

ECOLOGY, RESISTANCE, AND THE POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT: ENVIRONMENTAL AND ANTI-DISPLACEMENT MOVEMENTS IN MODERN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This article examines five landmark environmental and anti-displacement movements in India; the Bishnoi movement, the Chipko and Appiko campaigns, the Silent Valley struggle, the Narmada Bachao Andolan, and the Niyamgiri anti-mining resistance, as constitutive episodes in the formation of India's ecological politics. Drawing on scholarship spanning environmental history, political ecology, legal studies, and Indigenous rights theory, the article argues that these movements share a common analytical grammar: they challenged the state's authority to define developmental necessity, asserted the inseparability of ecological and cultural survival, and inaugurated new mechanisms of participatory environmental governance. Rather than treating each movement as a discrete case study, this analysis situates them within a broader genealogy of subaltern ecological thought, tracing how communities historically excluded from planning processes transformed local grievances into nationally significant precedents. The article further contends that the juridical achievements of these movements, culminating in the Niyamgiri Gram Sabha verdict of 2013, must be read alongside their structural limitations, including the persistence of displacement, the asymmetric recognition of women's leadership, and the unresolved tension between environmental protection and social development in marginalized regions. Ultimately, these struggles illuminate the contested terrain of development in postcolonial India and compel a rethinking of the criteria by which progress itself is measured.

KEYWORDS: *Environmental Movements, Displacement, Political Ecology, Indigenous Rights, Chipko, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Niyamgiri, Forest Rights Act, Postcolonial Development.*

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