END OF THE BEGINNING...

The month long Kanyakumari March along both the east and west coasts of India, initiated by the National Fishermen’s Forum with the solidarity of like minded organisations, culminated in Kanyakumari on May 1, 1989. The March had begun simultaneously in West Bengal and Maharashtra on April 2nd and travelled along the entire length of the coastal states highlighting issues related to the theme—“Protect Water, Protect Life”. 

The March was the resultant of a two fold realisation that firstly, the survival question of the traditional fisherfolk is related to the ecological destruction of the marine system as a result of over-exploitation of fish resources and secondly, the soundness of marine ecology is linked with inland water system which is getting affected by large scale pollution of rivers, the prevention of free flow of water by building big dams, the dumping of nuclear wastes, etc. Thus, the March incorporated a number of issues related to the destruction of ecology and environment and opened up the possibility of many environmental movements to come under a common platform to voice the importance of preserving the ecology.

The destruction of ecology as a result of denuding the mangrove forests at Sunderbans, missile testing range at Balijiapal, promotion of tourism at Goa, Puri and Madras, industrial pollution of inland water systems in Karnataka, West Bengal and Kerala, construction of nuclear power projects at Koodangulam were the major issues that figured during the March. In each state, thousands of people representing the above movements joined hands with the traditional fisherfolk in this major event.

On May 1, it was a real celebration of solidarity. Thousands of people moved around having a look at the exhibition on various aspects of water and life, and enjoyed cultural programmes and films. At 3.00 p.m., the line up for the rally began with more than 10,000 people participating, calling powerful slogans to protect water and life. In a beautiful ceremony at the confluence of the seas, they took an oath to conserve the environment, to protect water from excessive exploitation and pollution and to sustain life. When the rally was returning to the school ground where the public meeting was to take place, the trouble arose. A bus attempted to make use of the gaps in the rally to cut across it. The police made an attempt to stop it but instead wanted the rally to give way to the bus. Some marchers objected and began banging on the bus to stop it. This created tension which escalated when the police suddenly opened fire on the marchers.

In the firing, six people received bullet injuries and were admitted into hospital while many of those who attempted to bring about order contd. on page 7
Andhra Plan To Deprive Tribals Of Land

Plans are afoot in Andhra Pradesh, to deprive the tribals of land, by repealing Regulation 1 of 1970, that prohibits the transfer of land owned by non-tribals in scheduled areas to anyone except to the tribals and to the Government. The implications of this innocent-looking move are serious for the tribals. Moreover, this plan seems to be but one instance in the country-side struggle for the natural resources between the powerful corporate sector and big farmer on the one hand and the tribals and other powerless classes on the other. In every case the state comes out unequivocally in favour of the powerful classes.

Historical Background

The legislative measures meant to protect the tribals are themselves the result of a historical need. The first such measure was passed 150 years ago when the 'colonial government enacted The Garjiam And Vizagapatnam Act of 1839 to set up what are known as the Agency Areas. The area comprises the southern parts of Orissa and seven districts of the present-day north-eastern Andhra Pradesh. According to the 1981 census, 13.35 lakhs out of Andhra’s 31.76 lakh tribals live in these districts. Other areas of Telengana were brought under this schedule. Most of the remaining tribals live in these districts. Similar legislation was enacted also in other parts of the country.

The main thrust of this enactment was revenue and judicial administration. With the realisation that plainsmen were exploiting the illiterate tribals by lending them money at usurious rates and appropriating their land, the British enacted The Agency Interest And Land Transfer Act of 1917. Section 4 of this Act declared any transfer of immoveable property by a member of a hill tribe absolutely null and void unless made in favour of another member of a hill tribe.

The Government of India Act of 1935 reinforced this trend to protect tribals. It put the administration of the scheduled areas directly under the governor and empowered him to exempt, through a notification, the area from all Central and Provincial Legislation. This clause has been enshrined in the 5th schedule of the Constitution.

However, moneylenders and other powerful classes found many devious ways of circumventing these legal measures. The Regulation of 1959 was adopted to counteract these manoeuvres and protect the tribals. Since that too was not strong enough, Regulation 1 of 1970 was enacted to give teeth to it. It declared all non-tribals in the Agency Area to be illegal occupants of land, unless they fulfilled certain stringent conditions. Even after fulfilling them they are only allowed to own land in their possession or partition it by succession. The Regulation prohibits the transfer of this land to anyone except to the tribals or to the government since it originally belonged to the tribals.

The Ground Reality

That law alone cannot change the socio-economic reality is clear from the situation on the ground. According to official statistics, on December 31, 1987, there were 44,379 cases of unauthorised occupation of 1,89,337 acres of tribal land by non-tribals in these seven districts. Studies by non-governmental agencies estimate that in the same seven districts, six lakh acres are in possession of non-tribals. However, though legislation alone cannot be a deterrent, yet if the tribals become aware of their rights and organise themselves, the law at least provides them with the legal possibility of demanding their land back. It also makes it possible for the honest official to check land records and check fraudulent and coercive encroachment.

Repealing the Regulation will, therefore, allow many more non-tribals to pour into the Agency Area, and intimidate, cheat, and in other ways take over land from the largely illiterate tribals. Hence, far from repealing this provision, it is much more important to have a Regulation under the constitutional provision to protect the tribals from such encroachment.

The big farmers who demand the repeal of this Regulation, seem to be working under another set of compulsions. First of all, as
even the AP Government has stated in the Supreme Court, because of the oppression the tribals are subjected to, Naxalism is growing strong in the Agency Area. The non-tribals who are threatened by the Naxalites are today absentee landlords and would like to dispose of their land. Besides, several development projects have inflated land prices. For example, in the Singareni coal belt, the market price is Rs. 500 per cent. The high returns that can be got by selling, the market price is Rs. 500 per cent. The high returns that can be got by selling land at this price seem to be an important consideration in an election year when black money is required. In the Manuguru-Palavisha sub-division where a heavy water plant is coming up, rich peasants from the Yellama Caste (to which Union Minister Vengal Rao belongs) have encroached on government land and want to sell it at a high price.

On the other hand, given the low official price, it is not profitable for non-tribals to sell their land to the government or to the tribals. In many instances, many non-residents non-tribals who were till cultivating their land by using tribals as serfs, have left it fallow. After a certain number of years the government has cancelled the pattas of non-tribals and has handed this land over to tribals.

Haste And Pressure

These and other compulsions motivate the non-tribal rich landlords to demand a change in the legal reality itself. Their first move was to challenge the constitutional validity of the Regulation in the AP High Court which upheld its constitutionality. When they went on appeal to the Supreme Court, once again justices Thakkar and B.C. Ray upheld its validity in their judgement dated July 14, 1988.

Simultaneously, the non-tribal farmers have been pressurising the government to repeal the Regulation. Such a change requires the approval of the Tribes Advisory Council (TAC) which comprises 16 tribal MLAs, the secretary, Tribal Welfare, Managing Director, Girijana Coop. Corporation, Director SC and ST and is presided over by the Minister for Tribal Welfare, himself a tribal. While only two meetings per year, TAC was convened as many as five times during the three months between 28th December, 1987 and 29th March, 1988. In all of them, the main agenda item was the same: Repeal of Regulation I of 1970. The TAC refused to agree to the repeal. Instead, it suggested strengthening this and other Acts by putting them beyond the purview of courts, since non-tribals were constantly getting stay orders against their eviction from the lands they had encroached upon. While rejecting to repeal the Regulation, TAC suggested on 29th March that the government pay market price to the non-tribals while taking over their land distribution to tribals.

However, on 9th April 1988, the Chief Minister convened an all party committee of legislators who unanimously recommended the repeal of Regulation I of 1970. Not surprisingly the tone of the tribal MLAs had changed during the months that followed. At the TAC meeting of 23rd December, 1988, 13 out of the 15 tribal MLAs (one having been disqualified), agreed to the repeal. All the three official members opposed the move. Shri Chada Lingadhi, one of the two dissenting MLAs stated at this meeting that a lot of pressure was being brought on the tribal MLAs to agree to the repeal. That, one can assume, explains their change of heart between March and December 1988. Shri MVPC Sastry, Director, Tribal Welfare, who opposed the move, has since been transferred and the post itself abolished.

Based on this "resolution", on 24th January, 1989, the Chief Minister announced that the State Cabinet has approved the repeal. It does not require to be passed by the Assembly, but needs only a cabinet resolution followed by the President's approval on the Governor's recommendation. Unless public pressure stops this injustice to the tribals, AP will go ahead with the move meant to deprive tribal of their land. If one state goes ahead with it, other will follow suit.

Struggle for the Natural Resources

This is not an isolated move but an integral part of the larger struggle for the natural resources between the powerless and dominant classes. This can be seen in the fisheries, water, forest, land and other areas. In all these cases, the state has come out strongly in favour of the powerful classes as noticed in recent policy statements on water, forests etc. and from new legal trends concerning land, fisheries etc. Thanks to these measures, the corporate sector has been able to turn forest, fisheries and other natural resources into only a raw material for higher profit. Land, water and similar resources are being methodically monopolised by the big farmers. The message is loud and clear.

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Narmada Bachao Andolan

The Narmada Valley Development Project envisages the construction of over 3,300 major, medium and minor dams in the Narmada Valley. In recent years, there is an increasing opposition to the project on environmental, economic and human grounds. The focus of the opposition mainly centres around the two biggest dams—Sardar Sarovar and Narmada Sagar—which would together hold more water than any other dam in the country. Environmentalists and social activists are demanding to stop all work on these two dams till a fresh cost/benefit analysis and a reappraisal of the project is undertaken. Unfortunately, the planners and politicians have chosen to ignore their appeal.

To plan out a more effective, forceful action plan to compel planners and politicians to listen to objections against the project, a group of social activists and environmentalists—environmentalist have launched a movement—Narmada Bachao Andolan (Sava Narmada Movement).

During May 6-7, 1989, the organisers held a conference on the Narmada project in Bombay. Environmentalists, journalists, human rights activists from different parts of the country took part in this conference. A detailed action plan was also formulated in the conference.

For further details, contact:

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A/51, Ocean Gold Apartments, Twin Towers Lane,
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Santhal Pargana Bachao Manch

Santhal, Pargana, a predominant tribal region, consists of four districts of Bihar namely Deoghar, Godda, Dumka and Sahebganj. This region is very rich in terms of natural resources like forests, water and minerals. In recent years, this region has witnessed a rapid increase in the development activities like construction of roads, dams and mining. As a result, not only the environment has got affected but the very survival of tribal communities who are dependent on these natural resources is also at stake. The worst sufferers of such activities are women. In order to prevent mindless destruction of natural resources and to restore the control over these resources to tribals, various like minded individuals and organisations of the region has constituted a forum called Santhal Pargana Bachao Manch (Save Santhal Pargana Forum). To draw attention of the government and create public opinion the March organised a padyatra from Jangada to Chitra blocks of Santhal Pargana during April 16-24, 1989.

The forum seeks the cooperation of all those who are interested in such issues.

For further details, contact:

Arvind Kumar
C/o Santhal Pargana Bachao Manch
Modhupur, District Deoghar,
Bihar.

National Campaign for Housing Rights

Over the past three decades, housing related struggles are being waged in an intensive manner in the country. These struggles are varied representing a diversity of economic and cultural patterns that influence housing in different regions. In recent years, many attempts have been made to carry on the process of exchange of thoughts and experiences related to housing problems. The National Campaign for Housing Rights (NCHR) is one such effort in this direction formed in 1986. The campaign is a wide coalition of activists, professionals, voluntary groups, civil liberties groups, etc.

The campaign has been launched to draft a comprehensive bill on housing rights, to make housing a fundamental right in the Indian Constitution and to support the struggles for housing and housing rights by various sections of people. Apart from other activities the NCHR has submitted a People's Petition for Housing Rights in Parliament in September '88. The NCHR also brings out monthly newsletter—"Housing Struggle".

For further details, contact:

National Campaign for Housing Rights
36/1A, Gorcha Road,
Calcutta - 700 019
**Coming Events**

**Meeting on Canal Irrigation and Environmental Degradation**

Every year, large tracts of land in get waterlogged and saline due to canal irrigation systems in the country. Besides, canal irrigation also promote the use of high yielding varieties of seeds, pesticides and insecticides. As a result, such areas have witnessed increase in the waterlogged areas, increasing cost of production, monoculture plantations and deteriorating ecological balance. In order to understand such problems and evolve solutions to it, an action group called Baba Shri Nath Shiksha Samsthana has organised a 4-day meeting at Sultanpur, Uttar Pradesh, during June 8-11, 1989. A large number of agricultural scientist, researchers, environmentalists and farmers are expected to take part in this meeting.

For further details, contact:
Dr. Krishna Kumar
C/o Communication Centre
Village - Pura Paholwani
Dist. Kuriabhar - 228 151
Sultanpur
Uttar Pradesh

**International Conference on Environmental Education**

The third International Conference on Environmental Education will be held during October 3-7, 1989 at Goa in India. Organised by the Indian Environmental Society in association with many other agencies, the conference will be attended by large number of participants from different parts of the world. The theme of the conference is—Environmental Education for Sustainable Development. The purpose of the conference is to develop specific projects of cooperation and follow-up activities related to the theme.

For further details:
Dr. Desh Bandhu
U-112A (3rd Floor)
Vikas Marg
Delhi - 110 092

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**Workshop on Regenerating Nature**

The day long workshop on the theme, "Regenerating Nature: The Wastelands Development Approach" was organised on May 5, 1989 at New Delhi. This workshop was jointly organised by the Indian Institute of Public Administration and the NGO Steering Committee on Social Forestry. The aim of the workshop was to review the activities of the National Wasteland Development Board and discuss the implications of new developments taken place in the areas of forestry and wasteland. Over 35 participants working on this issue in the country took part in the workshop.

For further details, contact: Shekhar Singh, Indian Institute of Public Administration, Indraprastha Estate, NEW DELHI-110 002.
Land and Water Review

This is a quarterly journal brought out by the forum for People Oriented Water Utilisation (POWU). The journal contains information related to campaigns against big dams and alternate water and land management techniques. The yearly subscription of the journal is Rs. 25.

For further details, contact :
POWU
C/o Kiran More,
92, Misty Park
B. Desai Road,
Bombay - 400 036

Development Network

Development Network is an activity of the Barbara World Library and Documentation Centre, aiming to create an atmosphere of sharing and learning between those groups and individuals who are involved in the development programmes in India. The network is organised by bringing out a series of newsletters with relevant information on such issues.

For further details, contact :
Development Network
Post Box No. 843,
Deccan Gymkhana
Pune - 411 004

Major Victory for Rainforests

In a major development for the world’s environment, the World Bank and the Brazilian government have withdrawn a proposed US $ 500 million (Rs. 800 crore) loan for dams in the Amazon rainforests. Instead, the World Bank and Brazil have agreed to propose a loan of $ 400 million (Rs. 650 crore) for environmental protection and energy conservation.

This historic decision by Brazil and World Bank shows that environmentally concerned citizens working together in developed and developing countries can effect change in the policies of the most powerful institutions in the world. The decision marks a turning point in people’s collective efforts to save the natural resources from mindless destruction.

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were badly beaten up by the police. Even journalists were also beaten up and their cameras snatched. Thus, the end of the month-long march was not quite happy.

Nevertheless, the March had tried and achieved in linking the isolated struggles of various groups and regions into a national struggle for the protection of waters and thus the life in the country.

While commenting on the end of the month-long March, an eminent activist has very rightly said, “This is not the end nor even the beginning of the end. It is the end of the beginning of a people’s struggle for their right to a healthy ecology and environment.”
Women, Development and Ecology

STAYING ALIVE
Women, Ecology and Survival in India

Vandana Shiva

Published by:
Kali For Women, N-84,
Panchshila Park,
New Delhi - 110017
Price : Hardbound - Rs. 125
Paperback - Rs. 75

There is no denying the fact that the destruction of the environment poses the biggest threat to marginal cultures like that of the tribal, nomad and fisherfolk who have been dependent on their immediate environment for their sheer survival. But the maximum impact of this environmental destruction is on women because their working day get drastically lengthened by scarcity of water, fuel and fodder and their traditional skills and occupations are being displaced by new technologies. This destruction is taking place in the name of development and progress.

The book under review is an attempt to articulate how Indian rural women who are still embedded in nature, experience ecological destruction and its causes and how they have conceived and initiated processes to arrest the destruction of nature and begin its regeneration. The book focuses on science and development as patriarchal projects as they are thought to be class, culture and gender neutral. The author presents a critique of modern science and technology as a patriarchal, colonial project. "Seen from the experiences of third world women, the modes of thinking and action that pass for science and development are not universal and humanly inclusive, as they are made out to be: modern science and development are projects of male, western origin, both historically and ideologically. They are the latest and most brutal expression of a patriarchal ideology which is threatening to annihilate nature and the entire human species" argues the author.

The author attempts to focus, through an evaluation of various studies in different fields, how a technological approach to development has been destructive of nature, of women's skills and expertise of the survival base of the poor and of sustenance of life as a criterion for production. The author projects a feminist indigenous culture which she expresses in terms like "feminine principle" Snakti and Prakriti. Narrating the Chipko Movement, the author attempts to combine the skills of integrating forestry, agriculture and water management with a philosophy of nature and knowledge which poses an alternative to modern specialisation and the promise of technological solutions:

The book has given a crucial impetus to the debate on science and technology and ecology, not only by showing the destructive effects of such approaches but also by drawing on the traditional skills of women.

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clear: the natural resources are for the corporate sector and the big farmer, not for the tribals and the powerless classes who have preserved them for centuries.

Walter Fernandes

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