

## **Evolving Environmental Movement through Civil Society**

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### **Abstract**

*In this research paper explores the civil society's diverse role, particularly focus directed towards environmental issues and consciousness. This has mainly evolved, particularly after world war owing to large scale devastation and destruction to natural resources including fauna and flora. Environment has been prominent part of any political, economic and social agenda after the world war owing to expansion consumerism and new global economy. The present write-up has divided into three broad sections- the first section is very important to know the consciousness and awareness of environment and human interface; second section deals about civil society (NGOs): concept, its diverse nature and more focused on civil society's structure and functions. Third section focused on success stories on civil society and environment both international level and within country.*

**Keywords:** Totem, Social fact, NGOs, NPOs, Green Peace Movement

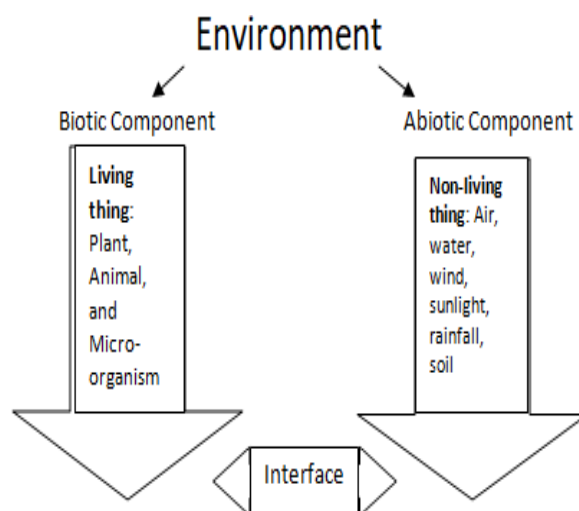
### **Introduction**

The purpose of this research paper is to explore the evolving structure and function of civil society. Civil society thrust upon broad arrays or spectrum from small local social groups (voluntary may be non- registered to registered) Here, the thrust of this paper is explore the civil society's role directed towards environmental trajectory and consciousness evolved, particularly after world war. Environment has been prominent part of any political, economic and social agenda after the world war owing to expansion consumerism and new global economy. The paper structured into three parts to see over mentioned objectives- first is very significant to examine the consciousness and awareness of environment and human interface with increasing pace with time; second part dealt about the notion of civil society (NGOs): concept, structure and functions. Third part core of this research paper is focused on success

stories on civil society and environment both international level and within country. Hence, it will explore the emergence of civil society for protection of ecology or environment at different levels- from small grassroot voluntary actions to as large as United Nations and other international nonprofit organization across the world. It has observed that major functions of civil society to environmental awareness and protective measures, education, human right, child right, women empowerment, health issues and many other components.

### **Environment – Historicity, Significance and Human Interface**

Environmental history refers the history of human being and its interface with nature. The importance of environment is known and traced with the beginning of early human civilisation, whether as a science or religion. It is strongly imbedded not only with all the disciplines of society but our daily lifestyle associated with fauna, flora and ecological system. This significance has developed with the dependence on nature as a whole, which led to its paramount significance on environment and established a symbiotic relationship between biotic abiotic. Most of literature of environmental history has been classified into three important thrusts areas- first, the concept of nature and its dynamics with time and space; second, the impact of such changes in nature and its interface on fauna, flora and ecological system, special focussed on human and their surrounding i.e. land, water, atmosphere and



**Graph-1**

biosphere; third, the most important is people's perception or thinking about nature- which includes people's attitude, belief and values. These are the broad coverage of not only fathomless environmental history but also demographic transition, means of production, technological changes, as well as the production and consumption process. This

relationship among all components of ecosystem can be depicted by the following Graph-1.

Now, we will see the interaction between human and environment as well as its consequences on ecosystem. Broadly, this interaction can be classified into three important categories.

a) **First interaction, intervention or modification:** Here we will see the human action either intervention or modification in natural environment like, construction of dam, bridge and other buildings. These interactions include positive or negative consequences. The usage of plastic and chemical in variety of ways modify the natural process such as increasing use of plastic products, fertiliser in agriculture and medicine intervene the natural process.

b) **Second interaction, adaptation:** In which we see human including other organism adapt with environment for their basic necessity. Here, we see a harmonious relation between human and environment viewed as positive interface.

c) **Third interaction, dependent on environment:** This interaction can be viewed as complete non-intervention in environment and humans are dependent on the environment for their needs like, food, timber, water, and many other resources.

Therefore, the interface of all components/ stakeholders of environment are intermingled and influence each other.

### **Civil Society**

Civil society contrary to state and profit institution encompasses large arena of associational institutions which have many expressions - trusts, foundations, non-government developmental organization (NGDO), trade unions, self-help groups and other formations under the broad category of 'the third sector'. After the failure of the first and the second sectors, namely, the government and the corporate, it has played a significant role in relation to concern for social responsibility, nation-building and other development process. This sector has grown by leaps and bounds, particularly in the last four decades, both within the country and at the global level. World Bank viewed civil society as “the wide array of non-governmental and not for profit organisations that have a presence in public life, express the interests and values of their members and others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations. Civil society organisations therefore refer to a wide array of organisations: community groups, NGOs, labour unions, indigenous groups,

charitable organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, and foundations”

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The concept of civil society subsumes association or organization or institutions get very muddled in practice. All the three concepts- association, organization and institution have distinguishing features. Association refers the short-term objectives and may be formal or informal, while 'organization' connotes a formal organized effort of a group. A more difficult distinction is between 'organization' and 'institution', which is interchangeably often used in voluntary literatures. Where organization themselves or norm of people's behavior became a stable, accepted and collectively valued basis of society's work. Thus the organisation changed into an institution.

### **Structure**

Before coming to the structure of civil society, we must have clarity about its basic nature. Civil society has visualised with large variations in its structure from small grassroots organisation at small village to as large as international level whose branches are spread globally. The structure and types of civil society also varies with many criterion- informal and formal, registered and unregistered, dependence on external funds- state fund/ corporate fund. Under formal registration, again there is five legal options in India- The Society Act (1860), The Co-operative Society Act (1912), The Trade Union Act (1926), The Company Act, section 25 (1956) for non-profit activities and The Indian Trust Act (1982). Most of the early literature viewed two major types of association and non-profit organisations- social influence and expressive type. Social influence types of associations are those, which are designed to act as interest or pressure groups. This acts as a mediating institution between state and citizen. While expressive typology, fulfills emotional needs of its members as a substitute of primary groups (Rose 1954).

Smith and Freedman have been used a variety of bases for classification of voluntary associations but important as following:-

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/about/partners/civil-society#2>

- Size
- Their internal political structure
- Their societal functions
- Source of their support
- Their locations
- The class and characteristics of their member
- Based on incentives i.e. material, solidarity or purposive
- Beneficiary- member, the client, the public or owner

M A Muttalib (1987) identified five types of voluntary associations in Indian situation on the basis of source of voluntarism, i.e.- mutual-aid, philanthropic, religious, governmental, business associations.

### **Functions**

Its functions are in large range of activities, such as small local need to larger needs identified by the local and international organisations, accordingly its role and function evolves. The structural and functional approach mentioned here, with separate sub-heading but both are very much associated and linked.

The nature of functions of civil society varies with time and space. Indian society has long history of charity, welfare and voluntarism often called traditional voluntarism. From last four decades, 1980s onward this approach has moved towards modern voluntarism along with traditional approach. Globalisation and world economic integration also played significant role towards modern voluntarism. There is difference between traditional and modern voluntarism- former characterise with charity, moral and ethical values, whereas modern voluntarism known for activism and right based approach. Therefore, owing to dominance of traditional voluntarism in Indian society, the necessity of modern civil society never felt earlier as much today. However, earlier the discourse of civil society existed in Western European countries and American society, later which has permeated to other underdeveloped countries including India.

Now funding and resource support considered the most significant component for efficient functioning of civil society. Today funding has enhanced not only the volume of modern civil society but also the nature of its function, which was not major concern in traditional voluntarism. Secondly, civil society is dynamic in playing new roles- from non-profit venture to becoming profit social enterprises, supporting government institution for people's legitimacy. After globalisation, this trend has shown an increasing pace with increasing corporate organisations and their sister charity wings.

### **Civil Society and Environmental Movement**

After the world war, world has faced ill effects of conflict and destruction led to forced all to follow a peaceful norms, develop an institution to work for conflict resolution and legitimize by the all stakeholders. Voluntary agreement emerges to development of world level association to prevent such conflict and destruction called **United Nation**. Here we will study that how United Nation and other various international organisations played significant and different roles of civil society- direct implementing programs, collaborating agencies, valuable research support, policy making, advocacy and most important as a funding agency. These international organisations worked for almost all important areas as mentioned earlier section in graph-2 (functions of civil Society). United Nation and its various organs played significant role which need to understand and later we study other forms organisations.

#### **A. UN as international organisation**

##### United Nations

This is one important inter governmental organisation to maintain internal peace and security. It has developed friendly relations among nations and achieves International Corporation by removing conflict issues. After world war, world has witness severe crisis and social-political unrest, to remove these problems and move for international peace and security was the major mission of the organisation. It has established in 24 October 1945 with only 51 members states and today has grown to 193 representing states. Besides the number of states membership and world over legitimacy, we can see various branches grown for specific needs. There are almost

61 organisations are direct or indirect monitored and recognized by United Nations including International Labour Organisation (ILO) established before the UN in 1919. Out these 61 organisations 16 are established by UN after its inception.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is one such international organisation established in 1972 for environmental protection whose headquarter is located in Nairobi (Kenya). Here our purpose is to know more about the various functions of UNEP. UN environmental programme focused on following issues.

- 1) Air,
- 2) Water,
- 3) Biosafety,
- 4) Cities and lifestyles
- 5) Chemical and waste,
- 6) Climate action,
- 7) Disaster and conflicts,
- 8) Ecosystems and biodiversity,
- 9) Education and environment,
- 10) Energy,
- 11) Extractives,
- 12) Environment under review,
- 13) Environmental rights and governance,
- 14) Forests,
- 15) Gender and environmental issues,
- 16) Green economy,
- 17) Ocean and sea,
- 18) Resource efficiency,
- 19) Technology,
- 20) Transport
- 21) Sustainable development goals (SDGs)

All above mentioned organisations are monitored and spelled in detail with region specific, accordingly advised the country specific to improve the upcoming threats. It is also advocating for planetary and human health for almost 50 years under UNEP and delivered scientific approach to help the world and understand the damage of humanity's due to carbon emission and resource hungry for development. This is causing to the human health and economics and has supported policy and actions to halt and reverse this damage. The planet spoke up for itself covid-19 hit, hard claiming lives and magnifying inequalities. Our economies are facing deep recession for the first time in 30 years poverty, while the pandemic is driving the world father from achieving the promise of the 2030 SDGs. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres put these issues at the top of the agenda is said that humanity must be peace with nature. Otherwise face problem for damaging like, covid-19 in the future. The harmony and peace with nature required resetting the system for long term transformation of how human extracts and consumes resources. The immediate environmental impacts highlighted of covid-19 such as increased waste and laying the foundations for a green post pandemic recovery.

Apart from United Nations and UN agencies many other international organisation are working hard for protection of environment. Broadly, these are two categories organisation but working as civil society organisations a) Governmental Organisations b) Industry- based Non-governmental organisations/ NPOs. It includes organisations for special branch of industry. Former category evolved for regional political and economic objectives, while global issue, like poverty, food security, health is common objectives of the both categories. These are directly or indirectly focused on environmental aspects.

### **Success Stories of International Environmental Movement**

#### **Green Peace Movement (GPM)**

Green peace movement is one of the important success stories for global environmental movement initially developed in Canada by a small group of people. The Unitarian church support was explicit in this vision of green and peaceful world actions. These activation and foundations of the green objectives is believed that media communication played also significant role to build the world's largest environmental activity which has started in 1971 in



Canada but spread worldwide and become a dominant force for environment movement. The basic objectives of this Greenpeace Movement was to act or protest in Munich where they go to the place where an activity that group considered as harmful to the environment occurring without using any force. Their try to stop their activity by protesting against welling Greenpeace members in boat positioned themselves between Wales and welling ships Greenpeace is a campaigning organisation and organises popular campaign for the following causes:

**The protection of oceans and marine endangered species:** In 1970s green peace movement started with protecting ocean and marine lives i.e. to prevent more than 3000 an endangered sea species the area at Amchitka Island, Alaska, (Canada). A small group of people visited the underground nuclear testing site and their peaceful protest not only prevented the project but later on spread to other parts of the world. As we are aware that oceans have important role of the planet earth and almost 80 percent of the whole life from microscopic plankton to the largest of the breed wheels oceans are also provide half of the the oxygen requirement of the earth. The latest vessels and equipment used to exploit marine life couple with the burning of fossil fuels and dumping of chemicals into the oceans threaten to their ability to cleanse themselves and maintaining a natural balance. The indiscriminate exploitation of ocean causes dead zones of life less in the sea decimation of fishing stocks extinction of whales etc Greenpeace movement played a significant role for saving our sea and ocean.

**To end the nuclear threat:** The nuclear threat is started in July 1945 when US tested their first nuclear bomb near Alamogordo (New Mexico) and few years later in 1951 further launched atoms and claimed it for peace program. However, the use of nuclear power has never been peaceful and always destructive to nature. The radiation not only posed a threat to the environment but also contamination of soil, rivers and oceans causing cancer and other diseases. Green Peace is campaigning to the nuclear power reprocessing and tried to shell into the US nuclear weapons testing in its initial attempt. Since then GPM continually opposes the nuclear weapons but this does not mean you clearly have disappeared it. It has grown to 70,000 during cold war and more than thousand of them were ready to launch at the short notice. However, after cold war it has drastically reduced to 13000.

**Protection of ancient forest:** The world's natural ancient forests are diverse that include temperate forests, tropical forests, coniferous forests and rain forest. These forests are multiple roles to our ecosystem like, balancing of oxygen proportion in atmosphere, controlling rainfall and evaporation, prevention of soil erosion, provide ample resources of food, herbs and livelihood needs. The ancient forests are home to millions of forest people, animals who depend on them for their survival both physical and spiritual needs. These forest are also house around two third of the world's land best spaces of plants, animals and millions of insects, whose futures also depend on the ancient forest. The destructive logging operations and encroachment in the ancient forest are changing the ecosystem, it drastically reducing the biggest forest of the world- Amazon rainforest, Africa's Cameroon rainforest. This is because of demand for cheap timber for the international market as the driving factor behind this forest destruction. Green Peace movement played initial catalytic role to protect and alerted the concern nation as well as suggested the environmentally and socially responsible forest management worldwide.

**To eliminate toxic chemicals:** Toxic chemicals in our environment threaten to the environment not only rivers and lakes but also the quality of air, land and ocean. We are engaged in the production of many synthetic chemicals and products now viewed as a global threat to human health the environment. The world's chemical industry continue to produce and release thousands of chemical compounds every year without any testing and understanding its impact on the environment. In 2019 reported that 53.6 million ton electrical or electronic equipment waste (e-waste) is generated worldwide and every year it added 2 million ton, while India alone creates e-waste roughly 00.146 million tones every year. This is biggest threat to developing and underdeveloped countries owing to lack of recycling/disposal process. In order to prevent these threat the European Union, Japan, South Korea and the States of the USA have already introduce legislation to end its uses.

**Campaign against genetic engineering:** The scientific development in molecular biology has great potential to increase our understanding of nature and provide new medical tools. It is

also used to turn the environment into giant genetic experiment for commercial interest. The biodiversity and environmental integrity of the world's food supply is very important for our survival to put at risk genetic engineering and enables scientist to create plants, animals and micro organism for manipulating genome that does not occur naturally called the genetically modified organisms known as genetically engineer. This also involves in future generations in an enforceable and uncontrollable genetic development. However, there is a major three reasons behind it- 1) genetic modified organisms cannot be recalled once released into the environment for commercial interest, 2) the public is being denied the right to know about genetic engineering in gradients in the food chain and, 3) there losing the right to appoint them despite the presence of leveling loss in certain countries biological diversity.

**Safe and sustainable trade:** Green Peace Movement was never against of development and trade rather suggested optimum and sustainable use of natural resources. However, trade is unbridled purpose of profit making without compromising the loss of nature that often led to all above mentioned fivefold problems. Hence it focused on sustainable use of natural resources and without disturbance or minimal interference to the environmental process.

Green Peace Movement is a popular non-governmental environmental organisation operational in more than 40 countries and an effective international coordination head quarter in Amsterdam, (Netherlands). Green Peace slogan thrust upon “to ensure the ability of the Earth to nurture life in all its diversity” and worked on worldwide with prominent environmental issues like, marine oceanic life, anti-nuclear protest, global warming, ancient deforestation, commercial whaling and overfishing. Green Peace movement uses direct action, lobbying and research to achieve its goals to protect the environment. It's funding and support truly volunteer and as its functioning without any state and corporate. Apart from Greenpeace Movement, there are many other international NGOs environmental/ development success story before after, however, isolated and less popular. These are also important to know Wildlife Conservation Society, USA (1895), Fauna and Flora International Cambridge (1903), National Historical Danish Organisation (1911), Wetlands International, Netherland (1937),

Environmental Defense Fund USA (1967), Traffic, conservation programme (1976), Southern Finland (1980) , World Resources Institute, USA (1982), Rainforest Alliance, USA (1987), International Network for Sustainable Energy, Denmark (1992) , Green Cross International, Geneva (1993), Earth Charter Initiative (2000), Society for the Environment, England (2004), The Climate Reality Project, Washington (2006), Project Green World International, Oman (2012).

### **NGOs and Environmental Movements in India**

India has long historical roots of social and environmental movements. The environment has imbedded in our culture as we consider the existence of gods in each living and non-living things of nature. The concept of ‘totem’ is well known ‘social fact’ in primitive communities and accordingly practiced. India followed the principle “**वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्**” means whole earth as one family including both biotic and non-biotic, wide range of fauna and flora. In this regard, we had various voluntary efforts for environmental protection / nature conservation. Some popular success story is as following.

**Bishnoi movement:** This is well known and truly voluntary environmental movement started in 1730 by Jameswarpanthi, the followers of Jameswar sect (or Bishnoi sect). Amrita Devi Bishnoi, who refused to let the king’s men to cut trees in her village Khejrli of Marwar region (Jodhpur district). This initial resistant against deforestation result that her head was severed and more than 300 people were killed for trying to protect the trees. Popularly these people are a known as religious sect called Bishnoi sect, who are nature worshippers and their movement was completely non-violent. Bisnoi movement played significant role as precursor for further environmental like, Chipko movement, Appiko movement.

**Chipko movement:** this is one important unique movement for protection of the trees or deforestation in 1973 at Chamoli district of Uttarakhand (Himalayan regions). Like Bishnoi movement it was also led by the women of that region and strong opposition for illegal cutting trees by the villagers. Two other charismatic leadership emanated this movement are the leading role of Sunderlal Bahuguna and Chandi Prasad Bhatt, who galvanized this civil society movement.

**Silent valley movement** Silent Valley is an area evergreen tropical forest in the Palakkad district of Kerala. To protect the forest and their inhabitants the Silent Valley movement started in 1973 by the local communities, local NGOs and eminent environmentalists. Government's approval for construction of Kuntipuzha hydroelectric dam across the Kunthipuzha river, runs through Silent Valley evergreen forest. This project has many fold impact assessed- loss of forest cover, displacement of forest dwellers, loss of wildlife varieties of silent valley and submergence of 8.3 sq km moist evergreen forest.

**Appiko movement:** In south India, this is well known deforestation movement after silent valley movement at Salkani village of Uttara Kannada district 1983. Appiko in kannada language mean 'hugging the trees'. The forest conservation movement focused against tree-felling and deforestation in hill districts in Karnataka and Kerala for plywood factories, pulp and paper mills and due to various development projects like dam construction, rail and roadways. Local people have observed heavily reduction in forest cover- from 80 per cent in 1950 to only 25 per cent within 30 years. This is inspired by the environmentalist Sh. Panduranga Hegde and he said that over 30 million people are adversely affected by this phenomenon.

**Narmada bachao movement** This is also movement against huge hydroelectric dam construction on Narmada River, the only westward flowing through Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Since 1985, this protest is going on against the building of dam construction at various level - local effected tribals groups, NGOs, local activist- medha patkar, Baba Amte and other people played important role for this protest. Apart from them many international NGOs are supporting and providing resources for this, a long legal battle further also highlighted the ill effects of high rise hydroelectric dams- large submergence of fertile land, peoples displacement from other places, loss of culture, disturbance in biodiversity.

**Tehri dam conflict:** Tehri Hydro Power Corporation began planning to dam on the Bhagirati river, the main tributary of Ganga at the Himalayan foothill town of Tehri in Uttarakhand (earlier under Uttar Pradesh). This is another popular resistance that started by local people of Tehri Garwal during 1986 and 1990. Despite of the protests it has continued a long time Tehri Hydro Power Corporation began planning to construct dam in Bhagirati River and plans indicated that it would be the fourth largest dam in the world. Sunderlal Bahuguna and people sitting on fast unto death, after assurance from government to improve the project ended the construction. However, it started again without viewing the danger and public policy. Scientists advised that an high earthquake prone area Tehri could easily destroy the dam and kill up to 500,000 people. Furthermore, the Bhagirati is sacred in Himalayan culture, therefore damming the river would be an affront to this sacredness.

Hence, India had long tradition of environmental protection for their survival needs. Whatever civil society initiatives mentioned are only few however, numerous similar initiatives are silent and unorganized.

Finally we may conclude that the dynamics of environmental movements, its important components and their mutual interactions. Understandings of these interactions are crucial to know the dependency between biotic and abiotic components of nature. There are large number of NGOs, NPOs and voluntary organisations engaged in environmental protection activities across the globe for varied way of actions- advocacy and awareness campaign, policy making, research support, voluntary participation, protesting against state and corporate agencies and other role both from village to international level. At international level in 1945, United Nation emerge as largest international association for varied purpose- environmental protection, fulfil educational needs, global health issues, international legal support and other aspects. For this it expanded various lateral organisations and its branches. Thereafter you will read the role of NGOs success stories national and international level.

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