

**SOCIOLOGICAL APPROCH TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL  
MOVEMENTS AND VILLAGE PEOPLE’S PROTEST ON MINING  
ACTIVITY**

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**ABSTRACT:**

Environmental movements have been the most dramatic and visible social movements in the post-world war period. Modern environmental movements emerged from the late 1960’s. Incessant process of industrialization leading to indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources provided enough grounds for the alarms of conservationists and preservationists. It was the radical critique of capitalist industrialism and representative democracy associated with the new left and the counter-culture that created the public space for the development of new social movements, as well as furnishing their tactical repertoire. “Earth day started from 1970 onwards and it is often said to represent the debut of the modern environmental movement” (Hunnigan-1997:5). Concern with interaction between physical environment and social organization and behavior is has been the predominant them of environmental movements.

Some social mobilization of people in the surrounding areas of mining seem to have been going on sporadically though, given the diversity of ways in which villagers have been involved in mining and allied activities benefiting in one way or another it is extremely difficult, if not impossible to set-up collective organizations which can be sustained over long period of time and it also lack’s dependable and responsive leaders, lack of resources and lack of environmental education creating a strong sustainable movements against mining has became almost impossible. Despite of all these constrain some episodes of collective protest against mining have registered and created among people an intense awareness of the adverse effects of mining.

The article is based on both primary and secondary data by using interview schedule and secondary data which relates to collection of data from Libraries and other published materials.

**Keywords:** Environmental movement, Social mobilization, People’s protest.

### **1.1 Introduction:**

The concept of environmental movement: “Environmental movement is an organized social activity directed towards promoting sustainable use of natural resources halting environmental degradation or bringing about environmental restoration”. Modern environmental movements have created more awareness among the human nature interactions.

RadhaKamalMukerjee emphasizes that the relationship between nature, nurture and culture are both interactive dynamic with humans trying to mould environment to their own ends but always having to work within the limits set by nature (Guha, 1998)

Experience shows that awareness alone is not a sufficient condition to check effectively illegal mining. Leader’s who are capable and indeed have the capacity to translate this awareness of people into concrete action is an indispensable aspect of environmental movement in the circumstances that are prevailing in the surrounding villages. Generally environmental activism generates around the cause of environmental degradation and the rise of environmental consciousness. Dramatic rise in the environmental movements and environmental consciousness has been the striking feature of the modern era. Environmental issues have a great deal to do with dynamics of human behavior. The role of social activist groups occupies an important and significant place in the preservation, conservation and protection of environment and environmental resources.

### **1.2 Objectives of the study:**

- 1 To understand the Social significance of environmental movements.
- 2 To identify the role of social Activists in environment protection.
- 3 To Analyze the Village peoples protest against mining activity.

### **1.3 Modern development has been taking place at the cost of environments:**

Ramachandra Guha comments that in the name of development systematic attempts have been made to loot natural resources resulting in misuse of increasing volume of natural resources, through the intervention of the state apparatus and at the cost of the state exchequer to subserve the vested interests of the rural and urban omnivore. This has led in recent years a tide of protest by the victims of development. Chipko Movement, Narmada BachaoAndolan and a host of dozens of other protest movements and Appiko movement in Karnataka are the best examples.

These protests have been taking place against a backdrop of visible ecological degradation, the drying up of springs, the decimation of forest and the erosion of the land. Environmental

movement has developed mainly with the issue of equity as its focus. The movements have largely taken the routes of conflicts between the omnivores who have gained disproportionately from the development policy and projects and the large ecosystem people whose livelihood have been seriously compromised because of the overuse and even misuse of natural resources. The latter has been affected by environmental degradation. Environmental movements have been the political expression of the struggle of the victims of environmental degradation or abuse of resources through the organization of social action group. Unabated proliferation of voluntary action group over the last two decades has marked the beginning of environmental movements in India. An attempt has been made here to illustrate major environmental movements. This will be a prelude to local environmental protest movements against mining and its mafia.

**Chipko Movement:** The origins of the Indian environmental movement can be traced to the most celebrated of forest conflicts involving the Chipko Movement of the central Himalayas. In April 1973 the peasants of Mandal an interior village in the Garhwali Himalaya, effectively thwarted commercial felling of trees in a nearby forest by threatening to ‘hug the trees’. The Chipko Movement is probably the best known example of grass roots protest against environmental destruction in world. It has branched out into a much broader tendency which looks at the basic causes of resource degradation, poverty and unemployment.

The Chipko movement became a classic example of non-violent resistance and struggle by thousands of ordinary hill folk without the guidance and control of any centralized apparatus recognized leadership or full-time cadre. The movement in the last decade and a half, not only spread across the Himalaya, but also inspired similar struggles in other parts of India. It is a spontaneous reaction against destruction of forest resources by people for whom forest is everything.

To begin with the Chipko Andolan was centered on economic considerations. The demands were for the cessations of forest-exploitation contracts to outsiders, for the payments of guaranteed minimum wage to forest laborers, for the protection of ancient village forest rights and the provision of materials to small-scale local industries at concessional rates

To reach the Chipko message to distant villages, different techniques were evolved and perfected. They include padayathras, the use of folk songs and stories concerning previous heroic actions to save forests and about India’s forest cultural heritage as well, running of eco-development camps. Chipko foot marchers took in village schools, temples and mosques. The activists spoke wherever people gathered. They carried taped message from popular

leaders and slides of the effects of deforestation. Accompanying folk singers sang stirring songs, pamphlets were sold nearby landslides and the increased drudgery of women was pointed to as the consequences of deforestation. The Chipko movement was led by Underlay Bahuguna.(Tapan Biswal, 2007 ).

**Appiko movement:** The Chipko Movement caught the imagination of the villagers in other parts of the country. In Karnataka it is known as Appiko (Kannada equivalent of Chipko). Here, the people fight against the plantation of eucalyptus apart from its adverse ecological repercussions eucalyptus has no social value; The Chipko movement created a strong opinion to value the forests for their ecological role and for the support they give to local people's livelihood by providing food, fodder and fuel. Chipko's influence was felt almost all over the country in significantly reducing the commercial use of reserve forests on the other hand, social forestry especially its farm forestry component-which the National Commission on Agriculture (NCA)recommended as a sources of biomass for local needs, emerged as a source of raw material for industry. In Karnataka, there is also another movement waged against Harihara Poly fibers, a Birla Company, which has obtained permission to set up a joint venture with State Government to plant eucalyptus trees. (Hegde, 1987).

**Sundarlal Bahuguna & Tehri Dam:** Sundarlal Bahuguna and his opposition to the Tehri Dam have been a reference point for environmental movements in India. Diversely acclaimed as the father of the Chipko movement, a freedom fighter, a true disciple of Gandhi and Vinoba bhawe, an environmental thinker and writer, a gentle crusader, an unobtrusive messiah, a rishi, the face (TBVSS) Tehri Bandh Virodhi Sangarsh Samiti, Convenor of Himalaya BachaoAndolan and much more, Bahuguna has maintained an important presence in the environmental movement of country and in Uttarakhand. Movements like Chipko Tehri, Silent Valley, and fish workers struggles were transforming a passive environmental consciousness of Indian Subalterns into an organized power.

The movement tried to establish connection between ecological and social mythical values through scientific studies environmental campaigns and cultural 175 religions references, thus engaging in a wide gamut of environmental politics (Economic & Political weekly, 2009)

There are several other environment movements, such as the 'Save the Soil Campaign' (MittiBachaoAndolan), which may all be important as the ones cited above for illustration. These protest movements can certainly be said to have contributed in a positive way in so far as they forced the government to look for environmentally sound and human development

projects. They have even stimulated a search for alternative development strategies and not just projects. In this, they have still a long way to go, though some voluntary organizations are already concerned about developing alternative agriculture, alternative health care and alternative housing technologies which are low cost and environment friendly.

#### **1.4 Campaign against iron ore mining and for mine workers' rights:**

Bellary district in Karnataka is a key mining district and is the hub of iron ore mining in the State. Before indiscriminate mining began the region was a rich agricultural belt having rich forests. Recurrent droughts and mechanization of agriculture forced the agricultural labour to look for other sources of survival and this coincided with the mining rush in the region which fast grew into an unchecked free market zone where it is widely reported that the mining mafia dictated the very governance of the State.

While the international demand for iron ore increased, bringing with it larger profits for a few, the environment and the social fabric of the region began to take a beating. Miles and miles of agricultural land were soon converted into iron ore mines where men, women and even children worked in exploitative and inhuman conditions at the mercy of the mine owners and contractors. At the peak of the mining activity, Bellary boasted of the highest number of private aircrafts. In stark contrast the human development indicators of the district like infant mortality, life expectancy, and literacy are abysmally low indicating that a large population of the district was deprived of even basic amenities.

**Anti-uranium mining campaign:** The movement against uranium projects (MAUP), a confederation of concerned individual citizens and voluntary organizations, is campaigning against proposed uranium mining in the districts of Cuddapah and Nalgonda. The uranium mining project proposed in Nalgonda and to be taken up by the Uranium 184 Corporation of India Limited (UCIL) included extraction at the Lambapur and Peddagattu villages with the refinery being proposed at the Seripally village. The villagers here have, however, been opposing both the mining and the refinery and have been able to prevent the same from commencing. In Cuddapah the proposed Pulivendula project, also of UCIL involves extraction in Vemulapallimandal and the processing unit is to be set up in Tummalapalli village. MAUP has been involved in campaigns against both these projects. The protests have been carried out by media advocacy, by organizing women's groups, by networking with nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and individuals for the cause, and by mobilizing and participating in the public hearings.

**Anti-thermal power plant and coal mining campaigns: (Dumka district Jharkhand)** The State of Jharkhand is divided into 24 districts under four administrative divisions—Santhal Paragana, North and South Chhotanagpur and Kolhar—each of which have specific laws protecting the land and resource rights of the majority adivasi population. However, the administration has been involved in exploration, mostly done in a secretive and insidious manner, with nearly 101 companies both national and multinational waiting to take up mining activities. At present coal and uranium mining and quarrying are the main mining activities in the State. Both these mining activities have severely affected the environment and the social fabric of the adivasis living for hundreds of years in the region. Where mining has been happening, no agricultural activity has been possible for a 5 km radius as a result of pollution caused by mining. The government's promise of providing power to the adivasi villages is yet to see the light of day. Jobs promised to them are being given mostly to outsiders. Adolescent girls who do find employment are vulnerable to sexual abuse mostly from the very people who employ them.

The Peoples Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) has reported cases of rape and has helped advice girls file cases and represented them in court as well. However, very little of these issues come out into the open. The company, contractors and the administration take advantage of the ignorance of the adivasis to exploit them. Whenever the adivasis question the injustice of the government policies, protests are ruthlessly quelled by the administration with the adivasis being branded as naxalites or extremists.

**Rights of stone and quarry workers (Maharashtra):** Maharashtra, a State in western India, is endowed with diverse mineral reserves. In addition to major minerals like iron ore, manganese, coal, limestone, etc., there are a large number of stone quarries in the State. Rapid industrialization and population growth were followed by a rising demand for housing, roads and civic amenities that fuelled the large demand from the construction industry. Stone quarry workers employed in these quarries are from marginalized and impoverished communities. Most of them are landless migrants who have moved here for various reasons drought, displacement, etc have been uprooted from their homes and have come to eke out a living from these quarries. They are unorganized workers who face immense exploitation and abuse at the hands of the quarry owners and contractors; this is more so in the case of women and children, particularly adolescent girls, who form a large part of the workforce.

**Anti-bauxite mining campaign: (Kasipur and Niyamgiri-Orissa)** The State of Orissa is located on the east coast of India and is covered with forests that are home to a very large

adivasi population. It is also a State rich in mineral resources like bauxite, iron ore, chromite and manganese. Participants from Orissa came from two regions—Baphlimali hills, Kasipur block, Raygada district, and Niyamgiri hill, Lanjigarh, Kalahandi district. Anti-bauxite mining campaign- Kasipur: In Kasipur the communities are fighting against bauxite mining and alumina refinery project of the Utkal Alumina International Limited (UAIL).

**Campaign against bauxite mining in Niyamgiri:** In Niyamgiri the DongriaKondh women do not want to leave their lands and their sacred hills. However, Sterlite Industries, the Indian subsidiary of Vedanta Resources Plc., is using its money and muscle power to make the State machinery of Orissa violate all human and constitutional rights. Even women are beaten up by the police and agents of the company while peacefully demanding for their rights.

### **1.5 Protest against mining activity in Tumkur district Sample villages**

**Protest against mining:** “Vijaya Karnataka” date24-07-2008 on23-07-2008 Prajapragathi daily reported that the farmers of Honnebagi, Ballenahally, Gollarahally, Manchekatte, Jogihally, etc, protested against mining in their villages. Owners of the mines have given contract to middlemen. These middlemen harass the farmers. Farmers protested in front of the AbbigeMallechwara temple on the hill. Because of mining farmers and people face many problems and difficulties. They went in padayathra to the hill to demand their rights.

**Villager’s complaint:** AbbigeMallechwara temple has got 800 years old history. Four years back mine owners had written in writing saying that we won’t take up mining within 199 200 metres of the temple. They had also said that we would take up mining activity only in Honnebagi, Bullenahally, Gollarahally, and Jogihally. But now mining activity is going on within 50 metres of the temple hence, temple has reached dilapidated condition, mine owners had also told that they would be in direct contact with the farmers and respond to their demands. Now the owners have violated their word and alleged the farmers.

**Anger of protesters:** Mining owners have license to extract one lakh ton iron ore but, they are extracting five lakh ton of iron ore without using government’s license. They are using some duplicate license. There are nearly thirty crushers in the mining area, which are all unauthorized. Hence, there is heavy loss to the government revenue. Mining owners must stop mining until there is a dialogue between the two, formers said. Until they come to dialogue the protest will continue they said we are even ready to go jail the protesters said. Taluk Experiment H.M. Surendaiah had led the protesters. Zilla panchayath ex-member B.N. Shivaprakash, Mallechwara Temples Development committees chairman Basavaraju and

hundreds of farmers Participated in the protest. Because of mining dust the area is becoming a drought Area – leaders are worried.

As “Samyaktha Karnataka” daily news paper reported on 12.07 2008 mining activity is going on in chickanayakanahally talukas hilly areas from many decades. Villages such as Bullenahally, Naduvanahally, Godekere, Boraligayana playa, Pankajanahally, Malagondanahally, Nagenahally, Honnebagi, J.C.puraetc are facing water shortage this because of mining. Mining dust settles on trees and plants, this cause’s serious hardship on environment. This has been said by Prof. BalekayiShivananjappa. People were protesting for drinking water from hemavathi channel during this time he told this in front of Taluk panchayat office. Clouds of dust are been created by mining. The rain is also becoming less.

In these

Hilly areas vain were 500 mm but now not even 5 mm rain is falling. Prof.BalekayiShivananjappa has expressed his opinion. Shivaganga, T.P L.D Bank president B.N.Shivaprakash, ThammadihalliMathasSwamijis, and other leaders of the Taluk participated in the protest.

**1.6 Protest to Pressurize Development:** In May 2008 “Prajavani” daily news paper reported that thousands of people around mining areas have been affected. Hence, too much money is to be earmarked for Taluk development. People protested through “Rastha Roko” programme Taluk panchayat ex- president spoke to the protesters and he said ‘Honnebagi and nearby villages are deeply affected by mining. All the agricultural crops have been destroyed. Water table was very good before mining started. People are suffering from form serious diseases; there is no fodder for animals. Roads have been destroyed. The environment is completely polluted even during monsoon no rain will come. It is almost like a drought area. Since there is no proper irrigation facilities compensation should be issued to the villages. Or else we won’t allow mining to take place in the area, the leader said. Honnebagi and Godekere village gramapanchayaths protested against mining is from of district office and Thasildar office. The local legislator Suresh Babu visited the place and suggested some solutions to the problems and later protest was continued.

**Protest against mining: vehicles torched:** As “Vijjiya Karnataka” daily news paper and “PrajaPragathi” daily news paper reported on 25-07 2008 AbbigeGUdda comes in Honnebagi village panchayathi area. The protest continued severely in this area. Hence, there was heavy loss. During morning hours thousands people started gathering above AbbigeGUddasMalleshwara temple. During this time people argued with the police behaved

rudely with three women who were going to protest. Yet, the people went to the gudda and protested against mining. Some anti-social elements entered way bridge room and fired mobile screening machine, hitachi, JCB machines, tippers, crushers etc... more than five crore rupees loss, occurred in the incident. Mediator contractors are responsible for these incident protesters.

**Against of mining activity:** The Times of India daily news papers reported on dated 28-08-2008, residents of Chikkanayakanahalli in Tumkur district, who are fighting the adverse impact of mining in their area, are practical lot. They do not expect mining to stop but want miners to take measures to minimize negative impact, besides compensation their losses. Tumkur is known for iron ore, manganese and limestone mining. Mining also takes place in dolomite, soap stone, quartz gold, china clay and corundum.

Here, iron ore extraction is being done on 7,204.2 hectares of land, manganese on 1,678.18 hectares and limestone on 1,300 hectares. Mining Chikkanayakanahalli a hot bed in the district, has polluted water sources, destroyed crops, damaged roads, caused health problems to people and cattle in the villages around Abbige hills. The most affected area the residents of Abbigudda, Soppinagudda, Gollarahalli, Bullenahally, Manchekatte and surrounding villages in the Taluk. Impact utilization of the Rs 7.5 crore development funds has enraged people further. In the post couple of years, a committee had collected development fee from mine owners to improve areas affected by mining. Another factor, which has enraged residents, is the employment of workers from outside the state for mining work “why can’t they provide jobs to locals”? Asked Mohan Kumar H.M of Honnebagi. The frustration of these people led to a protest on July 24-2008 as around 2000 people trooped in the mining area at Abbigudda (hills). Destruction of equipment at the mining site has made them face police fury

**1.7 Findings:** “local environmental movements: episodes of protests” examines the environmental movements that have played an important role in checking environmental degradation. Lot of information is available on the dynamics of environmental movements at macro level- state region-national and international. Whereas local environmental movements have not received much attention of researcher and activists. Social mobilizations of people in and around the mining areas have been going on for a long time unsuccessful though. Chipko movement and Appiko movement directly and indirectly provide an impetus to the rise of local environmental movements.

The sample villages where the field work was conducted local population protested almost repeatedly. Majority of the people are small farmers, landless agricultural labourers they are attempt organized politically often random into serious problem, in the face of politically, economically powerful mining mafia. Media's especially print media often drafted local protest movement in mining in spot light. Farmers of such villages nearby the mining site, mine owners has given contract to middlemen, where middlemen started to harass the farmers. Local farmers protested in front of AbbigeMallechwara Swamy temple on the hill, because of mining famers and people faced many problems and difficulties. They went foot walks (Padayathra) to the hill to demand their rights.

### **1.8 Conclusion:**

The foregoing discussion has shown that environmental movements in micro-situation are as important as at the state and national level. Though not successful against vested-interests they played a vital and important role in creating awareness of adverse consequences of environmental degradation and destruction. This apparently brings about changes in the behaviour of people around natural resources. Barring vested-interests the common person has become increasingly conscious of their duties and responsibilities vis-à-vis nature and environment

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