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Environmental Movements: A Case Study of Anti-Meta Strips Movement

Dr.R.B.Patil

Associate Professor and Head, Dept. of Sociology MES College of Arts and Commerce Zuarinagar, Goa-403726

ABSTRACT

The environmental degradation, its adverse effects and environment protection and preservation have attracted the attention of social scientists, statesmen, political leaders, environmentally conscious people, NGO's and others. In fact, issues of environment have prominently figured in the agenda of the discussions of many world forums. The unsustainable exploitation of the environment has caused irreparable damage posing a threat to the very existence of mankind on this earth. As a result the environmentally conscious individuals, NGO's and other organizations have launched protests, agitations and movements.

The state of Goa has also witnessed several environmental movements as it is also facing the problem of environmental degradation in recent years. The state of Goa has experienced rapid industrial development during the last two decades. Mining industry in particular, has drawn the attention of the environmentalists for its ruthless exploitation of natural resource leading to environmental damage.

This paper emphasizes the social aspects of the environmental movement under study. The issues of the movement such as ideology, leadership, mobilization pattern, genesis of the movement etc. are discussed.

KEYWORDS : : Environment, Ideology, Mobilization, Natural Recourses

Introduction

Today, environment protection and conservation have become major concerns of the world, and therefore, have occupied a central place in the socio-economic and political agenda of the world. The reckless and ruthless exploitation of natural resources, and industrial development without due attention to their adverse effects have posed a threat to the planet and to the life on it. Though the adverse effects of environmental degradation are universally felt, the developing countries are the worst sufferers. These kinds of affairs have evoked protest and resistance from the environmentally conscious citizens, groups and organizations.

Goa is no exception to this kind of situation. In consonance with the national policy of liberalization and globalization, Goa has opened up its economy for national and international industrialists and traders. Goa has experienced rapid industrial development during the last decade and half on account of liberal industrial policy of the Government. However, this has generated controversies and contradictions in the Goan Society giving rise to protests and agitations particularly against the polluting, large-scale multinational industries.

The people of Goa have lived in the midst of exquisite natural beauty for centuries. They have a lot of attachment to their land, rivers, mountains and forests. There is a symbiotic relationship between natural environment and Goan Society. The environmentally conscious and sensitive people of Goa are opposed to anything that could endanger their 'Golden Goa'. These sentiments towards environment have given rise to many Environmental Movements in Goa.

In recent years many environmental organization/groups like; Goa Environment foundation, Nirmal Vishwa, Ecoforum, Nav Nirman Abhiyan, Goa Environment Federation etc. have emerged with an objective of protecting and preserving the environment of Goa. Such groups have organized many agitations against the ruthless exploitation of natural resources and against the establishment of, what they called, life threatening and polluting industries. We can mention here the agitation's against Zuari Agro Chemicals, the Kaiga Nuclear Plant, Nylon 6, 6 Plant, Konkan Railway, Mechanised Fishing and the Meta Strips Factory.

The most recent among these series of ecological movements was the Anti-Meta Strips Movement led under the banner of Anti-Meta Strips Citizens Action Committee (AMCAC).

In this paper an attempt is made to identify the social aspects of the Anti-Meta Strips movement. Along with discussion on ideology, leadership and mobilization aspects of the movement, the paper dwells upon the alleged communal tilt it took in course of time.

The material used in writing this paper is mainly drawn from secondary sources like News Papers and Books, Booklets, Pamphlets etc published by the environmental organizations and AMCAC.

About the Industry

The Meta Strips limited is a large-scale industry established at Sancoale on the side of the national highway with a total cost of around Rs. 200 crores. It is around 10 km away from Vasco, a port town of Goa and around 20 km from Margao, a commercial town. It is almost in the midst of Verna Industrial Estate to its East side and Sancoale Industrial Estate to the West side. Originally, the Industry was supposed to be established at Verna Industrial Estate but due to opposition from Pharmaceutical Firms it was shifted to the present site. The industry is planned to produce about 2500 tons of Copper/Brass strips and foils per month from about 4240 tones (per month) of imported and indigenous raw materials consisting of copper cathodes, copper wire brass, Zinc ingots, Brass scraps and Copper scrap. It is basically export oriented unit. The land admeasuring around 2, 41,965 square meters is given by the Government on lease for 30 years for an annual rent of Rs. 73, 567. This land was acquired by the government at the rate of Rs. 18 per square meter for public purpose of creating an industrial estate. The industry requires around 15 MW of power per day. However, it is now said that the requirement of power is reduced to 8 MW. The water requirement was estimated around 4 million liters per day. Originally the industry was supposed to be called Nashik Wires Limited but later it was changed to the present name, Meta Strips Limited. It has provided jobs to around 400 people consisting of executives, non-executives and manual labourers. The industry is promoted by Jindal Group of Company in collaboration with M/s. INCO (SADE INGENIERIAY CONSTRUCTION MECANIA) of Spain (AMCAC document).

Emergence of the Anti-Meta Strips Citizens Action CommitteeIt appears that the people of the villages around the industry were totally kept in dark. The government probably, did not think it necessary to seek the opinion of the villagers before the implementation of the project. The public hearing, which is obligatory under the law, was also not conducted. The people became aware of the project when the construction activity of the Industry began in the beginning of the year 1999. The name board of the industry was installed outside in March 1999. The socially, environmentally and politically conscious people made a application in April, 1999 to the Goa State Pollution Control Board and to the concerned government departments for all the necessary information and documents pertaining to the industry under the Right to Information Act. Consequently, they got all the required records and documents by the end of May 1999. All this collected information gave them the understanding that the industry is highly polluting and the high consumption of electricity and water will put the local villagers in problem. Hence, they felt the need to organize themselves in some form in order to resist the establishment of such a high polluting industry. Thus, the Anti- Meta Strips Citizens Action Committee was born (AMCAC document).

Genesis of the Movement

The main contention of the movement was that the Meta Strips Ltd. factory causes high level of pollution. The plant produces Copper/Brass Strips and Foils on a mass scale from imported raw materials including Copper Cathodes, Copper Wire Bars, Zinc Ingots, Brass Scraps and Copper Scrap. It was believed that these scrap raw materials contain Nickel, Tin, Chromium, Zinc and Cyanide which are deadly, toxic and poisonous in nature to human physiology, respiration and even could lead to organ failure. It was further believed that the pollutants have the potential of causing cancer. The villager's apprehension was that the process of recycling of copper waste into pure copper and its other alloy would lead to severe air and ground pollution including metal pollution of the underground water bodies of the local areas (Herald, 29th July, 1999). It was argued that transportation of raw materials in thousands of tons per day, transportation of finished products and the plant machinery from India and other countries on a large scale and regular basis would cause congestion on the roads. It would bring pressure on the poor infrastructure leading to accidents. The boilers having steam generating capacity of 2500 kg per hour and the burning of around 5300 kg of LPG and 2700 Kg of H.S. diesel per day, would cause emission of humidity, Sulphur Dioxide, Carbon Monoxide, Carbon Dioxide and Nitrous Oxides into atmosphere causing respiratory problems. It was also viewed that the ecological disturbances due to migrant labour could result in theft, murder and prostitution around the factory site (D'souza, Joe & Satardekar, Ranjit D, Gomantak Times, 9th August, 1999). The dust pollution arising out of Carbon particles used in the reduction of Metal oxide, the mode of disposal of plastic waste and the ground water pollution in Sancoale Valley with metal such as Nickel, Chromium, Antimony etc. on account of 20 lakhs liter effluents released by the industry were some of the issues raised by the agitators (Gomantak Times, 30th July, 1999). The member of AMCAC, Dr. Joe D'Souza, stated, " We are fighting for our lives here because by the very nature of the Company's raw materials that include other than Zinc and Copper also Nickel and Chromium there will be pollution that will cause diseases like liver and kidney failure"(quoted in herald 30th July, 1999). General Secretary of AMCAC Nelson Fernandes further added, "Another reason for the fight against the Company was that the Government had promised that no polluting industries would be permitted and this was a Company that admitted itself to be a pollutant. The Environment impact Assessment Report that is required to be furnished by every industry hoping to set up was never done and yet land was sold to the Company (Herald, 30th July, 1999). Thus, the agitators felt that the "Meta Strips industry does not fit the profile of industry laid down for Goa with its delicately balanced ecosystem" (AMCAC, Memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister, 21st March 2000).

Another point of argument of the agitators was that the plant requires large quantity of water and power leading to shortage to the local people. As per the available information, the plant requires 15 MW of electricity and 30 lakhs liters of water per day. The people were of the opinion that, given the condition of shortage of water and the frequent cuts in power supply, the additional use of power and water by the industry could aggravate the problem.

The other root of discontentment among the people was the manner in which the clearance was given to the industry. The Company under the name Nasik Wires Ltd made the application for approval on 7th Sept. 1996 to the High Powered Co-ordination Committee (HPCC). The project was approved on 13th Sept. 1996 by the HPCC, which means within seven days from the date of application. This lightning speed at which the project was cleared, made the people suspicious about the government and the project. The people came to believe that heavy bribes were given to government officials and politicians. The AMCAC further argued that the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) had issued the No Objection Certificate to the plant without obtaining Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) report, and also without conducting public hearing by the State Government authority as per the statutory laws of Government of India.

The discontentment of the people was further aggravated for the reason that after getting final approval in the name of Nashik Wires Ltd, the Company forwarded an application requesting the Government to accept the change in the name of the Company from Nashik Wires Ltd to Meta Strips Ltd, which the Government subsequently approved this. The contention of the AMCAC in this regard was that, with the change in name, the Company submitted a fresh project report incorporating increased requirement for land, water, electricity and also scrap raw material to be imported from other countries (D'Souza Joe and Satardekar Ranjit D, Gomantak Times, 7th July, 1999)

The people were also apprehensive about the job opportunities for the Goans in the Industry. The industry had the potential to employ around 400 people. It was opined that out of these 400 jobs, about 300 could be in the category of unskilled and semi- skilled labour force employed to sort out, clean and recover copper from the scrap material. The possibility of Goans taking such jobs is less, as they prefer white-collar jobs. The employers too, prefer migrant labourers for such job as they find them hard working, submissive and cheap. In the category of skilled labour force also the opportunities get reduced due to lack of necessary technical skills.

Thus the polluting nature of the industry, the suspicious and hurriedly manner in which Government gave the approval by violating the laws, and without weighing the pro's and 'cons' of the industry, the fear that high requirements of water and power could cause shortage for locals and apprehension that the locals may not get enough job opportunities in the industry were the main roots of unrest and it consequently, outburst in the form of a long drawn movement.

There was a growing dissatisfaction among the people on account of the factors mentioned earlier. The people became restless. They became aware and developed a feeling that something should directly be done to eliminate the adverse condition. This feeling finally, gave rise to the movement against, what they called, highly polluting and life threatening industry.

The Beginning and End of the Movement

The movement began with the submission of memorandums to various Government authorities. A Memorandum stating that the labourers engaged in the construction work of industry are defecating in and around the spring which is the source of water to the villagers was submitted to the Dy. Collector, South Goa. The second Memorandum bringing out the pollution aspect of the industry was also presented to the Dy. Collector.

The Dy. Collector did nothing to solve the problems of the people. Therefore, AMCAC submitted a Memorandum signed by around 2000 villagers to the Governor of Goa in May 1999. The Memorandum highlighted the environmental and social impact of the industry and also the manner in which the Government granted the permission to the industry. It demanded the governor's intervention in resolving the conflict.

As no action was initiated by the governor or by the Government, after submission of Memorandum the AMCAC organized a huge rally in Panjim, a Capital City of Goa, on 29th July 1999. It was their first show of strength. A massive rally of over 3000 local people from affected villages of Consua, Quellosim, Cortalim, Sancoale, Velsao with other supporters marched through the stress of the city and submitted a Memorandum signed by over 14,800 local villagers to the Chief Minister. The rally demanded scrapping of project. It gave an ultimatum of 15 days to the Government to solve the problem. Cyril Fernandes, a member of the AMCAC said, "If within 15 days work on the Meta Strips project is not stopped we will take the law and order into our own hands and stop the work" (Quoted in Herald, 30th July, 1999). The Chief Minister assured the delegation of AMCAC that he would initiate a public debate and also seek a scientific opinion over the issue. However, this was rejected by the AMCAC stating that the Government should first stop all the construction activity of the Company before initiating such a debate or study. This was countered by the industry by arguing that the AMCAC is reluctant to discuss all the technical and general issues related to the Company. The Company stated that it was ready to discuss with "anybody" the details of the project and it has nothing to hide. It contended that "few elements" are inciting the people against the project (Gomantak, 5th August 1999).

The continued struggle took a violent turn when a Panchayat Sarpanch was assaulted and around 150 agitators destroyed the property of the Village Panchayat. The agitators were demanding the revocation of No objection Certificate issued to the factory in the light of a resolution passed in the Gram Sabha. The President of the AMCAC pointed out that "the Sarpanch did not do anything to implement the resolution" (Quoted in Gomantak Times, Vol.12, No. 171, 17th August 1999). It was

held that the will of the people was violated and neglected by the Panchayat. The Panchayat being the Centre of power of the villagers should have implemented the wishes of the people. "What happens when the Panchayat turns against the people, thus negating its very basis?" was the pertinent question raised in the local English daily, Gomantak Times (Gomantak Times, 18th August 1999).

Another massive "funeral march" in which around 4000 agitators participated was organized to protest against the failure of the Government to stop construction work of the firm within 15 days as was demanded by the AMCAC in the earlier rally held at Panjim. In the public meeting that was held before the beginning of march, a resolution demanding the suspension of all the construction activity and the demolition of all illegal constructions of the plant was passed. The agitators also took a vow to not to vote for a congress party in the ensuing Parliamentary elections for acting against the interests of the Goan population. This had a far reaching political implication as congress lost its Lok Sabha seat for the first time in this constituency considered to be the strong hold of congress. To the surprise of all, the BJP won the elections in the constituency dominated by catholic community, which is generally known to vote against BJP. At the end of this march covering around 2km, the effigies of Chief Minister and the Chairman of Meta Strips Ltd. were burnt. The socially important aspect of this march was that the women participants were more than men (Herald, 23rd August 1999).

A huge protest questioning the legal validity of the arrest of its two leaders was organized on 24th August 1999. These two leaders were arrested on charges of disruption of Independence Day, unlawful assembly and intimidation and kidnap of Sarpanch. The protestors blocked the National Highway for about 4 hours by felling trees and dumping boulders on the road leading to complete halt of the traffic (Navhind Times, 25th August 1999). The activists were released with the intervention of Nationalist Congress Party Chief. He held that charges against activists were paltry and to intimidate the people for political gains. He asked, "How can the police register the cases of trespass and unlawful assembly against those who were invited for a Gram Sabha meeting" (Quoted in Herald, 25th August 1999). However, it appears that the politician tried to take the political mileage of this agitation as he was contesting the Lok Sabha elections from the constituency where this movement was located.

A day long hunger strike was held on 30th August, 1999 to protest against "the government indifference to the sentiments of the people against the project" (quoted in Herald, 31st August, 1999). Around 1000 men and women activists and supporters took part in this token hunger strike which culminated in a public meeting addressed by the leaders of AMCAC and a BJP MLA. This meeting again decided to not to support the congress party in the fourth coming Lok Sabha election (Gomantak Times, 31st August, 1999).

The movement also used many other tactics to bring pressure on the Government to heed to their demands. They had decided to write letters requesting the international tourist travel agents not to bring tourist to Goa till the "polluting and slow killer industry Meta strips is not closed" (Statement of the General Secretary of AMCAC quoted in Navhind Times, 31st August 1999). An attempt was also made to bring pressure on the panchayats to revoke the construction licences issued to the industry.

The next action of the AMCAC was a day long dharna held on 2rd Sept. 1999 in front of the South Goa Collectorate office to press the Government to take necessary action against the industry. The agitators consisting of both men and women were holding placards and banners and shouted slogans against Meta Strips and the Government. They demanded the closure of factory to save them from slow death by pollution. However, a trouble broke when the loudspeakers were confiscated by the police on the charge that they were used without obtaining license from the concerned authorities (Herald, 3rd Sept. 1999). The protestors agitated over this action of the police, blocked the road resulting in total disruption of traffic. They were demanding the return of the public address systems which were finally, released with the interference of the superintendent of police. At the end of the dharna a meeting was held which the leaders addressed. They threatened to launch a civil disobedience movement along the lines of the movement of Mahatma Gandhi if the project was not scrapped. They opined that the Government was suppressing the fundamental right of the people to protest (Gomantak Times, 3rd Sept. 1999).

An unprecedented violence broke in Vasco when the villagers in large numbers had gathered in the court in response to the summon in connection with the additional senior judge restraining the AMCAC and others from demonstrating within fifty meters of the factory premises. A temporary injunction restraining the villagers from committing any illegal acts within 50 meters radius from the factory was given by the civil judge Vasco following the Civil Suit filed by the Meta Strips Ltd. All the residents of the five villages were summoned for hearing the case on 7th Sept. 1999 at 10.30 a.m. The gathering of around 1500 people in the court room and outside became uncontrollable leading to chaos and disturbance. As the lawyer representative of Meta Strips did not appear in the court for the conflicting reasons given, the judge adjourned the hearing to 2.30 p.m. This enraged the mob, which began to break the furniture and gates panes of the court building. The agitators also began to pelt stones on court building, vehicles and shops. The roads were also blocked. The police in a bid to take control of the situation began can charge and bursting of tear gas shell in which many policemen and agitators were hurt. The sociologically significant factor is the participation of priests in the agitation. The priests were also hurt during the lathi charge. They sustained multiple injuries and one of the priests hand was fractured. This incidence provoked violence in many other places as the agitators blocked national highway at several places and damaged buses, trucks and police vehicles.

The Church while expressing solidarity with Anti-Meta Strip agitation stated that the priests did not go there as leaders of the agitators but in solidarity with the people. The Church said "the Church was seriously committed to the promotion of human values and the social well- being of all the people especially the oppressed, without consideration of caste or creed. The involvement of the catholic community and of priests in the Meta Strips issue is, therefore a concrete expression of this commitment" (quoted in The Navhind Times, 13th Sept. 1999).

The gravity of the situation was clearly visible when Director General of Police taking cognizance of the damages to the public property wrote letter to the Government to start reconciliation process between the conflicting groups. The DGP had cautioned the Government that, if the Government fails to find an amicable solution to the problem, the agitation may lead to much more serious consequences (Gomantak, 11th Sept., 1999).

The AMCAC spearheading the agitation organized another day-long dharan in Margao town. They took out a morcha to the residence of Chief Minister. The agitators chanting slogans against Meta Strips marched through the streets of the town. At the end of the dharna, many leaders addressed the people. (Gomantak Times 25th Sept. 1999).

It also had a demonstration in front of the airport to draw the attention of the international tourists coming to Goa to the pollution that the Meta Strips industry would generate. A large number of villagers participated in this demonstration which later on culminated in a meeting. The meeting was addressed by the leaders of many other associations and organizations supporting the AMCAC (Herald, 12th Oct. 1999).

In the midst of all these happenings, an attempt was made to blow up culvert near the industry by using gelatin explosives. Two explosives were triggered off within a span of one hour while the third one did not detonate on the culvert. The involvement of the AMCAC activists was strongly suspected though it disowned the responsibility for the incident (Herald, 1st Nov. 1999). However, several activists of the AMCAC were arrested by the police on the charge of their involvement in the blast. This led to road blockade and agitation in which again women participants were found to be more. In this incident the involvement of Priests of Churches in the villages surrounding the industry was also suspected.

With the fall of the Congress Government and formation of new coalition Government, the AMCAC spearheading movement kept a low profile for about three month. However, later on it decided to intensify its agitation stating that enough time was given to the Government during which it did nothing to meet the demands of the AMCAC. Thus, here onwards agitation again picked up the momentum.

The agitation received a boost when high court dismissed Meta Strips writ petition requesting the court to direct the Government to supply power and water to its plant and also to impose restrictions on agitators against the Company. The court rejected the plea of the Meta Strips on

the ground that no case had been made out for its interference and that the allegation against the agitating groups of spreading false propaganda are contentious. The AMCAC responded to the verdict by saying that the verdict was a step forward in the peoples struggle to safeguard their health, lives and environment (Herald, 16th and 17th March 2000).

Encouraged by this decision, the AMCAC organized a morcha to the New Assembly Complex on the opening day of the budget session. However, they were stopped by the police at the beginning of the Mandovi Bridge, which they had to cross over to reach to the Assembly. This led to the disruption of traffic over the bridge. Later the delegation of the AMCAC met Chief Minister and the leader of the opposition and submitted a memorandum again reiterating that Meta Strips was highly polluting and therefore, be scraped. The AMCAC wanted the government to act firmly and strongly to protect the health of the people and environment of Goa. They gave five-day ultimatum to the government to solve the problem and warned that for any possible untoward incident in the future the government will be held responsible.

As the government did not respond to the memorandum submitted earlier by the agitators, the AMCAC decided to intensify its agitation throughout the state and to start an indefinite hunger strike (Gomantak Times, 27th March 2000). It started hunger strike on 27th March 2001 to demand the immediate action from the government to stop the factory. The hunger strike went on for several days but ended without any tangible results. Meantime, many demonstrations, dharnas and rasta rokos were organized by the AMCAC at several places in South Goa.

The movement reached its climax of militancy on 4th April 2000 when violence took extreme form. The agitating people blocked the roads, vehicle tires were burnt, trees were felled and public property was destroyed. A policeman sustained a serious head injury in a violent attack who later succumbed to injury. The police resorted to lathi charge and also opened fire in which some were injured. The agitators on their part complained about the atrocities, human rights violations and brutality committed by the police and the police countered this argument by stating that "the demonstrators were involved in destruction of private and public property"(Navhind Times, 25th April 2000 and Herald, 12th April 2000). During this time AMCAC women's forum was formed "for stronger cohesive action led by women from the villages surrounding the scrap based project" (Herald 15th April 2000). The women forum demanded the total scrapping of the project. The AMCAC women's forum leader said "our members are willing to march to the project site and even offer their lives in this battle. The police who are now protecting the factory should remember that we are fighting for a cause and that no weapon used by them can silence our voices" (Gomantak Times, 18th April, 2000). It is worth mentioning here that throughout the movement women participated in large numbers. In a way, movement was dominated by women.

The government sensing the severity of the problem decided to form a tripartite expert committee involving AMCAC, Meta Strips Ltd. and the government to look into polluting and other aspect of the industry and also to stop work at the Meta Strips factory by sealing its gates. This decision of the government was accepted by the Meta Strips industry. The AMCAC on its part adopted the delay tactics and finally, decided to not to nominate its members to the committee on the ground that it has already submitted to the government enough expert reports, which proved the polluting nature of the industry. This kind of attitude of the AMCAC and other factors prompted the Meta Strips industry to approach the Supreme Court for lifting ban on construction and production imposed by the government (Herald, editorial, 6th May, 2000). The Meta Strips Limited won the case in the Supreme Court as it had got all the clearances and No Objection Certificate. The government contention that the factory was closed down due to law and order problem was not accepted by the Supreme Court as if felt that the government cannot close the factory on this count. The circumstances forced the government lawyer to agree to open the factory.

This Victory of the Meta Strips Limited sounded the death knell of the movement. Its activity was largely confined to corner meetings in the Villages claiming to strengthen the movement. After this decision of the Supreme Court, no agitation worth considering took place. Gradually, the movement faltered in the absence of political support and diminishing interest and zeal of the people.

By and large, the movement had the following characteristic.

1) In the beginning, the movement was peaceful and democratic. However, in course of time, it assumed the characteristic of militancy.
2) The movement brought large number of people on street as the people in Goa, by their very nature, are not know to take part in agitation's
3) One community dominated the movement.
4) The participation of women in large numbers is another salient feature of the movement.
5) The church was involved in the movement.
6) The movement ended without any tangible achievement.

Mobilization Pattern

The AMCAC mobilized the people for movement against the company mainly by creating awareness about the polluting aspect of the industry. It held series of corner meetings in villages and towns of South Goa to make the people aware about the issue (Navhind Times 12th Sept. 1999). Efforts were made not only to mobilize the villagers around the Industries but also people of two important towns of South Goa that is, Vasco and Margao.

The church was used as an agency for the mobilization of people. The priests appealed to the people to support the AMCAC in its struggle against the polluting firm. During the Sermons people were informed about the dangers of the factory and the need to protest unitedly against such industry. The priests being religious heads in the respective areas made all the difference in the mobilization of people.

The AMCAC also sought the support of the non-governmental organizations, environmental groups and other national and international organizations. It got the support of the Human Rights Monitoring Society (HURIMOS), the Mull Goenkarancho Ekvott (MGE), the National Alliance of People Movement (NAPM), the Goa Environment Federation (GEF), the All Goa Citizens Committee for Social Justice and Action (AGCCSIA), the Goa Environment Action Group (GEAG) and Green Peace International. The Support of these local, national and International organizations had a positive influence on the participation of the people in the movement.

The effort to mobilize the political parties was also made by the AMCAC. However, it did not succeeded much in this effort as no major political party supported the movement. The National Congress Party was the only party, which supported the movement till the end. The BJP expressed its support to the movement, especially, during the Lok Sabha election but made a Volt – face once it came to power.

Ideology

The prime ideology of the movement was that every citizen has a fundamental right to "protect and to fight against the imminent danger to their lives and wellbeing" (Herald, 2nd Sept. 1999). It said that the movement is must to "protect health and wellbeing of the present and future generation" (Herald, 9th Sept. 1999). The ANCAC stated that health of people is more important that the economic growth through polluting industries. It was argued that the constitution of India provides the people the right to fresh air, clean water and pollution free environment (Fernandes, Cyril, Gomantak, 25th Sept. 1999). Cyril Fernandes ("Development by abusing human rights" Gomantak Times, 20th 1999) writes, "the ultimate purpose of business is not be, simply to make money. Nor is it merely a system of making and selling things. The promise of business is to increase the general well-being of humankind through services, a creative invention and ethical philosophy". He stresses the need to develop ecological morality. The AMCAC also spoke of launching a civil disobedience movement along the lines of Mahatma Gandhi '(Gomantak Times, 3rd Sept, 1999).

Communal Issue

The significant aspect of the movement was the communal issue that flared up in due course of the agitation. The active involvement of Church and Priests was probably, the main reason for movement taking communal tilt. The promoters of Meta Strips industry and organization like; Confederation of Communal Harmony and National Integration, Patna, People's Alliance for together of Religion, Industry or Trade, New Delhi, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bangalore and Bajrang Dal, Mathura branded the movement as communal. They saw the movement as perpetrator of atrocity and dominance of minority community over the majority. They opined that the movement was nothing but commitment of atrocities by one community over the other in the name

of pollution and minority. The contents of the letters written by these organizations to the AMCAC, quite surprisingly, are more or less, similar. The language is abusive and defaming. The Shiva Sena too, opposed the movement stating that its leaders are engaged in terrorist activities and such a movement will hinder industrial growth and job creation (Gomantak Times, 11th May, 2000). It even organized a Morcha in Panjim, a capital of Goa to oppose the movement. The Industry alleged that the Church wants to keep people backward for its vested interests.

The Church, on the other hand, stated that its involvement in movement emerged out of its commitment to the promotion of human values and the welfare of the people. It asserted that the Anti-Meta Strips movement is for the empowerment of the poor, for democracy and humanity (Navhind Times, 15th April, 2000). It stated, "Anti-Meta Strips Campaign, at its ground reality, is a campaign which gave a voice to the poor, empowered them to make their voice heard, is a campaign to give the land its value, independently from the development projects, is a campaign to expose corruption, callousness, and criminality at high levels of power, is a campaign to awaken a sense of pride for being humans and Goans, worthy citizens of this great country with high democratic traditions"(Navhind Times, 15th April, 2000). It further remarked that the church responds to the suffering of not only a Christian but of every human being. To put it in its own words, "the Church bleeds where not only a Christian but every human person bleeds. Where a rightly enraged voice makes its sound heard it is there where the Church screams" (Navhind times, 15th April, 2000). The participation of the Priests in the movement was justified on the ground that duty of Priests, whether they are Hindu, Muslim or Catholic is not merely to preach the message of God' but they are also responsible for the welfare of the society. Hence, it is the duty of the priests to protect the interests of the people and to bring out the wrong doings of the government (Herald, 12th Oct.99).

The AMCAC also responded very strongly to these remarks. In its letter (14th July 2000) addressed to the member of Zilla Parishad it stated that the agitation against Meta Strips Industry is for the protection of environment and health of the people of Goa. The movement has nothing to do with religion, as environment has no religion, caste and region. It further said that we all are first and last Indians before being Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis etc (Gomantak Time, 11th Sept. 2000).

The careful analysis of the available information suggests that the communal issue was blown out of proportion. There is no acceptable base to prove that the movement was communalized. The movement cannot be branded as communal for the following reasons.

1. The movement was not against any community but against polluting industry and anti-people decisions of the government. The confrontation was more with the government. People were protesting against the hurriedly manner in which permission and other licenses were issued without due consideration for pollution aspect of the industry.
2. During the course of the movement three governments came to power. Out of these three, the Christian Chief Ministers headed two. Industries Ministers also belonged to Christian Community.
3 No doubt that most of the leaders and participants of the movement belonged to the Christian Community but it can be attributed to the fact that the industry is established in an area where the majority of residents are Christians.
4. Though the participation of the members of Hindu Community was less, they were not totally left out.

However, the question whether any religious organizations direct involvement in such movement will be in the interest of the society or not, need to be discussed and debated.

Conclusion

The movement, which went on for almost two years, failed to achieve its main objective of scrapping the industry. Various reasons can be enumerated for this failure. The movement started when substantial investment in creating the infrastructure of the industry was made. The movement should have started when the process of establishing industry began. It started at that stage of industry from where return was almost impossible. Secondly, the industry had acquired all the necessary clearances by following the prescribed procedure. Hence, it had got a strong legal base and advantage. Thirdly, the movement appears to have lost public sympathy and support, as it became militant in course of time. Fourthly, the movement did not get the political support. Even the opposition parties, known to take opposite stand, did not support the movement. Fifthly, the movement dominated by catholic community failed to mobilize the people of Hindu Community. Lastly, the direct involvement of Church and clergy in the movement created apprehension in the minds of the people about the motives of the movement, which had a negative influence on the people's participation.

Though the movement failed in fulfilling its manifest functions, it ended up in achieving some latent functions. It created awareness among the people about their rights and also determination to exercise them. It sensitized the people to environment. It also sent a strong signal to the government and to the industrialists that they could not take the people for granted. It brought to the fore the principle that the government should involve people in the process of formulation and implementation of any project. The need to democratically decide the implementation of any project was realized. The movement also became a unifying bond as it resulted in solidity and integration of people particularly of one community.

The movement resorted to uninstitutionalised and unconstitutional methods to make it heard and bring pressure on the government to achieve its objectives. People had lost confidence in the government due to lack of transparency and its failure to solve their problem.

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