CHAPTER III

ENVIRONMENTAL NGOs AND ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS

3.1. Overview

This chapter deals with Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations and their movements to preserve the environment. It details the concepts relating to Non-Governmental Organizations and brings out the various environmental movements that have been undertaken by the Environmental Non-Governmental Organization to preserve and promote the environment.

3.2. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

By 1970s, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) have emerged and became well known throughout the world. Today there are hundreds of thousands
NGOs around the world fulfilling people’s participation in different aspects with or without their governmental support.

During the 1970’s the world witnessed the creation of various organizations and organizational groups operating outside the facilitated and regulated governmental organizations. These groups possessed goals such as assistance to women, preservation of the environment, peace, combating against nuclear activities etc., and they created organizations for executing their programmes and plans under the name of Non-Governmental Organization. The United Nations describes Non Governmental Organization as any private volunteer group of world citizens established on a regional, national, or international level and presents their opinions and professional evaluations on issues as well as responds to threatening situations. Generally, these organizations are known as civilian players who operate amongst government and private divisions. They make up a third level that alongside integrating different group’s interests, offers civilians a role in shaping policies and the results of developmental plans.

NGOs include groups and institutions that are entirely or largely independent of government and that have primarily humanitarian or co-operative

98Stromquist, N., 1998. NGO’s is a New Paradigm of Civil Society.
http://www.tc.clumbiaedu/cice/volo1nr1/ns.rts.htm-21k

rather than commercial objectives. They are private agencies in industrialized countries that support international development; indigenous groups organized regionally or nationally; and member-groups in villages. NGOs include charitable and religious associations that mobilize private funds for development, distribute food and family planning services and promote community organization. They also include Independent Co-operatives, Community Associations, Water-User Societies, Women’s Groups and Pastoral Associations. Citizen Groups that raise awareness and influence policy are also NGOs.

The largeness of the rural poor coupled with widening socio-economic disparities in the post green revolution era necessitated the active participation of the NGO not only with reference to the eradication of illiteracy but also in matters like provision of primary health care, road connectivity, innovative marketing strategy for the product of village artisans and spreading awareness regarding the various welfare schemes meant for the rural poor in India.

In this context, it is a welcome feature that NGO’s are expected to play a very significant role in the flawless implementation of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Amartya Sen in his book “Development as Freedom” (1999) points out that development should be seen “as a process of expanding the real freedom that
people enjoy.” Development requires the removal of rural poverty, which is a major roadblock towards the realization of the real freedom of the masses.

The term NGO, has acquired wide acceptance internationally. The United Nations nomenclature of an NGO refers to any international organization not established by inter-governmental agreement including organizations, which accept members designated by governmental authorities, provided that such membership does not interfere with the organization’s free expression of views. NGOs are different from the market induced organizations and other organizations of the State. They are formalized organizations beyond the market and the State, receiving their resources partly from voluntary contributions of the society. The term NGO in India has been used to denote a wide spectrum of organizations which may be non-governmental, quasi or semi-governmental, voluntary or non-voluntary, partisan or non-partisan formal or informal, non-profit or profit oriented bodies, with a legal status and registered under special Acts (like Companies Act, Societies Registration Act, etc.). To be eligible for funding from various agencies, it should have legal status (i.e. legal personality).

3.2.1. Characteristics of an NGO

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1. An NGO is a non-profit making, voluntary, service/development oriented organization, either for the benefit of members (a grassroots organization) or of other members of the population (an agency).

2. It is an organization of private individuals which believes in certain basic social principles and which structure their activities to bring about development to communities they are servicing.

3. It is social development organization assisting in empowerment of people.

4. An organization or group of people working independent of any external control with specific objectives and aims to fulfill tasks that are oriented to bring about desirable change in a given community or area or situation.

5. An independent, democratic, non-sectarian people’s organization working for empowerment of economic and/or socially marginalized groups.

6. An organization not affiliated to political parties, generally engaged in working for aid, development and welfare of the community.

7. An organization committed to the root causes of the problems trying to better the quality of life especially for the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized in urban and rural areas.

8. Organizations established by and for the community with or without little intervention from the government; they are not only a charity organization, but work on socio-economic-cultural activities.
NGOs are also traditionally known as Voluntary Organizations (VOs), Voluntary Agencies (VAs), Voluntary Development Organizations (VDOs) and Non-Governmental Development Organizations (NGDOs).

### 3.2.2. NGOS AND ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS

Basically a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) is perceived to be an association of persons of a body of individuals. Such body with a definite name and objective may be a registered one or unregistered one. But when such body seeks external funding or carrying out its philanthropic or other social objectives, the funding agencies (either international or national) will definitely look for some legal character for such organization. Legal character is acquired only after registration (incorporation) of the association of persons under any of the applicable laws.

An association of persons with non-profit motive may be registered under any of the following Indian Acts:

1. As a Charitable Trust.
2. As a Society under the Societies Registration Act.
3. As a Licensed Company under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956.
Farrington and Babington\textsuperscript{101} believe that in today’s world Non-Governmental Organization possess a high attraction. This is firstly due to the great inclination for nurturing civilian processes and secondly, because Non Governmental Organization is viewed as an element for filling in gaps existing in weak government programs, caused by financial and administrative crisis in developing countries. According to Van Den Ban\textsuperscript{102}, the NGOs perform an important role and affects rural development and extension education. NGO’s have organized extension activities for meeting the needs of groups, selected amongst farmers or rural families.

This organization generally uses the “help yourself method”, which emphasizes more on participation. The phrase Non-Governmental Organization pertains to institutions that do not receive direct government funding and its members activities do not result in government responsibility. At times, this expression has the same meaning as People Organization (PO). This organization is mediating between people and governments that are constantly being established and dissolved. Normally governments play active roles towards this organization as these organizations supervise and control government activities. Recent reports published by the World Cultural and Development Committees state that the number of NGO on the


international level as 28,900 and approximately half of the existing NGO’s in the world are situated in developing countries.

There are millions of Non Governmental Organizations engaged in the welfare of aged, agriculture, animal welfare, art & craft, children, culture & heritage, disability, education, environment, health, human resource, rural development, science & technology, tribal people, waste management, women development and other social and cultural activities in India. Thousands of such Non-Governmental Organizations are engaged in the preservation and promotion of environment. These Non-Governmental Organizations are called as Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations. These Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations have been involved in a large number of environmental movements to preserve the environment by bringing the attention of the government and people. Some of the environmental movements of the Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations in India are discussed in the following pages.

3.3. Environmental Movements

A movement is defined as an instance of moving of a body of persons with a common object and a campaign undertaken by such body to attain those objectives. Movements can focus on any issue that comes under the gamut of human activities, be it social, political, economic, cultural or others. The goal of a movement is to bring about
some desired change in the targeted fields. They can be understood in the context of the societies such movements seek to change. Environmental movements also fall within this broader paradigm.

The ancient societies were mostly unaware of ecological crisis. The awareness on environmental issues and problems began to emerge as they began to pose serious challenges to and started threatening the very existence of human civilization. The articulation and aggregation of interests on environment is mostly a modern trend especially that of the second half of the twentieth century, as ecological crisis multiplied manifold during this period. The environment concerns that crystallized since the 50’s, subsequently have gained an epoch-making prominence in the form of an environmental revolution, especially, since the last quarter of the twentieth century. The resultant awareness on environment is not confined to any particular country or region. It has become truly global and a new environment age seems to have dawned ever since the beginning of the 1970’s.

Unlike the other movements in human history, the environment movements are more radical and progressive. The focus and thrust of these movements have been basically to define the relationship of humanity with nature, to identify the parameters in the process of democratization of resources and to achieve


social justice. These movements are generally non-violent in nature and the participants stress their right to be heard before any developmental policy is formulated and executed.

The religion and culture of India have endowed its people with a consciousness about environment and have sensitized them about the need to carefully preserve the eco-system. The Vedic literatures and Upanishads contained several references to the appropriate usage of natural resources. Accordingly, ‘Dharma’ consisted of restricting the use of resources for the satisfaction of minimum basic needs as using resources beyond one’s needs would tantamount to the appropriation of the resources of others. Indians worshipped and continued to worship every form of nature—sun, moon, sky, land, mountains, water, air, trees and animals and thereby have evolved certain social and cultural norms to sustain and promote ecological balance. It is not argued here that the Indians never harmed their environment. As a matter of fact, most of the routine activities and practices of human beings—be they Indians or others—have been harming the environment. What is highlighted here is to indicate the fact that there has been a certain tradition that looked at the environment as an extension of socio-religious life that conditioned man’s relationship with nature and defined his usage pattern of natural resources. The fact that, two hundred and fifty years ago, more

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than three hundred men and women led by Amrita Devi sacrificed their lives by hugging the trees around their village so as to protect the trees is a pointer in this direction.\textsuperscript{106}

This tradition that had survived so long began to face several challenges since the arrival of the colonial rules with their post-industrialization values and lifestyles. The indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources with a gay abandon by the colonial masters accelerated the process of environment degradation during the British Raj. Developmental activities without adequate concern for environment in the post-independent India replaced the colonial exploitation in causing unprecedented and irreparable damage to our environment.

Historically, concerns against the limitless exploitation of nature have surfaced now and then and the present trends in this regard cannot be considered as some thing unique in human history. There were many instances where people have expressed their resentments, either individually or collectively, to policies, programs and activities that spelt trouble for the environment. But, what is new in this direction since the recent past is the intensity and range of the opposition to such exploitative culture that tends to increase corresponding to the intensity and range of environmental degradation. This trend has eventually paved the way for the emergence of environmental movement in India. As awareness among people increased on various issues like poverty, land degradation, pollution problems, unhygienic sanitation, lack of

\textsuperscript{106} ibid., p. 206.
drinking water etc., especially through the efforts of several voluntary organizations, both India and International, the environmental movement in India became broad based and comprehensive, especially since the 70’s.

The questions relating to the sharing of natural resources have also brought in a conflict dimension into such movement in India. Many of these conflicts revolve around competing claims over renewable natural resources and are manifest in the struggle for the right of victims of environment destruction. Resources like land, forests, and water had been locally controlled and used collectively for centuries. With the introduction of new technology after India’s encounter with colonial rule, a different framework was established for the use of these natural resources. The Colonial domination brought with it a systematic transformation of these resources into commodities that would generate profits and revenue for the government. This transformation, by and large, have paved the way for disputes between the new owner and the original users of the resource base. ¹⁰⁷

However, as noted by Anil Agarwal, “It looks as if environmentalism as an idea whose time has come in India”. ¹⁰⁸ Obviously, the media, politicians, professionals and the general public are turning their attention towards the grave environmental


problems haunting India. Particularly, several voluntary and non-governmental organizations have begun to have constant and continuous attention on various environmental issues affecting India. The fact that the number of voluntary groups engaged in environment duty in India is much higher than those in any other Third World country is indicative of the growing concerns among such groups on things environment. At present, approximately, more than 1450 environmental NGOs are actively involved in environmental duty India.\textsuperscript{109}

Environmental movement in India has been gaining strength since 1990’s as it has begun to involve people from all social strata. The popular resistances directed basically against some of the developmental policies adopted by the state, of late, has been crystallizing as a gallant gate keeping mechanism to challenge the implementation of questionable policy choices by the state. The focus of those in environment duty centers on the issues relating to forests, big dams and air and water pollution.

3.3.1. Forest Movements

\textsuperscript{109}Indira Gandhi Conservation Monitoring Centre: Environmental NGOs in India - A Directory, New Delhi, 1994.
In Independent India, the National Forest Policy continued along the old colonial pattern of the forest policy of 1894. The forest Department’s sins of commission (exploitation of the forest resources) as well as of omission (inability to protect the forest) resulted in massive deforestation. Worse still, many of the benefits landed in the pockets of those people in power centers and business houses and the unholy alliances between them furthered the large-scale destruction of the tree cover in several forest areas in India. Protest movements in different parts of the country arose in response to the threat to their survival base and also in demand for the conservation of renewable resources.

India’s best-known environmental movement is undoubtedly the Chipko Movement\textsuperscript{110} (Hug the Tree Movement) that emerged in 1973 among the hill people in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh under the leadership of Sunderlal Bahuguna. The movement’s success led to a wave of popular protests against commercial logging throughout the Himalayan region. As a result of the novel technique adopted from Gandhian Philosophy, the Movement gained more strength in South India as well. These movements successfully forced the government to formulate a new forest policy of trees but also to abandon the monoculture plantations that challenged the very livelihood of people living in hill regions.

Each of these protest movements had different demands in different phases, but the two of the most common themes were: (i) the forest ownership and management must revert from state to community hands; and (ii) the local communities should be actively involved in afforestation programmes. The intensity of such protests could be judged by the fact that the Draft Forest Bill of 1982 proposed by the government was effectively stalled by the efforts of several key environmental organizations as the bill had failed to provide opportunities for local participation in the protection and management of forests. Similarly the protest movements compelled the government to cancel its commercial afforestation policy in some existing forest areas. The upsurge of environmental protests brought forth significant changes in the draft forest bill and the revised government policy clearly emphasized the role of and the need for local participation in forest protection and development.

Some of the other forest movements witnessed in India operated in the peninsular region against the destruction of forest since the mid-eighties. Two of them are known as the ‘Save Western Ghats’ and ‘Save Eastern Ghats’ movements. Several individuals and environmental groups began addressing the deterioration forest conditions in the Western Ghats. They organized ‘padayatras’ to save the Western Ghats in 1987. More than 160 NGOs- Indian and International – participated in this action program and created a milestone in the history of ecological movements in
India. In recent years, popular protest movements focusing on the protection of forests have successfully asserted the people’s right to manage forests and brought forth significant changes in the existing forest policy to facilitate such local management.

### 3.3.2. Movements against Big Dams

The massive dam projects taken up in the post-independence period included the Bhakra Nangal Project on the Sutlej River in the north, Damodar River Valley Project and Hirakud dam on the Mahanadi River in the east, and the Nagarjunasagar Project on the Krishna River in the south. The Hirakud dam is still the longest dam in the world, the Nagarjunasagar is the largest masonry dam, and Bhakra dam remains one of the world’s highest concrete gravity dams. Through these large river valley projects submerged vast areas of forest and agricultural lands, yet, the huge population displacement caused by these projects undertaken in the 1950s did not evoke and serious popular protest. But since the late 1970s, a new trend of questioning and resisting of such large dam projects have emerged:

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111 Priyahari, Save the Western Ghats March: Voice to Preserve the Future, New Delhi, Gandhi Marg, 1988, p. 112.
The very first movement against the big dams was against the mammoth Russian aided Tehri Dam project on the Bhagirathi River in the Himalayan region since early 1977. The protest of the people was not simply to get a better deal for their rehabilitation alone; it also raised a few other vital questions of the very choice and the desirability of such a massive developmental frame work which they considered lacking in foresight besides causing irreparable damage to the forest environment. The protest is still going strong with demands to bring about environment friendly changes to the original plan.

The Silent Valley Movement\textsuperscript{112} could be considered as one of the most successful and important ecological movements in India. Silent valley is located at an elevation between 2400 and 3100 meters in the Kunthi River area in the State of Kerala. It has a rain forest area of about nine thousand hectares that is rich with valuable flora and fauna. The State Government of Kerala mad a decision in 1973 to build a dam across the gorge for generation hydroelectric power. The proposed dam would have destroyed the rich bio diversity and permanently jeopardized the wild life in the region as it would have drowned huge and valuable forest land mass. The task force set up by the state government to evaluate the project in all its dimensions also reported the likelihood of severe damage to biosphere and the forest and wild life if the proposed project was implemented.

As a result, an assorted group of persons comprising, students, teachers, journalists, scientists, lawyers, voluntary organizations like Kerala Sastra Shitya Parishad (KSSP) and other environmentally conscious citizens began to express their resentment over the proposed project since early 1973. They also established a ‘Save Silent Valley Committee’ to articulate and aggregate the interests that aimed to protect the ecologically rich Silent Valley. The thrust and the strength of protest movement forced the intervention of the Government of India. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered the closure of the project in 1984. As Darryl D’Monte have noted, “it is the most fiercely contested environmental dispute in the country and it quickly symbolized the quest for a new paradigm – development without destruction”.

Two of the interlinked water resources projects of India, the Narmada Valley Project and the Sardar Sarovar Project, have been occupying the centre stage of several national and international debate for the past several years. The Narmada Valley project has become one of the most contentious river valley projects of the world and has generated intense debates and mixed responses from various circles about the desirability and appropriateness of constructing of such a big dam. The Narmada Bachano Andolan headed by Medha Patkar, an eminent environmentalist, has been consistently opposing the construction of such a big dam that would drown thousands of hectares of forest and agricultural lands and destroy the eco balance in that region.

The NBA also focused on problem of rehabilitation of displaced people in new places and the indifferent and irresponsive attitude of authorities over the rehabilitation related issues. They have also been emphasizing that the policies related to the Narmada valley Project were short sighted and formulated hastily without addressing the linked issues adequately. The voice of this movement received due attention in both national and international fora and led the World Bank and the Japanese Government to reconsider and revoke their earlier decision to fund the project. The judicial interventions on behalf of the Andolan also led to the delays in the construction works at periodic intervals. There is another stream of people who favor the construction of the Dam. Narmada Foundation Trust and Narmada Samarthan Samiti are some of the pro-construction groups who have declared that ‘Narmada is their life and this project as their life line’. Though the Andolan Movement has been so far unsuccessful in its demand to scrap the project altogether, the subsequent decision of the government to keep the height of the Sardar Sarovar Project dam at a lower level is indicative of the intensity of the issues involved in the project and the relative strength of the proponents and opponents of the project.

3.3.3. Movements against Air Pollution
The days of innocence, when people genuinely believed that industries and power projects spelt progress for backward areas, are over. Yet those holding position in the decision making structures remain indifferent to the voices of protest and exhibit a tendency to ignore the harmful effects the proposed industries would have on the environment. Perhaps they continue to remain unaware of the strength and extent of new awareness among the eco-conscious citizens and groups in such backward regions. Two such instances that highlight these trends are presented here:

The 2,015-megawatt gas-fired combined cycle Enron Power Project planned to be constructed in a remote village of Konkan coast in Maharashtra was resisted by some sections of the local population. Although the project has successfully obtained all the necessary environmental clearances and is going ahead, the way in which local people have organized themselves to oppose the project and the questions raised by them about the industrial policy of the government are relevant in this context. Apart from this local resistance, the company faced a number of court cases filed by groups on questions relating to environmental safeguards as well as the financial terms under which it has negotiated its agreement with the government. Now the company has come to a decision to close the project essentially due to resistance of local people.

The erection of copper smelter plant by Sterlite at Zadgaon Gram Panchayat, (known as the Konkan Sterilite Project) was initially opposed by the Pancha
and later on it was taken up by Ratnagiri Bachao Sangharsh Samiti, which consisted of members from several professional groups and voluntary organizations. A social boycott by the company employees had also been started against the officials of the company. Finally the company was closed by an order of the State Government of Maharashtra in 1994.

3.3.4. Movements against Aquaculture Industry

Aquaculture is a system of food production as established as agriculture in the human history. However, as the intensity and extent of aquaculture practices increased, opposition to such practices have surfaced, due to the environmental and socio-economic problems posed by these industries. Chilika Bachao Movement is an example of this type of protest movement. Chilika is India’s biggest brackish water lagoon with a surface area of more than nine hundred sq. km. Considering the rich biodiversity in the lagoon, the Government of India declared it as a sanctuary in 1973. The large landmass of about 1,400 acres inside the lake has been a source significant economic opportunity to the local fisher folks. But the Orissa State Government decided to allot this landmass to the Tatas for shrimp culture. What had followed was an intense struggle organized by people’s organization like ‘Chilika Bachao Andolan’, Chilika
Suraksha Parished’, ‘Krushak Maha Sang’ and ‘Krantadasari Yuba Sangam’. The State Government of Orissa, annoyed at these interventions by various groups, began to assert its sovereign right over the lagoon and deprived the fishermen of their traditional enjoyment right of the lake. At the same time, the proposed project of he Tata’s has also been shelved, at least for the near future.

3.3.5. Environmental Movements in Tamil Nadu

The status of environmental movements in Tamil Nadu looks very impressive, as it has become one of the few frontline states in India in organizing mass movements against policies, programs and practices that threaten environmental security. These movements through the effective mobilisation of people for the cause of the clean environment have successfully resisted changes that spelt trouble for the environment. Several environmental groups in Tamil Nadu are very active and many of them seem to have developed some kind of rapport with the common man which in turn has enabled these groups to establish and maintain grass roots level organizations to promote environmental security. These movements have also gained considerable organizational abilities and strength from the national environmental movements such as Narmada Bachon Andolan, Chipko Movement, Save the Himalayas Campaign, and
Tehri Dam Campaign. A few important instances of such mass movements in Tamil Nadu are detailed below:

3.3.5.1. The Movement against Industrial Pollution

A. Tamil Nadu Cements Limited at Ariyalur in Trichi District posed severe environmental problems as it emitted 5.2 tons of cement dust and coal dust every day. The dust cover severely affected the productivity of the farmlands and seriously impaired the reproductive capacity of the cattle population in the region. Hence a movement against the Tamil Nadu Cements Limited emerged. The eco-conscious NGOs, citizens and groups from all walks of life in the area organized themselves under the banner of Joint Action Council of Citizens and took up a massive agitation for more than a month demanding action to protect the environment from industrial pollution. The Council also sought judicial interventions to direct the company to strengthen the pollution control mechanisms. As a result, the company had to install additional pollution control equipments like electro-static-precipitators and forced to modernize the dust collectors at a cost of Rs. 120 lakhs.
B. The movement against tanneries emerged in Tamil Nadu as the units for processing hides and skins, located in several places had been functioning without any effluent treatment facilities for more than hundred years. The wastes from these units polluted the groundwater resources and have wreaked havoc on the environment. The Tanneries at Ambur were discharging the untreated effluents into the 'Palar' River and thus causing significant pollution of the river water and the water sources in the adjoining areas. The huge quantities such untreated effluents posed grave threat to the river eco-system and gradually making the river as a useless water source for the public. So the NGOs, eco-conscious citizens and agriculturalists of the region filed Public Interest Litigation in the Madras High Court in March 1991 challenging the unethical, anti-environmental policies of the tanneries at Ambur and other places. They sought the intervention of the Judiciary to correct the irresponsible behaviour of these units that discharged the untreated effluents into the river. The High Court in its order, restrained the big tanneries in Vaniyambadi Taluk and in other places from releasing effluents that harmed the agricultural operations and drinking water sources besides causing health hazards.

In their joint effort to save the environment, prominent environmental NGOs in the state came together to challenge the State Government of Tamil Nadu Water Tribunal for its act of omission to take action against a number of highly polluting leather tanneries in North Arcot District and other places before the International Water
Tribunal. This was the first instance when an environmental issue in India has been brought before an International Tribunal for arbitration. The state government was accused for its indifference that allowed 500 odd tanneries in Tamil Nadu to get away scot-free despite the fact that they have been discharging large quantities of untreated effluents daily into the Palar, Cauvery and Tamaraparani rivers. It was also contended that such an industrial pollution has affected the surface and ground water sources and turned agricultural lands into barren tracts in those regions. After much persuasion by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, the State Pollution Control Board and some of the Non-Governmental Organisations, more than one hundred tanneries in that area have recently installed a common effluent plant designed to handle about 3,000 kilolitres of effluents a day.

C. The environmental NGOs and the general public of Kurungulam, near Tanjore, took up the issue pollution caused by the effluents form the Kurungulam Anna Sugar Factory and requested the authorities, on several occasions, to install necessary pollution control equipments to treat the effluents so as to minimize the environmental degradation. But the factory authorities failed to respond to the environmental concerns of the local people. The indifference of factory authorities compelled the local people to send a request to the Petitions Committee of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly to visit the factory for inspection and to initiate appropriate action in this regard. The committee visited the factory premises and expressed concern over the
pollution caused by the factory. Finally the factory management yielded to the pressure and installed the much needed pollution control equipments to treat the effluents.

D. The people of Nallur village, near Bhavani, noticed the changes in the quality of the ground water consequent to the release of the untreated effluents from a dyeing factory into the big ponds. The stiff resistance from the locals made the factory authorities to close the unit. In another instance, members of Perunallur Area Pollution Protection Organisation, near Tiruppur took out a huge procession demanding the officials to close the three dyeing and bleaching factories immediately as the waste water from the polluting units began affecting the potable drinking water drawn from bore-wells and adjoining farm lands. The timely intervention by the NGO helped to a larger extent in saving the drinking water resources in that area.

E. One of the popular and committed non-governmental environmental organizations, The PEACE Trust in Dindigul, has organized a number of campaigns against industrial pollution in the state. To expose the pollution problems caused by The Tamil Nadu Newsprints Limited at Pugalur, The Peace Trust joined hands with The Pugalur Consumer Protection Council and organized a human chain protest. They also appealed to the World Bank to reconsider its decision to provide financial assistance to the paper mill as even the treated effluents from the mill affected the residents of the area as indicated by a study conducted by these groups. They also wanted to make sure that the company took all the measures necessary to protect the people and
environment even when the production capacity increased in the years ahead. As a result, the World Bank began stipulating a few conditions to the factory for ensuring the strict maintenance of environmental standards. In a communication to these organizations, the World Bank authorities had indicated that they were aware of the problems of pollution caused by the effluents from the factory and assured to take all necessary steps in the immediate future to ensure that the factory did not degrade the environment. The untiring efforts of the Trust have eventually led to the installing of pollution control equipment at Tamil Nadu Newsprints Limited, Pugalur. In addition to this issue, The Peace Trust has taken up the problems of pollution in a number of cases to the higher judicial institutions as well as taken efforts to educate the people and to create awareness among them about those problems.¹¹⁴

³.³.⁵.². Save River Movements

A. The Cauvery River that flows through a stretch of more than eight hundred kilometers is the lifeline of millions of people, who completely depend on its water resources for irrigation and drinking water purposes. But the Cauvery River eco-system has been severely threatened by numerous industries such as paper, sugar, dyeing,

¹¹⁴ The Office Records of Peace Trust, Dindigul
distilleries, etc., located nearer to the riverbanks discharged large quantities of untreated effluents in to the river. In order to highlight these issues among the general public and to compel the intervention of government authorities to initiate steps to arrest the pollution caused by these industries, The Environmental Conservation Group of Trichi organized a 'padayatra' for a distance of Two Hundred Kilometers under the banner 'Save River Cauvery' during February 1991. The promotional activities of the group have met with some success as these industrial establishments were forced to have a re-look at their pollution control mechanisms.

B. The South India Viscose and other alcohol units situated on the banks of the Bhavani River were discharging a huge amount of untreated effluents into the river and thereby increased its pollution levels many fold. As a result, the water resources of River Bhavani was fast becoming untenable for cultivation purposes as well as posing serious threats to the interest of fishing communities in that region. Hence the environmental NGOs of the region and the Ryots of Lower-Bhavani Project Ayacut together organized a conference in January 1991 to bring to light such pollution problems of the river and requested the government to initiate steps to curb the pollution caused by those industries. In June 1991, a mass movement was organized by the people of Kothamangalam village, near Bhavani to urge the government to intervene immediately in this issue. The strength of the protest movement successfully persuaded the government authorities to issue appropriate directions to those polluting
units to attend to the pollution aspects of their units immediately. A notable feature of the movement was the voluntary and total participation of all sections of the community—a participation that transcended all the artificial barriers of the society and polity.

C. People's Action Committee of Karur, an environmental NGO, has been instrumental in organizing a mass movement involving all sections of the society to voice against the pollution caused by the dyeing and bleaching units in the region. It has also been resisting the plans to open new dyeing units within the municipal area and in the neighbourhood on the banks of the Amaravathy River. Because of the sustained agitation organized by the committee and due to the mass base the agitation had enjoyed, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board was persuaded to initiate steps to construct five common effluent treatment plants involving a cost of more than four crores of rupees.

D. The "Kodaikanal Lake Pollution Case" filed by The Palani Hill Conservation Council in 1990 became an important landmark in the history of environmental movements in Tamil Nadu. The Council sought the intervention of the Judiciary to restrain the Sterling Holiday Private Limited from constructing a resort nearer the lake on the ground that sewage from the complex would result in the contamination of the Kodaikanal Lake, which has been a most popular tourist spot. It was contented that contaminated water, besides polluting the lake, would also pose a serious health hazard
to the villages in the downstream and to the town of Palani. Earlier the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board had referred this matter to a sub-committee of the Tamil Nadu Environmental Council, which cleared the project and affirmed that the proposed resort would not cause any pollution to the lake. The members of the Council warned that the resort, coming up in an area of three acres with nearly one hundred and fifty housing units with five-star hotel facilities, posed gave environmental and ecological problems to the lake. The council, due to its untiring efforts was able to convince the judiciary to issue appropriate directions to restrain the promoters of the resort from undertaking such a massive construction activities that threatened the environment nearer to the lake\(^{115}\).

E. Citizens for Clean Waterways is registered society established with the objective of ‘clean rivers’ through environmental awareness education campaigns and mobilizing sustained public participation against the eco-defaulters. During the last few years, the campaign has progressed through several environmental awareness programs, public rallies, signature campaigns, environmental education programs and seminars. It has participated in the State Government Task Force organized for tackling the problems of the waterways. The campaigners keep continuing their work so as to achieve their objectives of cleaner waterways, environmental education and awareness promotion. Apart from the Citizens for Clean Waterways, a number of other non-

\(^{115}\)Documents and Affidavit copies at the Office of Palani Hill Conservation Council
governmental organizations like Exnora International, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, the Consumer Action Group and the Enviro Club are working towards the goal of clean waterways and keep educating all concerned, more importantly the school children, on the need for clean environment.

3.3.5.3. Save Forest Movements

The Sivagiri Zamin family owned nearly five acres forest land deep into the Kallakadavu Forest area and the Zamin family enjoyed the rights over this traditional property for a long time since the later stages of the British Raj. The Zamin family grew spices in this plot. Later they sold the plot to Mrs. Anandammal. They stopped growing spices, as it has been found not feasible to transport them. So it has been decided by the family to dispose of the trees from the plot. The new owners of the property obtained a direction from the High Court of Madras to fell 93 withered trees and 394 live trees having circumference over 120 cms. To transport them, a link road was needed. In the guise of providing a link road facility, several hundred trees were uprooted ruthlessly for laying 50 feet wide road for a distance of 15km to facilitate the transportation of the trees from the former Zamin land. The High Court direction that
permitted only a 1.5-meter wide road was flayed and thousands of trees in adjoining forest areas were also destroyed with the tacit understanding among all concerned. It is worked out that more than 45 acres of the forestland has been cleared to lay the ling road for 4.77-acres of forest land.

Kallakadavu Peak is one of the many beautiful forests decorating the majestic mountain ranges in the Western Ghat. It is located in the Thalayanai range situated in Sivagiri Taluk of Tirunelveli District in Tamilnadu. This forest is known for the rich bio-diversity and valuable flora and fauna. The water sources from this hill supply water to Sivagiri Taluk, parts of Sankarankoil Taluk, Kovilpatty Taluk and Sattur. The agricultural operation in the entire Sivagiri Taluk is dependent on the rainfall caused by this mountain range. This range is one of two places in the world where, Rose Teak, a rare variety of teak are found in large numbers (the other place where such trees are found is in Burma). Besides a host of wild animals, including the majestic tropical Tigers, are facing a grave threat of extinction. The Tamil Nadu Environmental Council along with 'Save the Western Ghats Group' and Black Theatre, campaigned against the massive tree felling and appealed to the people at State, National and international levels to send solidarity letters/telegrams to Governments of Tamil Nadu and India, urging them to take immediate steps to stop the massive tree felling at the forest ranges in Tirunelveli District\textsuperscript{116}. In response to the above appeal, hundreds of letters and

\textsuperscript{116} Priyahari, Save the Western Ghats March: Voice to Preserve the Future 1988, New Delhi, Gandhi
telegrams were sent to the State and Central Governments by the eco-conscious citizens and groups to take immediate action to prevent the destruction of forest areas in the region. Though nothing much could be achieved, the massive response from the people to the letter campaign appeal, was indicative of the growing concern of the common man on issues that pose serious threat to environment.

3.3.5.4. Environmental Consciousness Movement

Several environmental groups have been organizing innumerous meetings, seminars, awareness camps and public rallies to promote awareness among the people about the need for protecting and preserving the environment. For instance, The Environmental Council at Dindigul, in cooperation with other non-governmental environmental organizations in the region, has been organizing several taluk level seminars for such purposes. Since 1991, the Council has been taking significant efforts to resolve the local environmental problems by bringing them to the knowledge of the district administration through the District Environment Committee. It has worked hard with the local authorities to shift the polluting industries from the residential areas. It
has also persuaded the District Collector to refrain from permitting the establishment of new industries with high-pollution potentials nearer to the riverbanks, ponds, irrigation tanks and agricultural lands.

3.4. Sum UP

Though the environmental movement in India has been taking stronger roots than what it was a couple of decades ago, the magnitude of the unfinished works in the direction of environmental protection and management has thrown up many serious challenges than never before. Various basic differences among environmental groups, right from their perceptions and ideas about issues to the formulation of objectives and the choice of approaches to reach their goals, have virtually denied them the opportunities to work together on issues of common concern. They find it extremely difficult to chalk out common strategies and programmes for concerted action against those who continue to abuse the environmental and destroy the ecosystem. The absence of proper linkages among NGOs in India and, between them and the International NGOs to a certain extent, affect their effective functioning in India. Another reason for their limited achievement lies in their 'reactive' traits. Most of them have been responding to a given crisis situation rather than adopting 'proactive'