



Environmental NGOs and Movements in Satara District

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Environmental NGOs, Movements, Protection and Conservation

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ABSTRACT

The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Voluntary Groups and movements constitute most prominent actors in the civil society domain. The active involvement of NGOs is one of the significant features of environmental movement in India. In India, the expanding NGO activity in the field of environment is a welcome sign for making people aware about the environmental problems. NGOs also create an open forum for dialogue among all concerned, co-coordinate with the agencies involved, and provide inputs for policy making. At the grassroots level, they deal with locally relevant environmental issues.

Especially, after 1980 with the rise in the local environmental problems and along with them increasing felt need to address these issues environmental NGOs have emerged in Satara district. To address local environmental problems many environmental NGOs have been formed in Satara district. Therefore, to undertaken study of environmental NGOs and features of environmental movement in Satara District is the major objective of the present study.

A] Emergence of Environmental Movements in India:

The genesis of concern for environmental protection in India, "can be traced back to the early twentieth century when people protested against the commercialization of forest resources during the British colonial period"(Sahu, Geetanjoy 2007: 3). As pointed out by Reddy, Ratna (1998), "In India especially after 1970s a large number of environmental movements have emerged. However, some of the contemporary movements acquired the status of ecological or environmental movements in retrospect as these movements have widened their focus from basic survival needs to ecological concerns" (Reddy, Ratna V. 1998: 685). The main environmental movements in India are Chipko Andolan, Save the Bhagirati and Stop Tehri project committee in Uttar Pradesh, Save the Narmada Bachao Movement in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, Appiko Movement in the Western Ghats and Sailable Valley Movement. Some other local movements like Pani Chetna, Pani Pan-chayat and Mukti Sangharsh advocate ecological principal for water use (Karan, P. P. 1994: 32-33).

B] Linkages between Environmental Movements and NGOs:

The most significant feature of environmental movements in India is that, there is involvement of local voluntary organizations or NGOs in these movements. Many examples can be cited. Chipko Movement, the work of Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal (DGSM), Gopeswar, which was engaged in social work in the Uttarakhand, was significant. The volunteers of the DGSM realized that forest and land, and forest and man were intricately linked. Then they started educating the people about the ill effects of deforestation in the hill slopes and gradually they geared themselves in the movement. The same is true in case of Silent Valley Movement. The Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), an NGO, was working for three decades among masses of Kerala for growing environmental awareness. This voluntary organization was working with people in popularizing science and appropriate technology and in campaigning against the environmentally destructive development projects. The KSSP launched a campaign against the Silent Valley Project. Many NGOs are also connected with the Narmada

Bachao Andolan (Salunkhe, S. A. 2011: 17-18; Dhanawade, Satish 2013: 16).

C] Methodology:

The present study was undertaken to document the environmental NGOs and their work in Satara District of Maharashtra, with a view to understand their role in environmental protection and features of the grassroots level environmental movement. The descriptive research design has been adopted for the present study. A list of NGOs working in the field of environmental protection and conservation was compiled by using snow-ball technique. After preparation of the list of 58 NGOs, each and every NGO was contacted and preliminary information regarding all these NGOs was collected from the contact persons. The data were collected by using a questionnaire. The period of data collection spanned from April, 2009 to October, 2011.

D] Environmental NGOs in Satara District:

Especially, after 1980 with the rise in the local environmental problems and along with them increasing felt need to address these issues environmental NGOs have emerged in Satara district. The environmental NGOs emerged from civil society. The total 58 NGOs, covered under the present study were working at 26 (twenty-six) different villages and cities; most of the NGOs are working in cities such as: Satara city, Karad, Phaltan and Wai. Majority (44 or 75.9 percent) of the environmental NGOs were registered, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs); those having relatively small size having up to 20 members. Most of the environmental NGOs were having independent office, written constitution and own executive body. Majority 35 (or 60.34 percent) organizations were having full time volunteers in their NGOs. Majority (33 or 56.9 percent) of the environmental NGOs was not employing paid staff. Majority (35 or 60.34 percent) of the environmental NGOs was having honorary working staff.

E] Environmental Issues undertaken by NGOs in Satara District:

The important issues addressed through the programmes

undertaken by NGOs included: 1) Water Conservation and Tree plantation, 2) Disaster Management, 3) Forest Fire and Oppose to Cuttings of Trees, 4) Save Kas Plateau and Kas Lake, 5) Opposition to New Mahabaleshwar Project, 6) Medical Treatment to Wounded Birds and Animals, 7) Protection of Lakes, 8) Ban on Plastic Bags, 9) Protection of Rare Medicinal Plant Species, 10) Deforestation, 11) Solid and liquid Waste Management, 12) Save Snakes, 13) Protection of Sanctuaries and National Parks, 14) Noise Pollution, 15) Industrial Pollution, 16) Solar Energy, 17) Organic Farming, 18) Biodiversity of hills, 19) Natural Disaster, 20) Waste Water, 21) River cleaning, 22) Tissue culture, 23) Water literacy, 24) Soil erosion, 25) Saline land and 26) Social forestry.

F] Environmental Programmes undertaken by NGOs in Satara District:

The programmes undertaken by the NGOs for the environmental protection and conservation included: 1) Tree Plantation and Distribution of Medicinal Plants, Development of Nursery, 2) Distribution of Paper and Cloth Bags, 3) Creating Awareness about Tree Plantation, 4) Different Activities and Programmes organized for Protection of Nature, 5) Creating awareness among the masses through various programmes organized by NGOs, such as: experts lectures, documentaries, slide shows, films, street-plays, nature camps, farmers campaigns, rallies, poster exhibitions, essays, agitations, demonstrations, cycle rallies etc, 6) Organize various activities to generate awareness among the people by NGOs such as: seminars, workshops, group discussions, conferences, celebration of national days and festivals, writing and publishing articles in newspapers, journals, books, research in environment related subjects, **Ek Gaon Ek Ganpati**, donation of Ganesh idols and Nirmalya, eco-friendly Ganesh idols, creakless festivals, water literacy, observation of birds, census of tigers, representation of public hearing, public forum, youth forum for creating awareness, demonstration on save energy, use of solar energy, wind energy, organic farming, these pollution free activities are helpful for environmental protection and conservation.

G] Features of Environmental Movements in Satara District:

There are crucial environmental issues undertaken by the NGOs in Satara District for protection and conservation of nature. The different activities and programmes undertaken by environmental NGOs and therefore, we understood various movements in Satara District. Some of them are as follows:

- 1) Save the Kas Plateau and Kas Lake,
- 2) Opposition to New Mahabaleshwar Project,
- 3) Save the Western Ghats,
- 4) Forest Fires and Deforestation,
- 5) Sand Excavation and water pollution and
- 6) Ganpati Dan and Nirmalya Dan.

These movements are observed in Satara District, and their features are as follows:

1) General Objective of Environmental NGOs:

All environmental NGOs have common objective regarding protection and conservation of environment. Their activities are related to environmental issues.

2) Interrelations among the Environmental NGOs:

The environmental NGOs are interconnected, interrelated with each other on specific issues at the time of activities and programmes organized by various NGOs.

3) Continuity in Pursuing the Objectives:

The various environmental NGOs in Satara District are continuously undertaking different activities and programmes for protection and conservation of environment.

4) Organizational Features of Environmental NGOs:

The various salient features of the environmental NGOs in Satara District are as Follows:

- 1) The more activities/programmes of environmental NGOs are found in urban areas than the rural,
- 2) The environmental organizations are working spontaneously and voluntary. The nature of organizations (NGOs) are non- profit basis,
- 3) The majority environmental NGOs in Satara district are having small size (below than 25 members),
- 4) The majority of NGOs in Satara District are registered,
- 5) The NGOs executive bodies are constituted, from the middle class and these body members are coming from highly educated, well being civil societies.

5) Social Background of Volunteers in Environmental NGOs:

- I) The majority of the volunteers were of the middle age.
- II) The male volunteers were more than female.
- III) The majority of environmental NGOs volunteers were coming from Maratha and other higher castes, they are mainly Hindus.
- IV) Most of the environmental volunteers belonged to 'Middle Class' and 'Rural Background'.
- V) The majority of environmental volunteers were coming from highly educated families of society.
- VI) The majority environmental volunteers participate in different activities organized by NGOs and they were coming from government/private services and own business strata.

6] Ways and Means adopted by the NGOs:

The following ways and means were adopted by NGOs for the protection and conservation of environment.

a) The traditional peaceful ways include: organization of public campaigns, writing on environmental issues through magazines, news papers and books, and to increase the intensity of environmental issues through media.

b) Direct Action, Rallies and Agitations include: Lodging complaints and follow-ups, to register protest by agitations, standing demonstration, blocking roads, rallies on environmental issues, questioning government officers on duty for justification, sitting agitation, and to organize movements.

c) Lawful and Ethical appeal to people include: sitting agitation, chain relay fasting, warning for self-creamation, and filing cases against violators of environmental laws.

7) Ideological Orientations:

The majority environmental volunteers gave preference to the Gandhian Ideology followed by, Appropriate Technology in Satara district. Some volunteers were having Marxist's Ideology, Western and Capitalist Ideology.

8) Impact of Environmental NGOs:

The environmental NGOs in Satara district have been playing a crucial role in creating environment awareness among masses. They have undertaken various environmental awareness programmes/activities and action programmes for environmental protection and conservation.

H] The Important Achievements of the NGOs in Environmental Protection:

1] Save Kas Plateau and Lake:

Dr. Sandeep Shrotri, President of Ranwata organized seminar on 'Save Kas- Save Heritage' on 1st April 2012 and 200 participants including 18 speakers, 35 experts and 24 organizations at international, national, regional and local level participated. Before this all the environmental NGOs in Satara district came together and discussed on the Kas Plateau, prepared memorandum signed it and forwarded to the government. The prime intention was to include the Kas Plateau and Koyana Sanctuary into the World Heritage Centre. As a result of it has been included into the World Heritage Centers.

2] Opposition to New Mahabaleshwar Project:

The government planned to start a new hill station near the Koyana forest reserve and the Koyana backwater. This will pollute the 100 TMC of water, which may play an important role in the coming years considering the amount of rainfall. The members of various NGOs including Manvendra Nath Roy Informal Educational Institute, ENVIRO Nature Club, Sayadri Adventure Club, Kalpana Chawala Vidnyan Centre, Elements of Nature and Conservation, Drongo, Ranwata, Astha, Vasundhara Nisarg Sanstha along with the other NGOs opposed the government on the basis of conservation of biodiversity and the endemic species present in the area.

3] Forest Fire:

The NGOs organized different programmes and activities for eradication of forest fire nearby villages to increase the awareness among people about it. Dr. Sudhir Kumbar, of Manvendra Nath Roy organization is an active member who inspires the students for work of nature protection and conservation. He has also created awareness about the forest fire through songs, mimics, poster exhibitions, lectures, documentaries, pamphlets, banners etc. and he has also prepared anti-forest oath.

4] Donation of Ganesh Idols and Nirmalya:

Drongo, ENCA, Ranwata, Astha and Maharashtra Andhashradha Nirmulan Samiti jointly organized 'Ganapati Dan' (Donating the idols instead of immersing in water) and 'Nirmalya Dan' programmes. 'Ek Gaon Ek Ganapati' concept is implemented in so many villages. Late Dr. Narendra Dabholkar, Founder of Maharashtra Andhashradha Nirmulan Samiti was the chief pioneer of this concept.

5] Eradication of use of Plastic:

The NGOs have prepared pamphlets, slide shows, posters, published articles in local newspapers for creating awareness about environmental protection and conservation.

6] Documentaries:

Dr. Sandeep Shrotri, Mr. Sunil Bhoite, and Mr. Dilip Dongare have prepared documentaries on Valley of Flowers of Kas Plateau, Kas Lake, Forest Fire, Birds and Animals etc.

7] Tree Plantation Programmes:

All NGOs in Satara district have actively participated in the tree plantation activity. They have also opposed to tree cuttings and filed cases against the violators of environmental laws.

8] Inclusion of the 'Koyana Sanctuary' into World Heritage Centers:

All environmental NGOs in Satara district have been trying to include Koyana Sanctuary into the World Heritage

Centers since last two decades. They organized rallies, road shows, memorandum, demonstrations, sitting agitations, experts' lectures for inclusion of Koyana sanctuary. Ultimately they have succeeded and the UNESCO has declared it into the World Heritage Centers.

9] Conservation of the Ajinkyatara Fort:

The NGOs have initiated a collective movement to save the Ajinkyatara fort. The daily Sakal has taken initiative for creating awareness about the fort and published contribution of various NGOs and given appropriate place in the newspaper.

10] The Documentation and Publication:

Dr. Vishwas Deshpande, the president of the Environmental Nature Conservation Association has been publishing a quarterly journal which is a bilingual journal with articles related to nature and conservation of nature for the past three years.

11] Organization of Human Rally or Chain:

The people from different strata including doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers, social workers, activists, shopkeepers, students, workers and reporters came together and formed two km human chain on World Environment Day for creating awareness about environmental conservation. They gave slogans by hanging banners in neck and after that they took an oath for the protection of environment. All NGOs had prepared some pamphlets and distributed them among people.

12] Establishment of Eco-Club:

The Centre for Environment Education Central India Regional Office, Pune, had commenced the Sahyadri Eco-Club Programme in 21 schools of Satara District. The main objective of the Eco-Club was to inculcate the importance of nature among the students. Those schools are providing special training about the protection and nourishment of nature. The 'Astha' NGO is giving guidance on rain harvesting, water shade development and solid waste management. This environmental education is given through direct action programmes. The essay competitions, elocution competitions, rallies and exhibitions are organized for creating awareness among masses.

I] Conclusion:

The rise in the local environmental problems and along with them increasing felt need to address these issues environmental NGOs have emerged in Satara district. The environmental NGOs emerged from civil society. The nature of organizations (NGOs) are non-profit basis. The environmental NGOs in Satara district have been playing a crucial role in creating environment awareness among masses. They have undertaken various environmental awareness programmes/activities and action programmes for environmental protection and conservation. The environmental NGOs played effective role for protection of environment and the most important achievements of the environmental movements have taken shape in Satara District.

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