REVIEW ARTICLES

Ecological Crisis and Social Movements in the Indian Himalayas
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According to the conventional academic division of labour Himalayan ecology was traditionally studied by natural scientists, esp. geographers, who focussed their research on the climatic, geophysical and hydrological conditions and the flora and fauna of the Himalaya as a mountainous ecosystem. Human beings were seen just as one part of the subject of human ecology. The research of anthropologists and historians, on the other hand, focussed on the culture, economy and history of the hill communities and showed little interest in ecological issues.

In the last few years a critical discourse on environmental problems in the Himalayas has emerged, bringing together natural and social scientists who are now playing a central role in ecological debates in India. In the following review I shall present some stimulating, and occasionally controversial, publications concerning ecological and social change in the western part of the Indian Himalaya (Uttarakhand) as well as peoples' responses to these changes. The focus is on socio-historical approaches, but an important debate on linkages between parts of the natural ecosystem will also be briefly mentioned.

The ecological debate in India
In the last decade a steadily growing ecological awareness in all parts of India can be observed, which has to be seen as the result of an intensifying discourse on environmental changes and their impact on the people. In this context special attention has been given to the basic natural resources - forests, soil, water and air. One of the main issues of the environmental debate is not only to identify their state of deterioration or degradation, but also to discover the preconditions and reasons for the degradation, as well as the resultant consequences for man and nature. The discussion, therefore, centers on problems, such as forest decline, soil erosion, decline of soil fertility,

water pollution, falling groundwater levels, etc and takes up the processess of "statization", privatization and commercialization of natural resources and their integration into a profit-oriented market economy. Moreover, the debate deals with the linkages between different interface areas (e.g. deforestation and soil erosion, deforestation and floods, water or air pollution and health) and with the question, how far traditional modes of life are seriously affected or even destroyed by changes in the environmental conditions (1).

Since the middle of the eighties the environmental debate has become more action-oriented and sees one of its main objectives in finding solutions for the threatening nation-wide ecological problems. This process is indicated by the still increasing number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which are involved with environmental issues at the local level (these issues do not stand in isolation, mostly they are taken up in addition to long-standing concerns for rural development, social justice, the elimination of poverty, etc.). Supported by NGO-activists, local people have to some extent developed a socio-ecological consciousness of their situation and, rising from a position where they are mere victims of overwhelming outside events, have tried to influence and alter their living conditions, a process which sometimes leads to organized resistance (2).

Besides its practical orientation, the environmental debate has prepared the way for ideological discussions, concentrating on two major aspects: the relation between women and environment ("ecofeminist" debate) and reflections on the leading paradigm of development and the search for alternatives. Both topics are discussed heavily in the Indian context but are finding resonance on an international level as well. In the whole ecological debate the Himalayan region plays a crucial role. Compared with other ecologically degraded areas of India, it is gaining more attention. More

individuals and groups seem worried about its fate, possibly because of its cultural and spiritual significance in the Hindu tradition, whereby the "Holy Himalaya" is an object of devotion for millions of Hindus.

There are, however, further reasons for the interest in the Indian Himalayas. The Western Himalaya covers the river catchment areas of the Ganga and Yamuna with their drainage systems leading to the Gangetic plains. Especially Uttarakhand, which was severely affected by environmental and social changes since colonial times, has become an arena of peasant resistance against official forest policy. The first postcolonial social movement with ecological concerns - the Chipko movement - emerged in Uttarakhand, where it gained momentum and became a paradigmatic case for people's resistance towards ecological deterioration. The "ecofeminist" debate as well as the critical discourse on the question of development refer to a great extent to the Himalayan ecological situation and to Chipko events and ideas. Leading Chipko activists and "sympathizers" from the academic circle are main contributors to these debates.

Changes in the Himalayan ecosystem and in traditional modes of life: deforestation as an ecological and social problem

The main characteristic of the Himalayan ecosystem is its natural richness of water resources and vegetation types. Before the Himalayan mountains were affected by commercial and military interests as well as population pressure the slopes were covered with dense broadleaf and conifer forests (pine, deodar, oak, rhododendron, etc.) from the Siwalik ranges up to an altitude of ca. 3800-4000 m where alpine vegetation starts.

A close forest cover, so the current view of ecologists, does not only benefit the local hill people and their economy but has stabilizing effects for the whole mountain ecosystem and even for the plains: it serves to reduce soil erosion and land slides as it

influences the hydrological cycle by intercepting rainfall, creating soil conditions that allow greater infiltration of water into the ground and modifying runoff precipitation. To the same degree that deforestation progresses, so are the disastrous floods and massive siltation in the plains aggravated as greater quantities of soil and water run down the Himalayan valleys at an even faster rate.

A controversial debate has emerged concerning the wider effects of deforestation. The recently published third *Citizens' Report* of the Centre of Science and Development (1991) highlights the linkages between deforestation and floods by arguing that the Himalaya as the youngest mountain range in the world with still ongoing mountain building activities is highly affected by earthquakes, deep landslides and natural erosion processes so that it naturally constitutes an ecosystem "primed for disaster" (p. 23). Even when the Himalayan mountains were relatively uninhabited and the forest cover intact, major floods occured in the valleys of Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra and "disrupted civilizations" (p. 147).

In its essential statements the CSE report bases itself on the elaborate study of Jack Ives and Bruno Messerli (1989) in which the authors examine critically, what they call, the theory of Himalayan environmental degradation (for details see Ives & Messerli 1989:45). In this theory hill people are considered to be responsible for deforestation (3) and the resulting ecological damages because of population pressure leading to extensive forest use and transforming forests into agricultural land (4).

The blaming of hill tribals and subsistence farmers by the government and public for floods in the plains, the report stresses anxiously, may lead to the alarming situation that forest conservation will be pursued *against* the people in the hills: "the result could be extremely repressive legislation like the proposal to ban shifting cultivation by law or to undertake forest

conservation by throwing the people out (CSE Report 1991:149)".

Traditional forms of hill agriculture, including slash and burn cultivation, are seen as ecologically sound modes of subsistence; and subsistence farmers "are highly knowledgable and intelligent land managers with a wealth of accumulated, traditional wisdom" (p. 63; see also Ives and Messerli 1989:13; 147). Their methods of agricultural terracing and land use changes serve to stabilize the slopes and reduce water run-off. When afforestation is needed, it is for recreating a stable cycle of production and reproduction in the hills, and not for preventing floods in the plains (5). Some effect to prevent *local* soil erosion and shallow landslides is nevertheless not to be denied.

In a recent article the well-known "ecofeminist" Vandana Shiva attacks the CSE argument and blames it not only for its "anti-ecological claims" but also for its not any longer being a "citizens' report on the environment"(6). It is neither called participatory nor ecological; and, she further complains, the authors of the report mainly refer to L.S. Hamilton, a "so-called expert", who gained his knowledge in Hawaii (for details see Shiva 1992:42). Shiva does not deal seriously with the statements of the CSE report, and it seems that she is mainly irritatedby the absence of what, for her, is one of the strongest arguments for afforestation. Instead of polemics, an appreciation of the complex and certainly not simply anti-ecological argumentation of the report would have been called for . Such an analysis would reveal that for the case of Uttarakhand there are, indeed, some questions left to answer.

Ives and Messerli refer mainly to the ecological situation in Nepal where population pressure seems to be the most severe problem. Although they claim that their analysis applies as well to Garhwal and Kumaon, the situation is different there insofar as deforestation, as they themselves acknowledge, has taken place to a much

wider extent, due to the large-scale commercial felling and road construction. Immediately the question occurs: if the great floods affecting the plains are not mainly caused by deforestation, what about the recurring floods of Alakananda and Bhagirathi in the mountain region itself? For answering this question the analysis of the Third Report is by no means sufficient. A large section of the report is devoted to the floods in Garhwal and in the Teesta Valley, but what is presented is mainly a documentation of historical and present flood events and a study of the direct release mechanisms. Deforestation is mentioned only in passing as a possible cause for floods.

Here is not the place for deepening the problem of the relationship between floods and deforestation, but it can be said that a profound and unemotional analysis concerning this relationship, which takes into account the regional differences in the Himalayas, is a task that remains to be done.

To analyze the historical background of the environmental crisis in the Himalaya and the emerging social changes one has to concentrate on the studies of B. Agarwal and R. Guha. Both argue that the forest policy of the colonial and the postcolonial state led to severe transformations in the Himalayan ecosystem as well as in the traditional modes of life of hill people.

The traditional subsistence economies who rely on mixed farming are marked by an intensive use of community-controlled forests, whose "biomass" (to put it technically) is needed in the process of production and reproduction (7). These traditional forms of subsistence agriculture are affected by two parallel and interrelated trends: the growing degradation of natural resources in quantity and quality and the increasing appropriation of communal forest resources by the state (Agarwal 1991:17). It is difficult, however, to demonstrate forest degradation by statistical data because of their inconsistency. Offical data state that 60% of Uttarakhand are forest-covered, but this refers to land under the control of the

Forest Department, even if their is no single tree. According to satellite data the forest covered areas come to 48%. The authors of the first *Citizens' Report* speak, however, of only 37.45%, in which half the area is degraded with poor tree density (8).

Exploitation of forest resources increasingly took place under colonial rule but did not stop after independence. Likewise the process of "statization" - i.e. the establishment of state control over forests - started in the colonial period but was continued in postcolonial times. When large-scale felling in the early years of railway construction led to the severe destruction of forests, the Forest Department was founded 1864 to exert control over the utilisation of forest wealth. In 1878 the Indian Forest Act established the state monopoly over the forests and divided them into three categories: Reserved or Closed Forest, Protected Forest and Village (Panchayati) Forest. Severe restrictions minimized the customary rights of the local people to the resources: Closed Forests were designated only for commercial timber extraction; in the Protected Forests rights of access were granted to local people under highly restricted conditions and with the prohibition of barter and sale of the forest products, but at the same time the forest officers were allowed to give concessions to all those whom they chose to privilege. For the communities free access was granted only to Village Forests, but these forests (often degraded) made up only a minimum of the area available before.

Parallel to legislating its forest monopoly, the state introduced "scientific forestry", i.e. forest management primarily oriented to commercial interests and neglecting the demands of the local population. R. Guha (1989:59) points out that the silvicultural agenda of the colonial officials was the transformation of mixed forests into pure stands of commercially valuable conifers; and B. Agarwal (1991:23) describes how in Uttarakhand oak trees were systematically lopped to encourage the

spread of chir pine and deodars.

In all, colonial forest policy had a very severe, threefold impact on local communities (Agarwal 1991:20). First, it legally cut off an important source of sustenance for the people. Villagers holding onto their traditional economy which basically relied on forest utilisation lost great parts of their forests and were forced to exhaust their now limited resources by overgrazing and overlopping; in the long run the self-sufficiency of the traditional economies was severely threatened. Secondly, it eroded local systems of forest management and local knowledge systems. Access to the natural forest resources was granted to all members of the community and all of them had to be responsible for their maintenance and reproduction. Evidence is given that women, who traditionally provided fuel and fodder, had elaborate lopping techniques that not only served resource utilisation but also increased the productivity of the forests (9). Such practical knowledge, which was not codified but transfered to the next generation as part of the labour process in the form of implicit rules, was easily lost in situations when the labour process undergoes transformations. The third result of colonial forest policy was that it created a continuing source of tension between forestry officials and local people. The previous access of local people to forest resources became illegal through Legislation Acts. Innumerable "cases of forest crime", when people tried to hold onto their customary rights were registered in the following decades. Guha has shown that deep conflicts and even resistance movements emerged out of this tension. I will come back to this soon.

Following Guha, the whole process of exclusion and loss, which the local communities are facing might be at best grasped with the concept of alienation. The now reserved forest, formerly integrated in the everyday life of the people (economically and culturally) becomes "an entity *opposed* to the villager", only "harbouring the wild

animals that destroy their crops (Guha 1991:58)".

After independence far-reaching decisions concerning future economic policy were made by the Government of India. Following the path of development through economic growth and industrialization, the pressure on the natural resources increased. But what does that mean for the Himalayan forests?

Firstly, no major changes occured in the post-colonial forest policy which merely has to be seen as an extension of the policy laid down by the British. Forests are recognized as a renewable commodity serving commercial purposes (10). Primarily they have to supply raw materials for industry, export and defence; only secondarily do they provide local communities with a means of livelihood. Afforestation serves mainly industrial interests (although this policy is being rethought). Secondly, a greater demand for raw material led to an increased extraction of timber which had to be faciliated by the construction of a network of roads even into remote areas. Road building was again intensified after the China-India border conflict in 1962 and the growing military interests in this area. Thirdly, the listing of challenges to the Himalayan forests would be incomplete if one did not mention the mining activities, the expansion of resin-tapping and last but not least the steadily increasing number of pilgrims and tourists.

At the same time the postcolonial economic policy and the increasing environmental degradation has had a great impact on local village communities. Traditional processes of production as well as associated practical knowledge systems and the underlying relation towards nature are further being eroded. The burden of labour for the women who through their activities in the process of production and reproduction are related to the now diminishing forests is immensely increasing. Agricultural productivity has severely declined. Subsistence production is no lon-

ger able to feed the members of the community, they are forced to rely on the market. Dependence on the market has led to male migration on an even larger scale and a dual economy, "based partially on remittances and partially on the eroding basis of subsistence (Guha 1991:147)". More recently the male population has also begun to profit from the local sources of money making (commercial felling, resin-tapping, mining) and so exacerbates the process of environmental degradation. The encounter of two different modes of production in the hills creates further conflicts in the heart of society, bringing women, who are more subsistence-oriented,into opposition with men, who are predominantly oriented to the market economy.

Collective resistance in the Himalayas: the Chipko movement in historical perspective

The year 1973 gave birth to the *Chipko andolan*, a social movement in the hills of Garhwal and Kumaon which fights against commercial felling and deforestation relying on Gandhian non-violent resistance *(satyagraha)* and which succeeded in focussing national and international attention on the ecological crisis in the Himalayas.

The question arises how collective actions with a comparatively high level of organisational structure and mobilizing power could emerge in a "remote" area like Uttarakhand. Recent studies show that *Chipko andolan* indeed has not come out of the blue. On the one hand, it has to be seen in the light of the history of peasant resistance in Garhwal and Kumaon, on the other hand a line leads from the Gandhian wing of the Independence movement to the Himalayan hills and to prominent Chipko activists.

It is the main objective of R. Guha's book to explore the tradition of peasant resistance in the British territory of Kumaon and in the princely state of Tehri Garhwal (11) in order to contextualize recent movements like Chipko. Guha points out that

differences in the traditions of resistance in Garhwal and Kumaon stem from differences in the respective political systems.

In Tehri Garhwal the political structure was polarized between the *raja* (king) and his *praja* (subjects), organized in autonomous, comparatively egalitarian village communities. The *raja* possessed the titular property right over the soil, whereas the cultivators enjoyed the privilege of ownership except for the right to alienate land. It was part of the political ideology that the harmonious relationship between *raja* and *praja* could only be troubled by the misuse of power by the officials upon whom the king relied for his local administration. In such cases of conflict the peasantry drew the king's attention to the wrongdoings of his "wicked officials" by means of institutionalized forms of protest legitimized by custom. This form of mostly non-violent protest was known as *dhandak*; it was never directed to the king himself, but was a call to the monarch to restore justice. The *dhandak* normally ended with a new consensus attained between *raja* and *praja* and the restoration of the king's authority.

Forest management was first imposed in those forests leased by the British and led to severe curtailment of customary rights. During the following years the *durbar* itself realized a steadily growing part of its revenue through commercial forest use and the *raja* consequently introduced a policy of strict "forest conservancy" which followed the British model(12). The villagers took to the traditional form of the *dhandak* to complain against the new forest policy and in the beginning were successful in getting moderate relief. But when the forest policy grew harder and the conflict of interests increased, the traditional method of conflict regulation by consensus lost its impact and the *raja* felt forced to consider new methods to contain discontent.

Political tension escalated for the first time with the *dhandak* of Rawain in 1930, when villagers' protest against limitations on the number of cattle, cattle taxes, dis-

allowance of lopping, etc. encountered military force. An undetermined number of people (estimates vary from 4 to 200) were killed. This incident weakened the already badly affected relations between the king and his subjects such that the traditional authority of the monarchy was undermined.

The next resistance campaign took place in the years of 1944-48, when a widespread movement, the *kisan andolan*, was shaking and finally breaking the traditional power of the *durbar*. Guha explicitly mentions that these uprisings differed from the earlier *dhandaks* in two major aspects: first, the nationalist movement had spread into the Tehri state leading to the formation of the *Tehri Rajya Praja Mandal;* and second, this political body worked as an organizational forum so that several local movements against stately repression could merge. The political aim of the *kisan andolan* was no longer the restauration but the transformation of the existing political structure. When the heavy conflict came to an end, the *raja* had lost his power and the Tehri state was on the way to merge with Uttar Pradesh.

Guha's study points out that political tension in Tehri Garhwal traditionally were answered via a consensus model of conflict regulation legitimated by custom, which only in the course of increasing pressure on the local communities turned into a confrontation model, but that opposition against the British rulers in Kumaon was basically characterized by confrontation.

In the first centuries of British rule in Kumaon the demands of the state were. comparatively light and popular protest was nearly absent (13). Popular resistance in Kumaon started between 1911 and 1917, when the reservation of forests took place and affected the subsistence-based village communities; even the demands for *utar* increased as supervision of forests involved extensive touring by forest officials. The prevailing forms of resistance encompassed mainly denial of forced labour and firing the forests. Reasons for choosing the method of

firing were twofold: on the one hand, the villagers kept up their traditional practices, as in the conifer forests of the Kumaon it was usual to burn the forest floor every year to make room for a fresh crop of grass. On the other hand, it was one of the 'best' ways to violate the British forest regulations.

Already in 1916 the British registrated a number of 'malicious' fires in reserved forests which broke out simultaneously over large areas and destroyed resin channels as well as the young saplings. In 1921 large-scale resistance against the British administration took place. The campaigns were partly organized by the Kumaon Parishad, an association of local journalists, lawyers and intellectuals, which had absorbed nationalist ideas and whose leaders were aware of the discontent of the local peasantry.

The first resistance campaign with a high rate of mobilization, was directed against *utar*. It proved to be a total success as in the end the *utar* system was abolished in Kumaon by the British. Encouraged by this success, the leaders of the Kumaon Parishad began to establish local *sabhas*, esp. in the Almora District, and mobilized the villagers for direct action in order to recover their lost forest rights. During the summer of 1921 forests were systematically fired. The areas burnt down were always exclusively chir pine forests, worked for resin and timber, the areas with broad-leaved forests remained untouched since they were useful for the villagers in the scope of their traditional subsistence economy. In the course of the fire-campaign the legitimacy of British rule was questioned by refering to traditional and mythological symbolism: The British Government was called a 'Bania Government' (which sells the forest produce and therefore the wealth of the people), the King Emperor was compared with the demonic Ravana.

In the following years until independence the peasant revolts in Kumaon did not come to an end but, as in Tehri Garhwal, became increasingly linked

with Congress politics. The local interests of the peasantry could no longer be clearly separated from national interests.

The line that leads from Gandhi to the *Chipko* movement is mentioned by H. Berndt, R. Guha and V. Shiva. Guha seems right in warning not to hallmark Chipko as a Gandhian movement, but certainly Gandhian political ideology and moral conduct has shown a great impact at least on the Chipko activists.

Especially V. Shiva stresses the developmental work of two female European disciples of Gandhi, Mira Bhen and Sarala Bhen, who left for the Himalayan hills in the late forties and concentrated on ecological problems and on the conscientization of women. It is said that most of the later Chipko activists like Vimala and Sunderlal Bahuguna, Chandi Prasad Bhatt, Dhoom Singh Negi emerged from the surrounding of those Gandhian women disciples (14).

Unanimously the work done by the cooperative DGSS (Dasauli Gram Svarajya Sangh) in Gopeshvar and the Uttarakhand prohibition movement in the middle of the sixties are seen as preconditions for the Chipko movement.

In 1960 Chandi Prasad Bhatt founded a workers cooperative in Gopeshvar, Chamoli District (which later developed into the DGSS) to generate local employment by taking up labour contracts and later setting up small-scale forestbased industries. The efforts of the DGSS were often threatened by the Government's denial to grant access to the raw materials from the forest; moreover, holding the resin monopoly the Government supplied them with resin at slightly higher rates than the large industries had to pay. This harrassment led to a politization of DGSS members and at this point the story of Chipko movement begins.

Hagen Berndt gives a very detailed picture of the Chipko events basing himself on an analysis of the Indian press from 1971-1983, including the Hindi press (15). Relying on his work but also taking into consideration Guha's presentation of Chipko, one can identify an internal development of the Chipko movement. Three main stages may be identified.

The first stage of Chipko resistance is characterized by a strong economic impact. The major demands (laid down in a memorandum submitted to the District Magistrate in March 1974) included: abolition of the contractual system of exploiting forest wealth and Erstnutzungs-recht of forests by the local people; promotion of local forest-based small-scale industries and provision of financial and technical support; involvement of the people (i.e. organizations on District level) in the management of forests. The resistance campaigns were localized in the Chamoli District and organizational leadership rested with the DGSS and C.P. Bhatt; the resistance activities were carried out by men, only in the second line by women. At this time Sunderlal Bahuguna started to spread the idea of Chipko into the villages of Garhwal and Kumaon, undertaking several *padyatra*.

The second stage of the Chipko movement, starting with the events of Reni (upper Alakanda Valley), where village women defended a forest tract, is primarily characterized by a spreading of the movement and by an increasing involvement of women. The demands for abolition of large scale commercial exploitation of forest wealth and for regaining local forest control were strongly articulated. But the women put new emphasis on the significant role of forests as resource basis in the traditional subsistence economy. Refering to the Reni events, R. Guha (1991:160) states: "From now on Chipko was to come into its own as a peasant movement in defence of traditional forest rights, continuing a century-long tradition of resistance to state encroachment."

This second phase of the movement is also marked by an increasing publicity even beyond regional boundaries and by the growing attention it was given by the poli-

ticians. The State Government of UP set up a committee to investigate the connection between deforestation and ecological damage (floods, landslides) in the upper Alakananda Valley. The findings of the committee caused the State Government to ban commercial felling in 1976 for a period of ten years in the upper catchment of the Alakananda and its tributaries.

The beginning of the third stage in the course of the Chipko events can be set around 1977/78. The main characteristic of this new stage is the strong ecological impact of the movement, closely associated with the growing participation of women (16). In their demand for forest protection women underlined the value of forests for subsistence needs but with added force stressed the value especially of mixed forests for ecological balance (Advani/ Hemvalghati 1977/78, Bhyundhar Ghati 1978). In this context people started to make use of cultural and religious symbolism. In the Advani forest villagers took the vow of raksabandan (17) and tied consecrated ribbons around the trees marked for felling. With this creation of a personal relationship between human beings and trees they demonstrated their responsibility and willingness for protection. They also met for prayers and recitation of parts of the Bhagatvatapurana.

The ecological and subsistence-oriented demands of women led - as the case of Dungri-Paintoli reveals - to conflicts with men. When the Department of Horticulture planned to fell a large area of oak forest to set up a potato farm near Dungri-Paintoli, the Department officials negotiated the sale only with the men of the village. The men agreed, for they were promised employment and even further advantages, such as motorable roads, bus connections, electricity and a health centre. The women opposed the project, stressing the value of oak forests for the ecosystem and as a source of fodder and fuel. After this incident the question arose very clearly, why women, having an intimate relationship with forests, are not allowed to participate in decision making-processes concerning the utilization of forests.

Local Chipko campaigns came to an end in 1981. In this year the Prime Minister signed a moratorium in which commercial felling in all parts of Uttarakhand at an altitude of more than 1000m and at an angle of more than 30° was to be banned for 15 years. But the end of resistance activities did not mean the end of the Chipko idea.

There are mainly two networks in this idea is perpetuated. The first centres around the DGSS and C.P. Bhatt. For DGSS members the protection of forests is only one part of a wider concept of regional development. They continue their work in the Chamoli District, concentrating on afforestation projects (with broadleaved and fruit trees) and on the installation of appropriate, integrated technology, as biogas plants, low-cost energy-saving stoves, etc. The DGSS supports the participation of women in political decision-making by encouraging them to become members, or even heads, of village panchayats (18).

The second network is closely linked to S. Bahuguna, who devotes his energy to propagate the need for the preservation of forests as a stabilizer of the Himalayan ecosystem. He argues against every form of forest utilisation beyond subsistence economy (19). Bahuguna, supported by the ecofeminist Vandana Shiva, predominantly is responsible for that what is called by R. Guha the "public" face of Chipko (20). He undertook spectacular *padyatras*, participated in national and international seminars, contributed to newspapers and journals: trying to create a narrative of the Chipko movement as a purely ecological and women-based group with a very strong base in Uttarakhand. The persuasiveness of Bahuguna rests not only in his Ghandian mastery of the publicity generating methods of *padyatra*, fasting, etc., but as well in his using modern means of mass communication. Thus in his "advertising

campaigns" he successfully addresses both intellectuals and villagers. Bahuguna recently used his popularity for fighting against the Tehri Dam (Tehri Garhwal) with a more than 40 day's fast, especially drawing attention to the high seismical danger in this area.

Knowing the "private" side of the Chipko movement, the widespread public picture in some way looks like a functionalisation of the movement, its presentation getting modulated according to the theoretical ideas and concepts to which it has to fit. The use of Chipko in the "ecofeminist" debate and in the critical discourse on the concept of development will prove this argument.

Chipko andolan as "contributor" to ideological debates

The involvement of women in the Chipko movement and their deep concern for the forests has given a strong impulse to the "ecofeminist" debate, which is critically outlined by B. Agarwal (1991). Agarwal shows that this debate, originating in the West, postulates a close connection between women and nature, both of which are seen as standing in an inferior opposition to men, who are related to culture.

One of Agarwal's main objections against western "ecofeministic" discourse is that it locates gender relations and relations to nature exclusively in ideology, neglecting the material source of dominance as well as the economic and political structures these ideologies are based upon; it also does not say anything regarding the women's lived material relationship with nature. What is needed, according to Agarwal, is a "political economy of ideological construction" and the credit for having taken a first step in this direction has to be given to Vandana Shiva. Refering to her experience with the Chipko movement, Shiva postulates that Third World women (here she is generalizing in an inadequate manner) depend on nature and natural resources for their daily sustenance and that of their families. She further argues

that women, deeply involved with nature in the labour process, have special knowledge of nature and natural processes. The degradation of nature in the name of development destroys women's sources for "staying alive"; modern science and development is seen as excluding women as "experts" as well as ecological and holistic ways of knowing (see also Shiva 1988). From this point of view Shiva presents the *Chipko*movement as a paradigmatic case for women's fight for survival and for the preservation of traditional modes of life.

Agarwal rightly mentions, however, that Shiva simularly tries to root in ideology the intimate relationship between women and nature. She refers to *the* Indian cosmogony and philosophy, in which nature is conceptualized as *prakriti* and expresses itself as *sakti*, the feminine and creative principle of the cosmos, and in which a special relationship is seen to exist between women and forests. Concentrating on those ideological aspects there is another public picture of *Chipko* movement and of the Chipko women. As a manifestation of nature the women have a special sensivity and special responsibility for forests and the natural ecosystem. The conflicts arising in respect to resource utilization, emerging in a specific socio-historical constellation and being based on different modes of gaining livelihood become overdetermined by an essentialized gender opposition. Chipko women are used to examplify the fact that in women qua their female nature a specific pattern of agency is inherent.

B. Agarwal accentuates that Shiva's theoretical framework lacks differentiations on the material as well as on the ideological level. Third World women have to be differentiated according to their geographical, socio-economical and historical situations, which are determining their relationship towards men and towards nature. Even for the Indian context no basic feminine principle can be discovered; the principle Shiva claims to reveal from the Indian philosophy relates only to Hindu discourse.

Therefore she is neglecting (or subsuming) other religious and philosophical systems existing in India; and even the Hindu discourse has to be seen as pluralistic and cannot be reduced to one authoritative strand.

On the basis of women's very noticable participation in the Chipko movement, it is very easy to label it a feminist or a women's movement. But taking into consideration the organizational structure, objectives and public representation of the resistance, this seems to be an incorrect picture. Additionally, a women's movement is supposed to concentrate on gender relationships. Even though the prohibition campaign in the sixties was a first move in this direction and in the last period of the movement women started to think about their unequal situation (e.g.their exclusion from decision-making processes and from the village panchayats), this should not be overestimated. Agarwal (p. 53) cautiously points out that Chipko "has the potential for becoming a wider movement against gender-related inequalities" and mentions a shift in women's self-perception. The recent development in the Chamoli District may also be seen as a slight proof for her argumen. But in my opinion, even then it is not very convincing to draw on the examples of a few islands of women's politization for giving a judgement on the development of the whole movement.

The ecological conflicts and movements emerging all over India have directed public attention to the resource- and energy-intensive national economic policy and led to a critical questioning of the guiding economic model in India. In her most recent book, which was prepared in collaboration with other scholars, Shiva (1991) critically analyzes this model, giving special attention to the question in which way nature is encountered practically and ideologically.

The economic model prevailing in India, Shiva argues, presumes the universalization of the western economic tradition. It

is based on the ideology of development and progress through economic growth and privileges industrialization and the expansion of market economy. Nature is seen as an object of dominance, free for exploitation. Technology and science are the instrumental means to dominate nature and to guarantee freedom from nature's ecological limits. When Indian national leaders took over this "western" model of development, attention was not given to the fact that industrial development in the West was possible only because of the permanent occupation and exploitation of colonies. To favour the resource-intensive model of development after independence was to produce an internal colonization and marginalization of all modes of life depending directly on nature for survival.

Shiva's concept for an alternative economic model remains abstract and inadequately formulated. She claims a paradigm shift in the perception of progress, development and growth and strongly demands a reversal of the weight given to each of the three fundamental "economies" that Shiva (1991:62) identifies in Third World countries: nature's economy of essential ecological processes, the survival economy of basic needs satisfaction of the people (which are both marginalized and secondary) and the (now dominant) market economy of industrial commercial demands. By referring to Gandhi, Shiva (p. 348) pleads to withdraw from the idea of linear progress and to favour a stationary model of society involving "movement and progression within an orbit". The reconciliation of ecology and economy has to be given priority, development should be "sustainable development", growth has to be "green growth". Having formulated this utopia of a world of justice and sustainability, Shiva does not enter into a more concrete discussion of how to achieve these objectives under the prevailing political conditions, and especially how to transform the national market economy according to non-profit oriented imperatives.

In Shiva's argument ecological movements are the focus of change, as they are fighting for resurrection of the two vital economies. In this context the Chipko movement is presented as the most prominent example of ecological protest (p.109), not arising "from a resentment against further encroachment on people's access to forest resources" but as "a response to the alarming signals of rapid ecological destabilisation in the hills"(21). Like Bahuguna, Shiva emphasizes that ecological movements, such as Chipko, recognize the traditional subsistence mode of production as the only promising economic model, since it harmonizes with nature's economy and tends to stabilize it.

For myself, however, Chipko seems to be an example of a social movement with ecological concerns whereby conflicting ideas of economic future and development can be discerned. Against the "conservative" model propagated by Shiva and Bahuguna, stands the model of "regional eco-development" articulated by C. P. Bhatt. He pleads for political and economical decentralization based on technologies promoting self-reliance, social control and ecological stability (see Guha 1991:182). The participction of villagers and especially women is central to his ideas.

With this concept of development Bhatt follows the Gandhian model of self-reliant village republics, which also is propagated by Anil Agarwal and Sunita Narain, main editors of the CSE reports, in a recent publication on village-development (22). They wrote in the preface to this publication: "The supreme irony behind our entire paper is that nearly 15 years after we became conscious of environmental concerns, we are, at the intellectual level, presenting nothing more than an elaboration of Gandhiji's concept of 'village republics' (Agarwal & Narain 1989:vii)". Even government agencies, when in a self-critical mood, come back to Gandhian approaches (23).

From this review of recent literature it is clear that various alternatives to the prevailing model of development and growth have articulated by prominent activists who have conceptualized the future of the hill communities - speaking and deciding *for* the others. I want to end with the very simple observation that still little is known about the villager's own perceptions of their social, economic and ecological situation and about the way they conceive "development" and future.

Notes:

1. The environmental debate was mainly initiated and later systematically pushed ahead by the publications of the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi: *The State of India's Environment 1982: A Citizens' Report* (1985), and *The State of India's Environment 1984-85: The Second Citizens' Report* (1985). The editors explicitly demarcate their endeavour from that of the government: the publication should be a "Citizen' Report", i.e. a non-governmental but nevertheless authoritative ("factual") publication which assesses the state of the nation and in which a wide spectrum of individuals and voluntary organizations, who work among the people, should be involved (CSE Report 1982: v).

The Indian Government nevertheless has shown its concern with the environment, e.g. through the establishment of the Department of Environment (1980), through legislative a cts and numerous programmes for eco-development. But as pointed out in the second "Citizens' Report", there are many who seem to have no confidence that Government policy will really succeed in protecting the environment and that it takes seriously into account the needs of all those who depend on the natural environment for their survival.

2. For example:the Chipko Movement in Uttarakhand, movements against the building of big dams (Narmada dams, Theri Dam), Appiko Chaluvali in Karnataka and the fishermen's movement in Karnataka.

3. For Ives and Messerli "deforestation" is a

highly emotionalized category meaning "inherently" something bad. They recommend that different purposes of forest use be distinguished: e.g. large scale commercial logging has to be taken different fuelwood cutting and cutting the forest for agricultural terraces.

4. In their study Ives and Messerli mainly refer to Nepal but claim that their findings to some extent apply to other Himalayan regions.

5. The argument of the CSE report says: floods are natural events and people in the plains have "to learn to live with floods" (CSE Report 1991: 152). To discover the reasons for the disastrous results of floods one has to analyse the conditions in the plains (high population density, privatization of land, inequalities, poverty) which are conflicting with ecologically appropriate flood management.

6. Listening to Nature, in *Seminar* 394, June 1992 (Dialogue), pp. 40-44.

7. For animal husbandry the grass-rich areas of the forests and the alpine regions above the tree line are used as temporal pastures. The broad-leaved trees serve as fodder and litter, the manure for the fields is given by the forest in the form of rotten leaves or fermented litter mixed with the excrement of animals. The forest trees provide fuel as well as wood for the manufacturing of agricultural implements and for house construction. The forest is a source of medicinal herbs and also of food in times of scarcity.

8. For the data see Berndt 1978: 35; CSE Report 1982: 39; satellite data for all states of the Indian Union in CSE Report 1985: 80, reprinted in Agarwal 1991: 19.

9. See B. Agarwal 1991: 30 and also V.Shiva 1989: 79; both refer to a study of Marcus Moench, done in Munglori, Garhwal. See: M. Moench & J Bandhyopadhyay, Local needs and forest resource management in the Himalayas, in: Bandyopadhyay et al. (ed.), *India's Environment: crisis and responses*, Dehra Dun: Natraj, 1985.

10. The demand for the "realization of maximum revenue on a continuing basis" is laid down in the National Forest Act of 1952.

11. From 1825 to 1949 Uttarakhand was divided into the British territory (including Kumaon and the eastern part of Garhwal) and the princely state of Tehri Garhwal. Since 1850 the British had leased large parts of the forests of Tehri Garhwal from the *raja*.

12. The rhetoric of the British forest policy seems ironic, if not cynical: "conservancy" and "protection" factually means: to conserve and protect the forests for commercial feeling.

13. Villagers only opposed (in a moderate form) *utar*, a kind of forced labour where the people are required to provide several services for governmental officials on tour or for white travellers without remuneration (carrying loads, supply of provision).

14. I would like to draw attention to the activities of Gandhian organizations after 1962. After the border conflict with China a number of Gandhian constructive organizations came together and decided "to pool their resources in order to undertake coordinated constructive work in he Himalayan region" (J.P. Narayan). This work was aimed to integrate the isolated border people into the Indian nation and to "build up their defence potential" by making them "enlightened and self-reliant". As yet I have found no information on the linkages between Chipko activists and the *sarvodaya* workers involved in "defence-oriented projects" (V.V. Giri), but definitely, at the seminar which was held on this topic in 1967 S. Bahuguna read a pertinent paper. See Ram Rahul, ed., *Social work in the Himalaya. Proceedings of the Seminar on Social Work in the Himalaya.* Delhi: Delhi School of Social Work, 1969.

15. Among the large number of publications on the Chipko movement the book of H. Berndt is distinguished by the very careful reporting of the events. The other contributions on this subject are mainly articles, scattered over a variety of journals. The literature on the Chipko movement is based, if at all, only short-term visits to the area.

16. Another characteristic of this phase, especially in the eastern part of Uttarakhand, was the conflict between contractors and Chipko members became intensified when police interventions occured: e.g. the Nainital (1977) armed police proceeded against demonstrating people and during the following struggle violent actions took place in the name of Chipko. In Ghyari (1979) armed police were called to defend felling activities (Ghayatri 1979), but had to retreat when the felling was called off by the local administration. Arrests of leading activists became common events.

17. In the Hindu religious tradition a vow taken at the full moon in the month of Sravana; after the puja the worshipper gets a charm (*raksa*) around his/her wrist which should protect him/her against misfortune in the next year. In northern India an adult may tie a sacred ribbon around the wrist of a younger family member symbolizing that he or she will take special care of that person.

18. See "More Miles to Go for Chipko Women", in *Down to Earth* Vol.1 No.2, June 15, 1992, S.40-41.

19. Until 1977 Bahuguna was at one with C.P. Bhatt articulating that forests have to serve as resource basis for small-scale industries, but then he changed his mind and took the opposite stance.

20. The public profile of Chipko -"as one of the most celebrated environmental movements in the world" is opposed to the "private" face, "which is that of a quintessential peasant movement" (Guha 1991: 78).

21. It is remarkable that in the economic debate Shiva does not stress the specifically ecological responsibility of women.

22. See A. Agarwal & Sunita Narain, *Towards Green Villages: A Strategy for Environmentally-sound and Participatory Rural Development*, Delhi: CSE, 1989.

23. See, for example, M.L. Dewan, *People's Participation in Himalayan Eco-System Development: A Plan for Action*, New Delhi: Concept Publ. Co., 1990.

Decline of the Rong-folk:
reflexions on A.R. Foning's "Lepcha, my vanishing tribe" (New Delhi: Sterling 1987)
R.K. Sprigg

The Lepcha, or Rong, tribe has been vanishing for more than a hundred years. Writing in 1875 Col. Mainwaring, in his *A Grammar of the Róng (Lepcha) Language*, traces the 'downfall' of the Lepchas to "the advent of the Europeans"(1). The decline in their fortunes began, he writes, in 1839, with the arrival of Dr Campbell as Superintendent of the East India Company's acquired settlement of Darjeeling; and its main cause was the influx of Nepalese and others whom Campbell had invited to settle in the Company's new and, in his opinion, underpopulated territory. The population of Darjeeling was reported as being only about a hundred in 1828-9, an abnormally

low figure because many of its inhabitants had deserted the area on the outbreak of civil war in Sikkim two years earlier; but by 1850 Campbell had succeeded in increasing it to 10,000 (2). Immigration swelled the population even further after 1856, the year in which the tea industry in Darjeeling reached the stage of commercial production, to meet the needs of the tea-gardens for labour. By 1866 thirty-nine tea-gardens had been planted out, with 10,000 acres under cultivation; and by 1869 the population of the Darjeeling tract had more than doubled, to over 22,000 (3). No doubt the Lepcha population of the District had shared in the general increase during this time; for the 1872 census gives