

THE FOREST MOVEMENT
OF UTTARAKHAND AND
IT'S RELEVANCE

Presentation by
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INTRODUCTION:


- Importance of forest is now acknowledged worldwide.
- Trees and forests are at the top of national agenda.
- Uttarakhand is one of the most forested state of India.
- The life and existence of Uttarakhand and its people depend to a very large extent upon nature.
- The narrative of forest consciousness in India is particularly set by the Chipko movement.
- In Uttarakhand, green felling has been banned since 1981.
- The present state of forests and rivers is far from being satisfactory for any conscious society.
- Why is the situation like this despite the legacy of an internationally acclaimed environmental movement?



Forest Movement: History


- Any movement is a reflection of the contradictions involving an issue.
- The contradictions of the forest policy initially appeared in the year 1865, when the first forest act was promulgated in India.
- Chipko, the forest movement of 1970's is called a successful movement; this should mean that the contradictions regarding forest consciousness were erased.

Background

- The economy of pre British Uttarakhand (mountainous region) was forest based.
 - 3 components of this economy were-
 - Cattle rearing
 - Hunting and gathering
 - Subsistence agriculture
 - The East India Co. annexed “Kumaon” in 1815.
 - No interference in the matters of forest till 1855.
 - During this time, Company was solely interested in Uttarakhand as a summer resort and a link route for Tibet trade.
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- During the Gorkha Raj in Kumaon in 1790-1815, agriculture was largely destroyed.
- The Company, to facilitate the Tibet trade, encouraged agriculture in the valleys and *bhabar* areas.
- Company also began tree plantations by bringing plants from China.
- To satiate the high demand for tea in England, tea was mainly imported from China.
- Later on some native tea plants were discovered in Assam and Kumaon, the high scale plantation of which was successful.
- Processing of tea was done by hiring experts from China.

First Organized Forest Exploitation

- Fredrick Wilson, the “Raja of Garhwal”, took the forests of Tehri on leases.
 - Mukhba, Harsil was his headquarters.
 - He introduced his own currency.
 - Utilised the river system for transportation of timber.
 - Used unscientific methods of felling and transporting timber.
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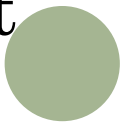
The Introduction of Railways

- 1853- First train was successfully operated from Bombay to Thane.
- Railways ushered in new opportunities for communication and business.
- The forests were an important source of raw material for Railway infrastructure.
- Lord Dalhousie's Charter of 1855 reserved certain species of trees.
- 1865-First Indian Forest Act- Concept of reserve forest.
- 1878-Revised Indian Forest Act- Concept of reserve forest- the protected forests.
- 1893-*Benap* land was declared as protected forests.
- The discontent among the natives by restricting their forest rights begins.
- Disruptions in *kuli begar* and *kuli utar*, forest fires.



- Kumaon Parishad was formed in 1916 to voice the grievances of people.
- 1915-1921- Forest movement spread to most parts of Kumaon.
- Rounds of negotiations.
- Kumaon Forest Grievances Committee was formed (FGC).
- Recommendations of FGC-
 - 4000 sq. miles of forest was de-reserved to form protected forest.
 - Van Panchayati Rules 1931.
 - Kumaon Forest Committee was formed.
- People were not fully satisfied with FGC.
- 1937- First elected Government formed in United Provinces (U.P.), headed by Pt. G.B Pant.

The Forest Movement in Garwal

- Tehri Garhwal was ruled by King of Panwar Dynasty, the king was known as the Bolanda Badrinath.
 - Dhandak* used to be the expression of Grievances of the *praja*. Normally the *praja* used to complain about the atrocities of the officers of the kingdom and the King used to solve the problems.
 - By 1885 the King had taken co-operation of British administration in the management of forests.
 - The *praja* was opposed to the new forest management.
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Dhandaks and Rebellion

- In 1904, a dhandak was organised, but issues remained unresolved.
- In the 1906's dhandak, King send his conservator, Keshavanand Gairola, to resolve the stalemate.
- When the problem was not addressed, the villagers dismantled the camp of Gairola and beat him, then forces were sent to the site and many villagers were arrested.
- Acrimony increased with passage of time.
- In 1930, the Diwan of Tehri, Chakradhar Juyal, banned the brewing of liquor, which was prevalent in Rawain and banned the cultivation of poppy. Forest concessions were also drastically reduced.
- There were rumors that the King has restricted the number of cattle owned by a family- one cow, one buffalo, ten sheep and only.

- Several representation were sent to the *darbar* of the King, but to no avail.
- The movement spread from Rawain to Jaunpur.
- Villagers collected in Tiladi for a dhandak.
- 30th May 1930- Diwan C. D Juyal ordered to open fire on the crowd of villagers of dhadak.
- About 200-400 people were killed. Some jumped into the Yamuna.
- In Gharwal people got almost no relief in the matters of forest policy.



- In 1937 when the first elected Government came to power the issue of forest rights was raised by the members of assembly.
- 1939 to 1945- World War II.
- The pressure on the forests was increased as the demand for timber increased during the war.
- From Kumaon alone, 4 lakh additional sleepers were supplied.
- The felling in the forests increased. However, the movement was subdued.
- After the independence, in the year 1969, a Kumaon Forest Fact Finding Committee was formed comprising of MLA's and MLC's.
- The committee was headed by Baldev Singh Arya, deputy Minister and N.D. Tewari as member, Conservator of Kumaon circle was Secretary of the Committee.

- The term of reference of the Committee was mainly rights and concessions and other related issues like price and supply of fuel wood in the towns, setting up of industrial units etc.
- The Committee travelled extensively across the Division, people took great interest and handed over many representations.
- Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant, the Home Minister of India, also sent a letter to the Secretary, expressing his desire for a solution to “lessen the difficulties of the hill people”.
- Committee submitted its elaborate report to the Government of UP but no action was ever taken.

THE CHIPKO MOVEMENT

- The flood of Alaknanda in 1970, by the breach of Gohna lake and washing away of the settlement of Belakuchi, devastated the valley.
- The issue of forest rights was still unresolved.
- Some local entrepreneurs had established forest based industries like resin, turpentine, timber, sport goods, honey bee hives etc. However, these industries were not getting sufficient raw material.
- There was a resentment among hill people against contractual system of exploitation of forests.
- Unemployment was increasing. Money order economy was the norm.
- Flood of Belakuchi acted as a trigger point for people to vent their discontent.
- The agitation for forest rights got a new beginning and dimension.

Beginning of Chipko

- 22nd Oct 1971- Major demonstration at Gopeshwar, led by Sarvodaya workers and Sarla Behan, Chandi Prasad Bhatt was also involved.
- Demand of ban on liquor and untouchability and preference in allotment of forest raw material to native people.
- Next year, public meetings were held in Gopeshwar and Uttarkashi, which demanded the replacement of contract system with forest labour co-operatives and setting up of local small scale industries.
- March 1973- DGSS's demand for Ash trees was turned down and the trees were allotted to Symonds Co.
- The villagers resisted the allotment of Ash tree to Symonds Co. and denied their entry into the forest.
- Later on Symonds Co. was allotted trees near forest near Phatta and were again denied entry into the forest by the villagers. For the first time the call for embracing the trees was given as a mark of protest.

Reni

- Over 2000 trees were marked for felling, scheduled for March 1974.
- The locals were called to Chamoli for long overdue land compensation and Bhatt was engaged at Gopeshwar for a meeting with the Conservator.
- In the absence of men, the local women in the leadership of Gaura Devi stopped the lumbermen to enter the forest for felling the trees.
- A committee was formed by the Government of U.P. headed by a botanist Virendra Kumar.
- The committee recommended a ban of felling in the upper catchment of Alaknanda and its tributaries for 10 years, stating that the felling was responsible for the recurrent landslides.
- Another committee was formed under K.M. Tewari to investigate the resin tapping.

- A committee was formed to find out the alternative to SPM. Small paper manufacturing units were recommended but were found to be not feasible.
- Then 2 sites were selected of a capacity of 25 tonnes per day. But never implemented.
- A recommendation was for the setting up of a Forest Corporation. This was implemented to replace the auction system of sale of tree lots. But FLC method was not became successful.
- In October the movement spread to Tehri.
- In the same year the activists tried to stop the auctions in Nainital.



The Follow up Chipko

- In June 1975 emergency was declared-there was no sign of movement.
- In 1977 the emergency was lifted and Congress was defeated, Janta Party Government was formed.
- In October 1977, the forest auctions were abandoned after a strong protest by USV. In Nov once again the auctions were opposed and the movement spread to all town of Kumaon and Garghwal. Many students were arrested and Uttarakhand bandh was organised on 23 feb 1978.
- In the later years the resistance spread to many forest area.
- In 1981 a ban on green felling above 1000mtr was imposed.
- All the timber lots were allotted to UPFC.

The Analysis

❖ First of all we should see the forest movement in two parts

Before 1973 and after 1973.

❖ Was Chipko a myth?

I. 1961 “Silent Spring” and 1972 Stockholm Conference has created an international mandate.

II. Indira Gandhi was inclined towards elite environmentalism

III. Was it a Right movement, an employment movement or an environment? These are mutually exclusive and antagonistic

IV. We need a different silviculture for these three.

Was CHIPKO a myth? The fissures

- It was active in certain patches.
- DTE- In a Mandal it was a dispute between two contractors!
- Reni – the logging operations are not completed in a day!
- The demand to create a forest corporation was raised by the activists.
- CP Bhatt and SL Bahuguna were in the Governing body of UPFC.
- Chipko's initial demand was raw material supply to local units preferably.
- The Ban on green felling above 1000 mtr was unscientific.
- They have never talked about the outlines of a different silviculture.

The Culmination

1. Ban on green felling above 1000 Mtr.
2. 1976 forest included in concurrent list.
3. 1980 Forest Conservation Act.
4. The constitution of Forest Corporation.
5. End of contractor system.



- The two top leader never reached in a consensus. Reni's women's disillusion.
- The activist still oppose the Forest Corporation without suggesting an alternative.
- Logging has been perceived as a despise job.
- No improvement in the logging and wood improvement methods.
- Efficient logging and wood improvement is part of forest conservation.



Present scenario of Uttarakhand

- Wildlife decreased invasion of wildlife in habitations.
- Forest fires are becoming frequent.
- Rivers, water bodies are drying continuously.
- Smuggling in increasing.
- Migration from villages.



Who will bell the cat?

Thank you.

