Chapter 5

Conclusion

The environmental degradation and subsequent climate change is a reality experienced by people around the world transcending countries, continents and cultures. Human intervention in the form of increased use and abuse of nature is one of the major reasons for this alarming situation. Environmental awareness and activities leading to sustainable development is the only possible answer to check the imminent catastrophic impact of global warming and climate change. The fact is that our world is currently experiencing issues caused by global warming and it continues to threaten mankind. The global climate change is already at a critical level, and if the world leaders, scientists, writers as well as individuals do not try to do something about it as early as now, then global catastrophe is inevitable.

One of the greatest challenges facing humanity is environmental degradation, including deforestation, desertification, pollution and climate change – an issue of increasing concern for the humanity. Environmental degradation increases the vulnerability of the societies it affects and contributes to the scarcity of resources. In the future, the continued degradation of natural resources, shortcomings in environmental responses, and renewable resource constraints may increasingly lead to food insecurity and conflict situations. Changes in global biogeochemical cycles and the complex interactions between environmental problems such as climate change, ozone depletion, and acidification may have impacts that will confront local, regional, and global communities with situations they are unprepared for. Previously unknown risks to human health are becoming evident.
An answer to all these problems is sustainable development and ecosocial activism. Sustainability is based on a simple principle: everything that we need for our survival and well-being depends, either directly or indirectly, on our natural environment. Sustainability creates and maintains the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, that permit fulfilling the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations. Sustainability is important to making sure that we have and will continue to have, the water, materials, and resources to protect human health and our environment.

Environmentalism can be described as a social movement or an ideology focused on the welfare of the environment. Environmentalism seeks to protect and conserve the elements of ecosystem, including water, air, land, animals and plants along with the entire habitats such as forests, deserts and oceans. The concepts dealing with environmental issues include urbanization, industrialization, global warming and management of natural resources. The ecosocial activists argue that the effects of human development and activity have altered and harmed the earth’s natural state. Environmentalism works to correct the damage as well as prevent future destruction. Environmental activism has led to an increased awareness of various issues concerning the effect human activities have on the environment. But activism has also played a major role in producing legislation designed to help preserve and protect health and the environment.

Ecosocial activism represents the dynamic reaction and interactions of the public against the impacts of natural or human induced environmental changes, which endanger the ecology and environment. Social transformation for environment and social justice is
the heart of the effort. The writer activists play a major role in formulating public opinion to motivate them to participate in the ecological movements. Social activists are the mediators between those who govern and those who are governed. In other words, social activists act as intermediaries between the ideal society and the actual organizing of social, religious, political and economic life of the members of the community, society and Nation. Activism is an important element in the process of social transformation and a key feature of civic involvement- social participation in civil society.

In many of these contexts, women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than men primarily as they constitute the majority of the world’s poor and are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are threatened by climate change. Furthermore, they face social, economic and political barriers that limit their coping capacity. Women and men in rural areas in developing countries are especially vulnerable when they are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood. Those charged with the responsibility to secure water, food and fuel for cooking and heating face the greatest challenges. Secondly, when coupled with unequal access to resources and to decision-making processes, limited mobility places women in rural areas in a position where they are disproportionately affected by climate change. It is thus important to identify gender-sensitive strategies to respond to the environmental and humanitarian crises caused by climate change. Since women and farmers are the immediate victims of environmental degradation and climate change, their empowerment is the key to sustainability. Most important will be the need to make environmental protection a people’s movement with close, participative involvement of the all communities, to leave behind a better world for our children. The writer activists taken
for study are leading movements like Green Belt Movement, Narmada Bachao Andolan and Navdanya from the front for the restoration and revitalization of the environment. Writer activists especially women writers have a major roles to play in this regard.

The ecosocial activists call people's attention to environmental issues, and try to promote public good, which is the improvement of the natural environment. They play an important role to educate the masses on environmental issues through their writings, and activism. They help social groups and individuals acquire awareness and sensitivity to the total environmental and its allied problems and acquire a set of values and feelings of concern for the environment and motivation for active participation in environmental improvement and protection.

This thesis was an attempt to find out the contribution of ecosocial activists Wangari Maathai, Vandana Shiva and Arundhati Roy towards the protection of environment and promotion of sustainable development through their writings and ecosocial movements like The Green Belt Movement, Navdanya Movement and Narmada Bachao Andolan. It also attempts to critically analyse their contribution to the promotion of environmentally rooted social justice. These three writer activists are the three faces of eco-social activism in India and Kenya, representing women from the third world countries. Social justice, democracy and the environment are intrinsic to their campaigns. Being celebrity writers, they have brought enormous amount of energy into environmental issues to empower the people concerned. They give voice and act as the voice of the marginalized groups to bring about positive changes in the lives of the people and society. Their writing and activism has empowered the women, farmers and the downtrodden.
Maathai’s uniqueness as a leader and ecosocial activist sprang from her dedication to hearing the often-disregarded voices of women. She was herself a phenomenally accomplished woman, the first in East or Central Africa to earn a PhD, Chair a university department, or become a professor, and the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. But as a representative of the National Council of Women of Kenya, she did not insert her ideas about what she thought they needed. Instead, she listened when the rural women she spoke to her said that they lacked firewood, clean water, and good food. If those were their needs, she suggested, perhaps trees would provide.

It was a sensible and humble idea, and the beginning of something monumental. It was the beginning of a rediscovery: that our natural surroundings could and should provide for our families and our communities. And that the sense of security provided by an abundant landscape can be an antidote to violence, oppression, and exploitation. Maathai was not only planting trees: the project became a means of allowing women to work to support themselves and families. It was a practical response which benefited both rural women and environment.

Maathai combined science, social commitment and active politics. More than just protecting the existing environment, her strategy was to secure and strengthen the very basis for ecologically sustainable development. She founded The Green Belt Movement where for thirty years, she mobilised poor women to plant forty million trees. Her methods have been adopted by other countries as well. Through education, family planning, nutrition and the fight against corruption, the Green Belt movement paved way for development at the grass root level. (The Green Belt Movement, Preface ix).
Maathai knew that the role of women in environmental stewardship is powerful -- it is time the rest of us understand this. There are still major gains to be made in combating climate change, improving livelihoods, reducing natural resource conflict and advancing community health because half of the people with solutions have been largely excluded from the process. Unlocking women's potential as "green agents of change" is necessary to realize the full potential of investments in conservation in the region, and around the world and to ensure the long-term sustainability of our world's natural capital. Action by governments, corporations, civil society, philanthropists and communities must be taken now and that action must include women.

Maathai was instrumental in promoting the concept of protecting nature not just for nature’s sake, but for people’s sake as well. As founder of the Green Belt Movement, Professor Maathai helped Kenyan women realize their potential as environmental stewards, and showed them how protecting the environment and planting trees could lead to a better future for themselves and their children. Under her leadership and guidance, the Green Belt Movement planted more than 45 million trees in Kenya. Through her life’s work, Professor Maathai helped advance the cause of women in Africa and promote a fuller understanding of the essential connection between conservation and development. On the global stage, Professor Maathai was a strong advocate for reducing deforestation and the carbon emissions it generates and for climate adaptation, lobbying for their inclusion in the United Nations’ global climate agreements.

The pivotal focus of Wangari Maathi’s ecosocial activism is ‘Tree.’ For her the ‘Tree’ become a symbol of much bigger campaign to protect resources, to respect human rights, empowerment of women, enhance the dignity of the African women, community
mobalsatioin and to promote social and economic justice. Maathai's message was simple: one person, one tree, and she worked tirelessly to build a sustainable relationship between human beings and the land. To her the tree was the practical solution to the complex causes of poverty and environmental degradation in rural communities. It also became an emblem of her struggle for peace, democracy and civil liberties, which threw her into direct confrontation with the regime of the Kenyan president Daniel Arap Moi.

Wangari Maathai's Green Belt Movement is led by rural Kenyan women which began with planting a few tree seedlings grew to forever reshape the political landscape of Kenya and the world. Maathai trained thousands of women on everything from water conservation to civic leadership, and to date, they've planted 40 million trees in a country devastated by deforestation. Along the way, they also helped overthrow a dictatorship.

For Maathai “planting trees is the planting of ideas. By starting with a simple step of digging a hole and planting a tree, we plant hope for our selves and for the future generations” (Noelle web) Maathai, as an ecosocial activist tried to solve all social, economic, political and feminist problems through the Green Belt Movement’s tree planting. The Green Belt Movement is a grassroots non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Kenya that focuses on environmental conservation, community development and capacity building mainly through a nationwide grassroots tree planting campaign as its core activity. The Green Belt Movement was conceived and nurtured in the National Council of Women in Kenya (NCWK) in 1977. The formation was in response to needs identified by Kenyan rural women such as lack of fire wood, clean drinking water, balanced diets, shelter and income. (The Green Belt Movement 22).
The Green Belt Movement, through tree planting as an African ecosocial Movement demonstrated peoples' capacity to play leading roles in communal, regional and national development. Maathai and the Green Belt Movement however have been at the forefront in resisting western imperialism by advocating for indigenous Kenyan systems, which lead to the protection of indigenous local biodiversity and sustainability. For instance, the Green Belt Movement is involved in educating farmers on sustainable farming methods such as organic farming to maintain soil fertility instead of using chemical fertilizers, which inhibit the regenerative capacity of the soil. 'Empowerment of her country men was the underlying principle of ecosocial Movement of Maathai, the Green Belt Movement.

The Green Belt Movement has brought visible changes in life and livelihood of the people. The women became empowered in many ways. It has become more evident to them that, though deprived in some aspects, they have the potential to make a difference in their communities. This has given them a great deal of courage and confidence with which many continue to discover and develop their talents. Some have initiated group projects, while others have become independent leaders and decision makers capable of addressing various community-related issues. (The Green Belt Movement 69). Empowerment has also been acquired through civic education. The Green Belt Movement initiative in Kenya, inspired greater awareness of the need to protect other forest ecosystems in Africa that are under threat, especially the Congo Basin Forest. The Congo and Amazon forest ecosystems are two of the most important ‘lungs’ of planet earth. (Unbowed 274).
There are some visible changes that one could see in the Kenyan women’s life and status. All community members who planted trees benefited from an increased wood fuel supply and enriched soil (through agro-forestry), and from the sale of timber. Even those in the community who did not plant trees still gained from improved environment and scenic beauty. (The The Green Belt Movement 37). As a result of the women’s involvement in Movement, many men have gained respect and high regard for women, in a nation where women’s roles are commonly perceived as subordinate.

Assessing the achievements of the Green Belt Movement Maathai said that by June 2011, it is estimated that The GBM women’s group has facilitated in planting 45 million trees country wide, and although some of these have been harvested, millions are still standing. In areas where the campaign has been successful, the increase in tree cover is impressive to the naked eye. This is the organization’s most visible achievement. (64). The lives of thousands people have been touched in a positive way. For instance, there are thousands of women who no longer walk long distances to fetch fire wood because they now have trees on their farms. It has created employment opportunities for the youth, as it engaged promoters, and tree nursery attendants at the tree nursery level, and mini advisors at the sub-location level so as to increase the effectiveness of the tree planting project. At its most active period there were about 2,600 such employees.

The Green belt Movement has succeeded in raising public awareness of the need to protect the environment. The message of environmental conservation has not only reached millions of people in Kenya but has also extended to other parts of Africa and beyond. The Green Belt Movement aims to create an understanding of the relationship between the environment and other issues such as food production and health. Education
serves a critical role. Children gain exposure through Green Belt projects at their schools; small farmers learn to appreciate the connections between forestry, soil conservation and their own needs for wood.

The Green Belt Movement is an ecosocial movement which believes that a reorganization of the political, social and economical system would be more effective as opposed to environmentalism which merely prioritises green issues with existing political and economic structures. The Green Belt Movement can therefore be seen to provide a platform for women in their earth struggles.

Vandana Shiva is a burst of creative energy and intellectual power. She is one of the world's most eloquent and passionate voices on the environment, women's rights and sustainable development. Apart from her writings on environmental issues, Shiva has supported grassroots organizations in India and around the world in their struggles against clearing of forests, large-scale dams, the industrialization of agriculture and the invasion of multinational agribusiness. She is a determined foe of globalization.

The Ecosocial activism of Vanadana Shiva revolves around the theme 'Seed'. She finds in seed a powerful tool which can feed people, regulate climate change, stop farmers' deaths, empower women and farmers and stop wars. She says: “Control over seed is the first link in the food chain because seed is the source of life. When corporation controls seed, it controls life, especially the life of farmers.” (Shiva Web).

Shiva’s ‘Ecosocial Activism’ is oriented towards Earth Democracy, where all of us being citizen in the planet. She feels that we need a globalization that is based on countries making their decisions, communities making their decisions. The current
globalization is trying to build a roof by eating out of the foundation. And there is a panic because it is a false building and it is going to crumble.

Shiva relates environmental movements with social justice movements, in her interview with Scott London she says “… for me, ecological sustainability and social justice are very closely linked, because my view of ecology comes from the margins of Indian Society, from the agricultural producers who make up 70 percent of India, people who are dependent on natural resources, on biodiversity, on the land, the forests, the water. Nature is their means of production. So for them ecological destruction is a form of injustice. When the forest is destroyed, when the river is dammed, when the biodiversity is stolen, when fields are waterlogged or turned to saline because of economic activities, it is a question of survival for these people. So our environmental movements are justice movements.” (Scott Web).

Shiva’s long experience taught her that the homogenization of crop production was dangerous, particularly at the time of climate change. Unlike native seed strains, developed over a long periods of time and therefore adapted to the conditions of a given area, the seed strains promoted by large corporations required the application of a large amounts of fertilizer and pesticides. In addition many such seed strains were genetically engineered and patented, preventing farmers from saving seeds from their harvests to plant the following season and instead forcing them to purchase new seed each year. Chemical agriculture and genetic engineering are threatening public health and leading to nutrition decline. Costs of production, which includes hybrid seeds and genetically engineered seeds, chemicals and irrigation etc., are increasing with every season and pushing farmers into the debt trap. Shiva’s idea was that a decentralized approach to
agriculture, based on a diverse array of locally adapted seeds, would be more likely to weather the vagaries of a changing climate than system relying only on a few varieties. This idea gave birth to Navdanya.

As an ecofeminist she understood that the empowerment of women can be achieved only through only through the preservation of native seeds for which the women were the custodian for centuries. The industrialization of agriculture took away the native agricultural practices from women, which led to the exclusion and devaluation of women. The displacement of women from agriculture disempowers women and reduces food security. Food systems evolved by women based on biodiversity based production rather than chemical based production produce hundreds of times more food, with better nutrition, quality and taste.

Vandana Shiva’s ecosocial Movement is Navdanya, which is a network of seed keepers and organic producers spread across 16 states in India. Navdanya has helped set up 54 community seed banks across the country, trained over 500,000 farmers in seed sovereignty, food sovereignty and sustainable agriculture over the past two decades, and helped set up the largest direct marketing, fair trade organic network in the country. Navdanya has also set up a learning center, Bija Vidyapeeth (School of the Seed) on its biodiversity conservation and organic farm in Doon Valley, Uttranchal, north India. Navdanya is actively involved in the rejuvenation of indigenous knowledge and culture. It has created awareness on the hazards of genetic engineering, defended people's knowledge from biopiracy and food rights in the face of globalisation and climate change. Navdanya is a women centered movement for the protection of biological and cultural diversity. (Shiva Web).
Navdanya’s community seed banks are living, both in terms of living communities that participate and protect the seed, and in terms of the seeds growing, adapting and constantly evolving. Genetically manipulated seed loses the resilience that adaptive capacity brings. We protect the seeds of life and seeds of freedom. Setting up a seed bank involves collecting seeds, conserving seeds, multiplying seeds and distributing seeds.

Navdanya has led many successful Biopiracy Campaign to protect indigenous food crops. Navdanya started the campaign against biopiracy with the Neem Campaign in 1994 and mobilized 1,00,000 signatures against neem patents and filed a legal opposition against the USDA and WR Grace patent on the fungicidal properties of neem (no. 436257 B1) in the European Patent Office (EPO) at Munich, Germany. The patent on Neem was revoked in May 2000 and it was reconfirmed on 8th March 2005 when the EPO revoked in entirety the controversial patent, and adjudged that there was “no inventive step” involved in the fungicide patent, thus confirming the prior art of the use of Neem.


The next major victory against bio-piracy for Navdanya came in October 2004 when the European Patent Office in Munich revoked Monsanto’s patent on the Indian variety of wheat “Nap Hal” (Shiva Web).
Through the citizens’ actions, it has won three bio-piracy battles and have thus contributed to the defense of farmers’ rights, indigenous knowledge and biodiversity. Navdanya’s focus on collective, cumulative innovation embodies in indigenous knowledge has created a worldwide movement for the defense of the intellectual rights of communities.

Agriculture shifted from farmers’ hands to scientists’ labs - scientists driven by the corporate interests of the Food Industry giants. Processing too slipped away from women’s hands into the mega processing units of these giants. The disastrous results of this greed-led phenomenon upon health, ecology and livelihoods are well documented. In the face of this unviable situation, recognizing women as ‘the traditional food experts, Navdanya launched its Mahila Anna Swaraj programme in 2003, to put back Food Security, Food Safety and Food Sovereignty into women’s hands. The Mahila Anna Swaraj programme operates at several levels. On one hand, under this programme Navdanya sources artisanally processed products from already existing women’s groups such as the Mahila Charkha Samiti and Jiyo or informal women’s collectives as the ones in Mumbai and Balasore. These products range from a diversity of pickles to a diversity of papadoms (thin, crisp lentil flour bread with different flavours), and badis (dried lentil dumplings). They are unique not only because of their gentle processing and light carbon footprints but also because their taste is authentic, original and distinctive; they are as such a symbol of women’s age old food wisdom.

There are about 120 families in Rudraprayag village in Uttarkhand and almost everybody is an organic farmer since who do not use chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Now they all are self reliant: have their own seeds, and make own compost and herbal
pesticides. Navdanya trained them how to increase soil fertility and control pests and
diseases by using available natural resources. Now our crop yields have stabilized and
are increasing every year. In the past seven years yields have almost doubled.
(Goburdhun 4).

Ecosocial activist Arundhati Roy is not only an accomplished novelist, but
equally gifted in unraveling the politics of globalization, the power and ideology of
corporate culture, fundamentalism, terrorism, and other issues gripping today’s world.
While commending on essay written by Arundhati Roy Power Politics Vandana Shiva
said ‘writers have proved that they are powerful when they turn their back to power and
start to feel the pulse of and pain of the society, that is the power Roy brings forth in
Power Politics.’ (Shiva Web).

Roy uses ‘words’ as a weapon to awaken the consciousness of the Society
against the dubious designs of the neo-imperialist forces. It does not bother her whether
it is the American power giant Enron which was notorious for its double-dealing,
corruption, violence and violation of human rights or the world’s largest democratic
government which had decided to construct Big, big dams across the River Narmada
displacing millions of people and animals and plants, destroying the ecology, or the
Supreme Court of India gives its verdict against the ‘Voiceless’or Against the USA’s
foreign policy- the War in Afghanistan, or India and Pakistan for their Nuclear Weapon
Tests.

Roy is closely associated with Narmada Bachao Andolan a Movement which
against the construction of Big of dams as it would displace poor people and cause a great
deal of environmental degradation. For Arundhati. Narmada Bachao Andolan is not a
fight against river or dam it is a fight against the protection of our environment and culture. ‘Whichever the way you looks at it, the Narmada valley Development Project is Big. It will alter the ecology of the entire river basin of one of India’s biggest rivers. For better or for worse, it will affect the lives of twenty-five million people who live in the valley. It will submerge and destroy 4,000 kilometers of natural deciduous forest (Infinite Justice 76).

In an interview given to David Barsamian, a journalist, she says about her association with Narmad Bachao Andolan, ‘When I first met people from the Narmada Bachao Andolan, they told me, "We knew that you would be against the dams and the World Bank when we read The God of Small Things." The remarkable thing about the NBA is that it is a cross-section of India. It is a coalition of Adivasis India's indigenous people, upper-caste big farmers, the Dalits (formerly known as Untouchables), and the middle class. It's a forging of links between the urban and the rural, between the farmers and the fishermen and the writers and the painters. That's what gives it its phenomenal strength, and it's what a lot of people criticize it for in India, saying, you know, these middle class protesters! That makes me furious. The middle class urban engineers are the people who came up with this project! You can't expect the critique to be just Adivasi. You isolate them like that, and it's so easy to crush them. In many ways, people try to delegitimize the involvement of the middle class, saying, how can you speak on behalf of these people? No one is speaking on behalf of anyone. The point is that the Narmada Bachao Andolan is a fantastic example of people linking hands across caste and class. It is the biggest, finest, most magnificent resistance movement since the independence
struggle.” (Shape of the Beast 41-44). By associating her self with this movement she became the voice of the voiceless people.

As Roy readily points out, there’s a limit to the role she can play in India’s environmental politics, since she’s no expert on megawatt power production projects or global economics. But she’s abrasive, poetic, and tough to ignore — the absolute opposite of a sofa-bed. Her powerful voice and equally potent credentials have helped her win a prominent place in the public debate over India’s environmental and social future. *Power Politics* could help bring that debate to a much larger audience than it would otherwise enjoy and help win a fair hearing for the 56 million people for whom Roy speaks. (Michelle web). Perhaps that's what the twenty-first century has in store for us. The dismantling of the Big, Big bombs, big dams, big ideologies, big contradictions, big countries, big wars, big heroes, big mistakes. Perhaps it will be the Century of the Small. Perhaps right now, this very minute, there's a small god up in heaven readying herself for us. Could it be?”(Shape of the Beast 62).

The writings of Roy strengthened the hands associated with the NBA. Critical studies of big dam building began to appear in India in the 1980s. The Narmada Bachao Andolan , a movement of protest specifically against the Sardar Sarovar dam, organized demonstrations and strikes through the 1980s and 1990s. Independent reports, commissioned by the Indian government as well as by the World Bank and the World Conservation Union, were highly critical of the dam, for environmental reasons as well as social reasons, and after much pressure from activists the World Bank withdrew its support. Still, the Indian Supreme Court, after being petitioned by the Narmada Bachao Andolan, decided to let the project go ahead anyway.
Anti-dam activists, including Roy, were smeared in the pro-government press as traitors, and accused of assaulting a group of lawyers at the Supreme Court. There was no evidence for this, but the case went to court, and Roy wrote in her affidavit that this showed "a disquieting inclination on the part of the court to silence criticism and muzzle dissent." As a result, she was charged with contempt of court, spent her night in jail, and paid a fine. Unwise, perhaps; but more people read about the dam problem because of her than would otherwise have been the case.

Describing the role of Arundhati Roy as a writer activist in the downfall of US based Enron Power Project in India, James Hamilton says; ‘it was the biggest piece of inward investment India had ever seen, a $2.9 billion bonanza, but for the Texas-based Enron it was also one of the reasons why the multinational corporation has just become one of the biggest ever corporate losses in the history of capitalism. One of the authors of that collapse is best-selling novelist Arundhati Roy whose Booker Prize winner, The God of Small Things, catapulted her into international literary stardom. Not that her head has been turned by fame. In her book, the Hollywood agents are in the same league as multinationals such as Enron, which wanted to turn her native India into one big franchise. 'Is globalization about the eradication of world poverty or is it a mutant variety of colonialism, remote controlled and digitally operated?' she asked in the wake of Enron's recent fall from financial grace.’ (Halilton Web).

The first dam that was built in the Narmada was the Bargi, completed in 1990. They said it would displace 70,000 people and submerge 101 villages. One day, without warning, the government filled the reservoir, and 114,000 people were displaced and 162 villages were submerged. People were driven from their homes when the waters rose. All
they could do was run up the hill with their cattle and children. Ten years later, that dam irrigates 5 percent of the land that they said it would. It irrigates less land than it submerged. They haven't built canals. Because for contractors and politicians, just building the dam in itself is a lot of money. The Sardar Sarovar in Gujrat is built to irrigate 1,23,000 hectares of land, it will submerge 91,000 hectares. This includes 41,000 prime dry deciduous forest, 249 villages. (Hema Ahmad Web).

Speaking on the number of people affected by the displacement she said “When I was writing *The Greater Common Good*, what shocked me more than the figures that do exist are the figures that don't exist. The Indian government does not have any estimate of how many people have been displaced by big dams. I think that's not just a failure of the state, but a failure of the intellectual community. The reason that there aren't these figures is because most of the people that are displaced are again the non-people, the Adivasis and the Dalits. I did a sanity check based on a study of fifty-four dams done by the Indian Institute of Public Administration. According to that study, just reservoir-displaced, which is only one kind of displacement, came to an average of something like 44,000 people per dam. Let's assume that these fifty-four dams are the bigger of the big dams. Let's quarter this average. We know that India has had 3,600 big dams built in the last fifty years. So just a sanity check says that it's thirty-three million people displaced. They all just migrate to the cities. And there, again, they are non-citizens, living in slums.”

In fact, Roy asserts the dams will cost more, deliver less, and displace more people than the government claims. In the case of the Sardar Sarovar on the Narmada, the government has maintained it was building the dam to deliver water to thirsty villages, a noble cause. Roy is dubious, noting that the water would have “to negotiate its
way past the ten sugar mills, the golf-courses, the five-star hotels, the water parks,” the cash crops, and several big cities to get to the thirsty villages. She considers it unlikely the water will ever reach those thirsty villagers. To update Roy’s piece, indeed the thirsty cities have taken their share (and the government of the state of Gujarat has claimed that as a success as well). The canal delivering water to the parched area of Kutch is sometimes bone dry. (Paige Web).

She is such an activist who does not sit idle after asking questions, she searches for the solutions from the people concerned and also she puts across her demand at every forum that is the reason we can find her raising the issue of dam and ecological destruction repeatedly in her essays and interviews. She was successful in awakening the consciousness of the people towards human intervention in the environmental degradation.

Though the methods chosen by Maathai, Shiva and Roy differ, their ecosocial activism was part of a holistic approach to empowering women, advocating for democracy, and protecting the earth and the promotion of environmentally rooted social justice.

As natural resources become more and more limited on our finite planet, a shift in our world view becomes compulsory. These ecosocialist writer activists envision for a combined movement to end oppression of both women and nature is part of the answer to how we can achieve sustainability on this planet and find our place as a species. We must acknowledge that we are the part of the larger web of life that provides for our survival and therefore it is imperative that we protect that fragile web of life, not as dominators –
men over women, and humans over nature—but as partners with every other life form on the planet.

As a part of the research, I have made a field study of Vanastree—a women’s collective engaged in promoting forest garden diversity and food security through the conservation of traditional seeds and social activism in the Western Ghats. I found it as a micro replica of ecosocial movements of the above writers in this region. Vanastree movement perfectly blends the ideas of women empowerment, native seed conservation, organic farming and forest gardening. A concise report is given in the Appendix.