UNDERSTANDING ENVIRONMENTALISM AS POLITICS IN INDIA

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Introduction

The concept of environmentalism reflects worry over the degradation of the natural world as a result of economic progress. The concept of environmentalism arose from concerns about the deterioration of human existence, a crisis in the human species' survival economy, and the potential dangers of the organic and inorganic environment. Environmentalists in the West have their roots in ecological or green movements, as well as the revolution against industrialism. The main principle of ecology was introduced by Thomas Robert Malthus, who proposed that population expands in a geometrical proportion while food supply grows in an arithmetic proportion (Ramaswamy, 2004, 428). Environmentalism is commonly connected with the birth of the green or ecological movement in the late twentieth century (Heywood, 2007, 64); nevertheless, its roots can be found in the nineteenth-century uprising against industrialism. Environmentalism emerges from social movements, which aim to influence the political process in order to save natural resources and the entire ecosystem. Because the philosophy stresses human needs and their satisfaction, environmentalism supports 'shallow ecology.' Environmentalists are concerned with the long-term viability and conservation of natural resources for human needs.

Contemporary environmentalism concerns including global warming and climate change, ozone layer depletion, biodiversity loss, trans boundary pollution, desertification, ocean acidification, harmful substance and waste disposal, livelihood among others have been recognized. From the commencement of global environmental issues, efforts have constantly been made by the international community including national governments, institutions and non-governmental organizations to effectively address and tackle those issues. Nonetheless, while efforts are being made to counter global environmental problems, it has become rather difficult to approach those problems through political solutions. Factors such as the rapid and increased numbers of Multilateral Environmental Agreements and the fragmentation of environmental institutions including its complexities, the lack of accountability, diverse interests in cooperation and the challenges with regards to

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compromise all lead to the reasons behind why global environmental problems are difficult to address through politics.

Environmentalism and India

Environmentalism can be viewed as both an ideology and a form of social opposition. It serves the interests of specific social groups and their life situations as an environmental philosophy. Environmentalism can also be classified as reactionary utopianism, which denotes an endeavor to restrict or prevent progressive changes that threaten a dominant social group's status. Environmentalism, on the other hand, emerges from instinctual resistance or social movements to the economic development process (Gibson,2002, 104-105). Environmentalism, according to Ramachandra Guha, is a worldwide movement and a social programme that is taking place all over the world. Environmentalism began as a popular movement in the 1960s, and it influenced public policy through a series of protests and lobbying (Guha, 2000, 2-3). The abstract concept of 'environmentalism' is taking on a life of its own in Third World countries, shaped by actual cases of ecological, green, and/or environmental opposition. To save their means of subsistence and avoid mass displacement, poor tribals and other marginalized people mobilise social resistance against the state-sponsored modern mega economic development process. It is the struggle for natural resources by persons who rely on the land, water, and forest resources of their country for their everyday necessities and survival. When poor peasants or forest-based traditional communities believe that the contemporary economic development process is a threat to their traditional livelihood system and a major challenge to their cultural lifestyle, this sort of collective mobilization occurs, especially in agrarian societies. As a result of their community-based environmental consciousness, they have an anti-state, anti-authoritarian, and anti-industrial stance. Environmentalism is a form of social resistance in this sense.

However, political movements can also generate environmentalism, as the state sometimes legalizes and enforces specific environmental laws in the name of sustainability. Many Third World countries, including India, are aware of severe environmental change, global warming, ozone layer depletion, deforestation, species extinction, population explosion, resource shortages, food crises, development issues, and so on, and planners and policymakers are taking necessary steps on behalf of the government to address these issues from time to time. Environmental awareness initiatives, environmental education, and environmental regeneration are all implemented by the government. As a result, environmentalism can be understood as a political movement or a pattern of government affirmative action aimed at making the man-nature interaction complimentary.

In India, there are many different types of environmentalists. The nature of Indian environmentalism can be gauged by looking at the level of social and political movements opposing the federal or state government's developmental ambitions. It can also be gauged by looking at the state authority's environmental policy formation process. When the state attempts to hijack the process of economic development by enacting a number of policies on developmental projects, a large number of people who rely on   natural resources for their livelihood and are concerned about the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity they step forward and organise a popular movement against the state-sponsored project.

In modern India, the state authority has accepted globalization and the market economy to strengthen the economic development process; on the other hand, project-affected or to-be-affected people, environmentalists, proponents of human rights, and even politicians raise their voices to assert democratic rights and environmental justice for both human and non-human species. At this point, the state authority is obligated to launch those development plans that are less environmentally damaging and suitable for individuals from all socioeconomic groups. Several voices of unhappiness and anger have been voiced in opposition to the government's developmental model. State-sponsored development initiatives would abuse nature and the surrounding environment in a variety of ways, with the poor and marginalized people bearing the brunt of the consequences. As a result, social movements for natural resource rights are expressions of "poverty environmentalism" (Guha and Alier1997, 18). The social movements that demanded an environment-centric livelihood system and customary rights gave birth to 'environmentalism of the poor.' State agencies should learn from these responses and implement environmental policies that are beneficial to human security, survival, and needs.

Environmentalism as a Politics

It is obvious that there is a complex link between science and politics in the context of environmentalism. Environmentalism is not solely a result of environmental science, nor is it a necessary component of radical environmental politics. Separating science and politics in environmental policy would result in two major issues: a) many environmental policies would fail to address the underlying biophysical causes of environmental problems, and b) many environmental policies would place unnecessary and unfair restrictions on marginalised people's livelihoods (Shiva and Bandyopadhyay, 1986, 84-90). The boundary organization approach of social movement theory, according to Tim Forsyth, examines the coproduction of environmental science and policy. However, the ability to affect environmental research in this way is not limited to official organizations or expert institutions; it can also encompass less formal forms of political involvement, such as social movements

(Forsyth,2003, 10).

Indeed, much debate in environmental politics and political ecology has focused on the positive role of social movements and a vibrant civil society in establishing a more ecologically conscious or socially just type of development. At one time, environmental social movements offered a way to revitalise an increasingly dominated by state and industrial interests environmental discourse, and this type of activism can be considered 'green' not only because it reflects environmental science findings, but also because it offers a reaction from society to the domination of policy debates by economic growth interests (Forsyth,2003, 152-153).

The newly emerging middle class has largely inspired by modern ecology, which has begun a defensive struggle against capitalism and modern industrialism. People who reject the philosophy and ideals of industrial capitalism and are more likely to pursue occupations outside of the market place can be classified as new middle class. For those who are dissatisfied with a subordinate role in industrial society's largely hierarchical systems, such a corporation would provide a significant degree of personal liberty (Cotgrove and Duff 1980, 82). Environmentalism, from a Western perspective, is essentially a nonviolent collective social mobilisation that protects the interests of the middle class. However, in Third World countries, it is the new middle class that typically organise social rallies demanding environmental justice for marginalised populations. Because of the contributions of new middle class citizens who were actively involved in environmental activism, lobbying, and education, the Chipko and Narmada campaigns received scholarly attention. During the quiet valley movement, however, middle-class environmental activism was powerful enough to sway government decision-making. The interests of underprivileged people were not prioritised over biodiversity conservation in this case. Since the Chipko struggle, Indian middle-class people have been at the forefront of the so-called environmental movement, playing a dominant role based on social ecology, environmental economics, and biodiversity conservation in order to establish environmentalism as a dominant socio-political ideology. Marginalized individuals join the Indian environmental movement when economic values become paramount, while for the middle class, both economic and noneconomic values are equally crucial for the movement's success. In general, middle-class activists employ tactics such as 'nonviolent coercion,' such as demonstrations, hunger strikes, road blockades, petitions, and other forms of nonviolent coercion; environmental education; public interest lawsuits, and so on.

Emma Mawdsley has noticed India's middle class participating in environmental debates. She discovered that: a) India's middle classes account for a sizable portion of the

population, and their environmental behavior has a big impact. Through their ability to command more resources such as per capita water and energy, consumer products, and waste output, including car emissions and garbage, particularly wealthy groups in Indian urban areas place larger demands on environmental goods and capacities; b) Through their substantial representation in the media, politics, scientific establishment, NGOs, bureaucracy, environmental institutions, and the legal system, the Indian middle classes have disproportionate influence in determining the terms of public discourse on environmental concerns. From localized issues, such as air pollution discussions in Delhi, to institutional attitudes and approaches, such as those found in the Ministry of Environment and Forests or environmental NGOs, to the substance and tone of national newspaper reporting, the middle classes control the public arena; c) In terms of their understandings of and fears about various environmental challenges, as well as indicators of regional disparities and inflections surrounding these debates, the Southern middle class has shown increasing dynamism and change. There is evidence of an increase in the number of middle class residents associations seeking to manage waste, green areas, and regulate or deny access to public space, as well as an increase in the number of middle class residents associations seeking to manage waste, green areas, and regulate or deny access to public space; d) The evolved environmental attitudes and behavior of India's middle class would aid in challenging two powerful but problematic contemporary environmental thinking tendencies. The first is the 'stages of developmental model,' which was created using Northern environmental ideas, histories, and experiences. Despite its obvious empirical and conceptual flaws, this approach is very prevalent in India. The power of 'nativist' environmental theorizing is the second problematic direction (Mawdsley, 2004, 81-84). Some pundits critique the current developmental paradigm and provide future recommendations. They depict a sanitised and partial environmental and socio-political history in this way, relying on a paradoxically Orientalist construction of a timeless, ecologically attuned, and anti-science and anti-modernity civilization. However, an inefficient platform for dealing with contemporary environmental change in an increasingly urban, consumerist, and industrial culture would cause issues with cultural-national purifying processes.

Mawdsley also highlights the differences in the nature of urban poor and middle-class Indian environmental politics. There is a significant ideological divide between the techniques employed by these two parties. The 'political society' fascinates urban poor people, whereas the 'civil society' is vital to the middle class. 'Political society' is frequently found in slums or impoverished areas, using the language of rights and utilising agitation and protests as one tool in their limited arsenal, with low cultural capital and stronger affiliations to political

parties, and trying to secure basic rights for the poor. On the other hand, 'civil society' is frequently run by upper-class individuals with ties to large corporations, and is characterised by 'professional' systems and has adopted the language of accountable government, stakeholders, and transparency. It is often located in middle and upper-class areas of the city. The urban poor have a high level of faith in political parties and membership organisations, but the middle class is increasingly turning to civil society organisations that seek to work in "partnership" with the government. Furthermore, the goal of the urban poor's political participation is to secure various citizens' rights through lobbying and agitation, such as health, education, a minimum wage, freedom of information, gender rights, and so on, whereas the goal of the middle class-dominated associational efflorescence is to secure consumer-oriented services and policing the social and geographical boundaries of their privilege (Mawdsley, 2009, 243-244).

Middle-class environmentalism is considered as a symptom of the 'new middle class''s evolving culture and political orientation, which is being shaped by a variety of causes, including the opening up of the Indian market and global economic prospects. The state's class differentiated development agendas advocate heightened consumption for the liberalising middle class but "sustainable development and austerity" for the rural poor and subaltern groups, mirroring the distinction between middle class environmentalism and "environmentalism of the poor" (Upadhya, 2009, 255). Even within the context of Indian middle class environmentalism, there is a significant divergence, particularly between the environmentalism of middle class human rights campaigners and the environmentalism of pro-state middle class people. Indian environmentalism, which was established by middle-class human rights advocates, has a high level of sympathy for the rights of underprivileged people who, in essence, meet both ends by living close to nature. During the Narmada Bachao Movement, urban middleclass individuals like Medha Patkar and Baba Amte were at the vanguard of the struggle, challenging the neoliberal economic developmental model, which would marginalise and impoverish the 'ecosystem people.' Middle-class human rights activists used politics to pressure the state apparatus to abandon the Narmada dam project, reiterating the issues of environmental sustainability, marginalised rights, and welfare state. On the other hand, another set of middle-class patrons seeks a regulated natural environment for their rich lifestyle, ignoring the needs of the poor and disenfranchised. It was dubbed 'bourgeois environmentalism' by Amita Baviskar. When the topic of leisure and cleanliness became a critical issue for them in eradicating slum inhabitants in Delhi, 'Bourgeois environmentalism' arose as a more potent philosophy. The interests of middle-class hegemony, as well as private capital and the state, are at the heart of bourgeois

environmentalism. Environmentalists from the urban bourgeoisie frequently ignore questions of equity in assessing the relationship between their own resource-intensive lifestyles and the environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity that they claim to be concerned about, and they also blame these problems on rural poverty, overpopulation, or ignorance (Baviskar, 2011, 391-418).

In the context of economic liberalisation, the creation of a new middle class is extremely significant. The political building of a social group that works as a proponent of economic liberalisation is represented by the growth of the new Indian middle class. This newness in the middle class section refers to the process of forming a distinct social and political identity that symbolises and claims the benefits of liberalisation, not to upwardly mobile elements of the population entering the middle class (Fernandes, 2006, 18). Economic liberalisation is industrialising India, according to Leela Fernandes, occurs through two distinct but concurrent languages of economic development and economic growth. On the one hand, state-led and global policies of economic liberalisation use celebratory languages of middle-class consumption as a sign of their success, while on the other hand, state-led and global policies of economic liberalisation use narratives of sustainable development that primarily target subaltern social groups, particularly in rural areas. These contradictory narratives of middle-class consumption and subaltern growth are part of a unique set of post-liberalization state developmentalist policies (Fernandes, 2009, 220).

The new middle class has defined their identity in various ways during the era of economic reforms, and their politics has been closely tied to the material reconfiguration of urban space, constructing a new environmental thinking in the age of modern urbanisation. Individualistic rhetoric of responsibility is frequently used by such rising kinds of urban middle class environmentalism. For example, using the language of a broader urban audience, the synergy between "environmental self-help" and a new emphasis on "caring for the self" such as yoga, no smoking, safe water, exercise diet, and so on has been addressed to the health of the middle class (Fernandes, 2006, 151-152). This generalisation was based on the sentiments of many metro cities middle class toward environmental rights and political assertiveness for the city's citizens. The rural middle class politics of social protest for environmental justice differs significantly from the urban middle class politics. When rural poor people band together under the leadership of middle-class people to speak out against displacement, loss of traditional occupation and culture, and resource depletion, economic values take on a new significance, in contrast to the non-economic values that urban middle-class people prefer.

The violation of popular political principles such as liberty, equality, and justice concerns the middle class of society, and as a result, they organise radical social protests, even normative movements, rallying disadvantaged groups such as tribals, poor masses, and other working class people. The actual leadership authority and the movement's future prospects are vested and remain in the hands of the society's educated and politically informed middle class. Furthermore, it is the middle class that structure the micro groups, if necessary, for the social revolt to succeed. These micro organisations form for a variety of reasons, including temporary purposes and long-term solutions to local problems and desires. When the state takes the lead on a development project, the rural society's organisations become extremely powerful. These organisations are mostly critiques of advanced industrialised society and are inspired by the post-materialist movement. These ideas and elements are at the heart of contemporary environmentalism. As a result, the new left politics of the middle class adds a unique dimension to environmental activism. Such a tendency persisted in the twenty-first century, and twenty-first-century Indian environmentalism adopted the Marxist class movement as its banner.

Conclusion

Green ideals are mainly supported by many ancient and new major political ideologies such as feminism, anarchist, socialism, and conservatism, and they are well encompassed by modern environmentalism. It can be seen that the formulation of the 'Gaia Hypothesis' has a subtly feminist overtone. Clearly, supporters of 'green politics' deny the necessity of state authority and sometimes demand that the state's authoritative power be cancelled; a global anti-globalization movement is fueling 'ecosocialism'; a desire to preserve traditional culture and a willingness to resist change are signs of 'anti-growth' initiatives. Environmentalism has manifested itself as politics since its inception. As a result, India isn't an outlier. The article has highlighted the heterogeneity of environments on the one hand, and the interconnected nature of environmentalism politics on the other, by exploring diverse areas, particularly from rural to urban areas, but also by carefully considering liminal spaces within dominant areas, such as rural-urban riverscapes, and socio-cultural frontiers within neighborhoods. It does so by emphasizing the analytical problem of accounting for local context and specificity while also acknowledging the multi-scalar political-economic and social forces that affect the reproduction of certain rural and urban environments. In order to comprehend the dynamics of Indian environmentalism, it has also brought to the fore the need to recognise and account for the ambiguous class binaries.

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