Chapter – 7

Conclusions
CONCLUSIONS

... Ecological or environmental movements are not presenting a solution for the crisis of the modern world, and they do not have the capacity for ending development. But they can show the difficulties, shortcomings and limited scopes of the dominant as well as the alternative models for development at the level of action (Linkenbach 1994: 81-2, quoted in Peet and Watts 1996: 35).

While development is a concept and a model adopted by the West to integrate the World and aimed at reducing the gap between the rich and the poor its universal applicability is an enigma. It’s an irony that the development project that has been aimed to reduce the economic gap between two classes of people and also intended for economic development of a nation the very objective is at danger and not fulfilled. Such projects, very often, are implemented at the cost of nature and the environment. In such circumstances these projects not only hit many birds in only one harmful bullet but also create many more problems that are sometimes unheard of. Allied with such problems these projects harm the very basic people for whom they are aimed at. It is especially true in case of India. The theme that has been selected here and has already been discussed in various chapters is basically an analysis of all such harmful effects within an overall ambit of development-environment paradigm. Hence, a sociological enquiry has been undertaken with special emphasis on one of the upshoots of such paradigm i.e., environmental movements in Chilika in this thesis.

Sociological studies on the issues of environmental movements and the forces of development such as liberalization or globalisation, privatization and also on the issues relating to marginalization, economic deprivation and occupational displacement are neither new nor rare in post-industrial India. But they differ in their nature, design and organizational structure. That’s why the CBA has been taken as a specific case study against the larger gamut and design of development. The speciality of CBA is that it occurs in a region which is a small tiny place, but has been proving to be one of the most organized and effective movements in recent years. Its organizational structure, design and grassroots mobilization has been so powerful that it has not only threatened the state apparatus but also challenged the national one. Due to its specific focus of assimilating environment with sustainability against the
class is deprived of everything except a weapon of protest. These protests have been commonly characterized as ecological movements.

The contemporary period is characterized by the emergence of ecological movements in many parts of the world occurring mainly due to competing claims and conflicts over natural resources and the people’s rights to survival. These competing claims originate mainly from the process of assimilation of the global village through the processes of development. Such processes are mainly aimed at economic upliftment by driving away social maladies such as poverty even at the cost of nature. Ironically, these processes have proved to be the greatest contradictions in the Third World countries, especially in India. The CBA is only one such example. It has emerged as the people’s grassroots response to the new threat of development for their survival and as a demand for the ecological conservation of vital life-support system. In otherwords, in the context of a limited resource base and unlimited development aspirations, ecology movements have initiated a new political struggle for safeguarding the interests and survival of the poor and the marginalized.

The thesis has not only discussed all these issues in its various preceding chapters but also tried to focus on different objectives that form its main thrust.

Objectives analyzed

The Indian state has adopted a policy of national development by adopting the liberalization policy for which it has given emphasis on industrialization and urbanization without realizing its undesirable side effects. It has been frequently noticed that in India, many national projects which are presented as beneficial for the country have ultimately ended in fiasco for the large poor mass. The present study that has been attempted is basically a proof of this credential and feature of India through this case study. Attempts have been made to approach the problem through unbiased research through a sociological probing. The issues related to globalization and environment have been discussed in detail with the objective to examine their overall impact within a framework of society-nature relationship. From the findings of the study, both conceptually and analytically, it has been observed that the practice of shrimp farming in Chilika Lake through the process of current liberalization policy
and market economy of the state of Orissa has posed a direct threat to the rural fisher-folk and their livelihood patterns. Not surprisingly, the social consequences of this shrimp culture, as a process of economic development by the state have encompassed issues of social equity, loss of goods from coastal ecosystem, property and land rights etc. posing a threat to the poor fisher-folk near inhabiting the Lake area. Thus the first objective of the study has been looked into and explored with the finding that the current phase of globalization, a product of debt crisis caused by the model of development based on liberalization and industrialization have only accelerated the pace of resource extraction from Chilika Lake by introducing ecologically damaging technologies for intensive aquaculture.

Secondly, from the study it has been observed that there has been a linkage between the nature and culture of a traditional community, i.e., between the Lake and its fishing community. The ecological consciousness is very much embedded in the close ties which exists between the Lake ecology and the fishermen community through their cultural tradition, religious practices and beliefs. The lives of these fishing community are originally tied to their habitat (the Lake ecology) from which they derive their knowledge and experience of sustainable practices, for which they are broadly called as ‘sustainable resource managers’. From the field survey it has been observed that the traditional fishing community’s identification as a community is based on their caste system. Their identity has been shaped by their discourses of dominant caste occupation such as fishing since their ancestry. The dependence of that community upon the natural resources of their habitat has been institutionalized through their tradition, religious rituals and social stratification based on their fishing activities. It has been shown in the study that traditional local fishing communities live in harmony with their environment, their culture incorporating the spiritual and the material into one integral whole. So, being part of the living nature, the environment is not exploitable. These holistic concepts have not been verbally expressed, but are evident from their myths and lifestyles. The universe of the study is, thus, defined in relation to the physical site upon which the community subsists.

Moreover, the study has highlighted the objective that the state development initiatives only have benefited a tiny elite at the cost of the large poor mass. Large
state sponsored subsidies and other developmental schemes meant for the development of the poor have rather created an "iron triangle" (in Guha’s ideological terms, Guha and Gadgil 1993) in Indian society. The members of such an iron triangle benefit from and influence the state apparatus. Constituents of this iron triangle are forcing the country into a pattern of exhaustive resource use at the expense of the environment and society. The iron triangle is an alliance of a group of people who are favoured by the state such as the industrialists, politicians and bureaucrats. Hence, the non-fishing community of elite has been encouraged to do the shrimp culture. It has been corroborated by the data of the survey that the benefits from ‘culture source’ (a detailed description of different shrimp/prawn culture methods practiced in Chilika is mentioned in Chapter-4, Section I of this thesis) of shrimp farming is higher among the non-fishermen community of the locality than the fishermen.

Chilika Lake’s ecology and ecosystem has undergone dramatic changes over the last few years. Several factors have contributed to the degradation of the Lake environment of Chilika. The different lease policies followed by the government of Orissa have divided the Lake into different fishing areas for fisher-folk and non-fisher-folk in a way that has strengthened the exploitative power of the mafias. The lease policy pursued by the government of Orissa for shrimp culture in Chilika since 1991 has greatly changed the socio-economic profile and condition of the inhabitants of the villages in and around Chilika with its profound impact upon ecosystem and environment. The transformation of non-fishermen to fishermen and the rising fishermen population in and around Chilika, introduction of modern fishing techniques with nylon nets and motorized boats, intensive shrimp aquaculture due to its lucrative export market for shrimp (particularly for its brackish water nature) in advanced countries have directly and indirectly contributed to the environmental degradation of Chilika. In other words, the pursuit of economic class interests has degenerated the Lake environment and society. Since, prawn acquired a higher monetary value in international market, both prawn and the business community needed to be controlled by the state which did not take place. Rather, the state became an active supporter of such a process. This not only affected the traditional fishing communities of Chilika

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1 See table 3.11, Chapter 3.
but also endangered the Lake ecology. The precipitate pursuit of private profit by different business groups legitimized by clothing in the rhetoric of 'fisheries development', 'foreign exchange' further aggravated the situation.

It has been argued that the movement (CBA) is the combination of different factors from a social-ecological perspective. The movement has challenged the process of development and globalization through mass mobilization aimed at saving the traditional culture of the area. The movement which has amplified the local struggles into a larger movement has focused its attention against the nature of development-fighting against the injustice of the state's appropriation of natural resources from the Lake through industrial corporate houses like Tatas and later on business mafias and bureaucratic elites of the state. The Andolan has united different groups in its fold, forging a common front against the state apparatus and other forces of exploitation such as the different aquatic firm projects, mafias etc. The ideology of the movement has attracted the international attention due to its core ethos such as environmental protection. Hence, the issues of degradation caused due to intensive prawn aquaculture, issues of economic deprivation causing problem for the main support base for the livelihood of the poor fishermen, destruction of the social and cultural base of the marginalized people, prevalence of a psychological insecurity among the fishermen due to occupational displacement, (as a result of the entry of non-fishermen into fishing) etc., became important issues of social concern. CBA has also held the state apparatus guilty for irresponsible action. It has asserted the predominant eco-social culture of the lake area through the weapons of mass-mobilization and resistance. The Andolan also puts pressure on the state through constructive, fishermen conscious strategies using the law courts, the mass media and by mobilizing the support of other intellectual elites. The Andolan has further enlarged its support base by incorporating and uniting, fisherwomen, students, peasants etc. One peculiar aspect of the struggle was that when more and more fishermen and fisher-women came under the influence of the Andolan, the local non-fishermen community became lukewarm in their support, though never opposing it openly because they saw the growing power of the CBA as a threat to their own interest. A section of the traditional fishing community which had link with the mafias also did not support the movement,
but instead opposed it clandestinely. This shows that simply being "local people" is not an adequate reason for opposing outside intervention. Resistance to the appropriation of Chilika's resources will only come from those whose place in the production economy is understood in class terms in relation to the forces of production. That is, only those engaged in the labour of fishing for sustaining themselves, those whose economic position prevents them from investing in extractive, capital-intensive techniques, will participate in the CBA.

The local fisherfolk's claim of traditional property rights over the resources of the Lake is more important than the legal claim of the state of Orissa. Their use of the fishery resources of the Lake is sustainable as compared to the overuse (intensive culture) by the state-sponsored/promoted and outside interest groups/agencies. Strange enough, such a group of people or community is not only facing an economic danger but also social problems. The state is equally facing an ecological problem. A state that justifies its actions and policies in the name of the 'national interest' shows itself as preying upon both the poorest citizens of the nation and the valuable natural resources that belong to them and their future generations since they have proved to be the best protectors among all. Thus, the very project of development safeguarding 'national interest' is compromised and undermined by the nexus between the state and the few private capitalists.

The objective of the study based on the issue of the goals, different target groups and different actors of the movement has focused on the relationship between nature, ideology and politics of the struggle against the developmentalist state (as has been analysed in chapter-6). This has been expressed through more secular collective action. Besides political action against the state, the resistance movement has emphasized on the issues of social justice. Its unity is expressed through 'fishermen' as a coherent group surpassing the religious boundaries. The Movement has focused more on the social maladies such as occupational displacement, injustices of caste and class conflicts, particularly so because the liberalization policy has resulted in the process of social transformations in the region by affecting the local caste hierarchy in the village level. Apart from this, the movement has mobilized different sections and devised a set of strategies to save the Chilika Lake ecosystem as well as the local
Gandhiji). He said, Aparigraha can be practiced by preserving nature, conserving energy and living austerely. It is all about creating well-being through moderation and balance (see Gandhi 1932).

There is no doubt that the New Economic Policies (NEP) of the Government of India and the state of Orissa have structural flaws which have to be challenged. These flaws are not only deep but also intense in nature and to a great extent imbalanced. I have already examined the denigrating role of the iron triangle (in Guha’s terms, see Guha and Gadgil 1995: 34-36), its deep repercussions for the society and the Lake environment in chapter-5. It may be added that the constituents of this iron triangle have forced the state authority into a pattern of exhaustive resource use at the expense of the lake environment and a majority of the fishing population. Hence, in this context, policy alternatives of such a sociological study can ameliorate the situation if they are implemented.

**Policy Alternatives**

*Conservation and Sustainable development of the Lake Ecology*

There is a need to have a sustainable development strategy for the resources of Chilika to be used. The Lake and its ecosystem is a unique case where ecological considerations cannot be separated from historical, social, cultural and religious dimensions. The inhabitants of the place are truly integrated within the Lake’s ecology in a socio-economic sense. Therefore, one has to consider sustainable development of the region as an integrated issue with vernacular conservation (in P.S. Ramakrishnan terms, 1998). For a peaceful co-existence of different communities and distribution of income in and around Chilika which is a Common Property Resources (CPR), it is desirable that the poor, the landless laborers and other marginalized sections of the non-fishermen community of the surrounding areas should have the right to ‘capture’ fish in the Lake for their livelihood. However, there is a need for some restrictions on ‘capture’ fishing keeping the re-generation rate of stock of fish, shrimp and crab with relation to their exploitation rate in mind. Chilika is a CPR and as such it should be managed by local collective action through an autonomous body in which the fishermen community must have the majority. In other words, it should be the
federation of independent, autonomous, co-operatives societies of fishermen operating in the Chilika region (Samal 2002:1717). And, of course, the local system may be helped by the government by providing a legal framework and technical assistance.

It has been argued by various scholars of social ecology and environmentalism of India and abroad that the notion of ‘environmental sustainability’ is inseparable from ‘social equity’ and therefore the ideology lies on the combinations of two important concerns-social and environmental justice and ecological conservation. Ecological conservation is possible in Chilika when the traditional, local communities whose lives are embodied with nature for their subsistence, have control over natural resources and when they remain faithful to the principle of ‘ecological sustainability’. In the case of Chilika, the resource utilization of nature by the traditional fishing community through their low intensity use maintains its regenerative capacities.

The climatic condition of Chilika is favourable for coconut cultivation. However, due to certain taboos associated with this cultivation, people are not enthusiastic for such business. The far lying open sandy lands in Chilika Lake area, if distributed to the poor, landless fishing community of the region through proper assistance and help from the government for the purpose of coconut cultivation and production, this area can be developed as a major coconut cultivation land. In this way, it can serve as an additional occupation for the fishing community and hence, will reduce the community’s fishing activity in the Lake.

In order to reduce the influence of mafia intervention in the area, fishing cooperatives have to be activated. For the women to improve their socio-economic condition, other supplementary income generating activities have to be initiated. Saving habit has to be encouraged.

The other policy alternatives and issue areas (as identified during the field survey with the local people), include a focus on the following action plans:

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1 During the past due to brahminical supremacy, coconut cultivation was only the autonomous business of the Brahmans. There was a prevailing fear that whoever except a Brahmin starts to plant a coconut tree, will lose the head authority of its family. Therefore, people belonging to other low castes were afraid of planting or cultivating coconut in their locality.
a) Most Urgent Steps

- Making the whole Chilika area as one sub-division or an autonomous body having control over fishing co-operative, Revenue and Forest and Environmental Departments so that unauthorized fishing activities will be tightened.
- Ban on fishing by trawlers in Bay of Bengal near Chilika.
- Majority of members of CDA should be fishermen and the head office of CDA should be shifted to Chilika area so that the grievances of the fishermen can be addressed immediately.
- Adequate funds for co-operatives operating in Chilika so that the co-operatives can publish their programmes, plans in their own reports and pamphlets.

b) Other Significant Steps

- Population control/Family planning programme and diversion of people to other occupation by spread of education.
- Stop deforestation so that the environment will be protected.
- Land Reforms and distribution of land among the fishermen for cultivation so that fishing activity will be minimized.
- Re-activating co-operative societies in the villages of Chilika Lake area by supplying working capital, arranging financial assistance to the members and facilitating them in marketing their products.
- A vocational training centre at Bhusandpur village.
- Checking water-logging for proper cultivation in villages.
- Lease to co-operative society of local poor fishermen of Niladripur of Berahumpur district for salt cultivation instead of giving lease to businessmen.
- Social forestry for fuel wood.
Conclusion

The CBA’s struggle shows that a global phenomenon such as ‘Development’ accompanied by a global food regime backed by powerful capitalists and state interests can be challenged by a grassroots movement. The movement has not only united dispersed groups of fisher-folk who confront a common threat, it has also mobilized middle class support. Such an alliance is essential for the movement’s success for it enables it to ensure that grassroots protest-demonstrations, satyagraha etc.- is supported by media coverage and receives genuine, sympathetic consideration by the courts. These strategies put pressure on the executive organs of the state, forcing them to allow traditional claims to prevail and preventing repression of the movement. All these highlight the theme that and the global food regime can only be challenged when a localized movement addresses the larger issues of such a process that it confronts. Further, the movement constructs global political alliances, joining the specificities of the Chilika with other struggles for environmental sustainability and social justice across the world.

Suffice it to add that the environmental movement of Chilika shows the distinctive character of Indian environmentalism or ‘environmentalism of the poor’ in Guha’s terminology (see Guha 2000) as they refer to the struggles for livelihood and for ecology. Since this movement is a movement that is a combination of both societal and environmental factors, its boundaries soon extended to different regions in the sense of political support. Although the movement was started at the local level, due to its systematic approach and organizational behaviour has made it a success. Since the larger issues like poverty, environment have been addressed by the people at the grassroots, the movement drew uniting spirit to sustain it. The Andolan (CBA) that was primarily started as a socio-economic one soon engulfed the environmental factors because of its complementality. The movement is truly ecological in the sense that it attempts to take environmental resources out of the formal economic sphere, out of the generalized market system. Thus, it can also be emphasized that the CBA is both a survival movement of the poor and the environment. From an ecological perspective, the Andolan is not merely a defense of the traditional fisher-folk community and its cultural values, but also an affirmation of a way of life which has
harmoniously adjusted with the Lake's natural resources. At one level, the CBA is defensive, seeking to escape the tentacles of the commercial economy and the centralizing state; at another level it is assertive, challenging the urban industrial culture which threatens their culture and society. In relation to the ecological devastation caused by the state in Chilika through either Tatas or other prawn mafias, the use of fishing resources by the traditional local fisher-folk appears miniscule in its impact. Thus, they can broadly be called sustainable resource managers. Because, it is asserted that local people's perception of nature is based on a selective respect towards a culturally conceived nature in which valuable and useful elements are differentiated from useless or even harmful plants and animals.

Moreover, the Andolan, in its orientation, is based on the Ecological Marxist approach where it focuses on the issues like the transformation of consciousness, prevalence of occupational displacement among the traditional fisher-folk community and the ideological character of the leadership structure. The movement also analyses collective action which lies outside the rational self interest of the average person and in terms of cost-benefit calculations; drawing mainly the attributes from the Resource-Mobilization paradigm of the nature of social movements. In addition, the Andolan focuses on the social dimension of collective action where the new dimensions of the identity of contemporary actors are involved in the movement, thereby reshaping the ideology of Identity-Oriented Approach into such movements.

More so, Chilika's environmental movement gives a different picture of development/globalization/liberalization as adopted by India. As the local traditional fisher-folk have acted economically, socially and politically against the model of development of the state initiated shrimp aquaculture, the message is clear. Over the years, the local community has learnt the lesson to deal with the situation and has gathered the necessary strength to pay any price for the protection of their land, community and culture. Chilika has become a symbol associated with their part of nature that should neither be exploited nor damaged. In the words of George Fernandes (former Defense Minister of India), "the fight against the shrimp industry is the test case for the poor in the battle against capital and for the rights of people to

utilize their own resources” (quoted in Goss 1998:384). In this context, it can be emphasized that the CBA is not only a survival movement of the poor but also a cultural, social and environmental movement of the large chunk of fisher-folk that lives harmoniously both with nature and society having a distinct identity in a caste and class-ridden society like India. The local community in its struggle, against the state and outside interests, has infused with it a spirit of nationalism. Thus, the ‘Save Chilika Movement’ is a living metaphor against such forces of development that attempts to exploit and extinguish a group of people in the society whose identity in and contributing for the society and environment is much. CB that symbolizes many such struggles in India and in Third World will continue until its final goal is achieved. At this juncture the movement not only promotes the unity and values of ecological people but also sends signals of cohesiveness for their values of community life, sustainability and respect for nature against the hazardous actions in the pseudo name of development by the state. The strategies and alliances adopted by them shows the importance of their action. Their diverse experiences have enabled them to create a solidarity that has challenged not only the economic elite but also the state apparatus. Finally, it sends the signal that marginalized classes and communities at the bottom of the caste hierarchy have a justified right for their existence in the society as much as the other classes and castes and could fight through the social movements against these social evils and to challenge the state authority if it marginalizes them and undermines their importance. In fact, the marginalized people are the people who should be given proper attention in a country like India if real development is aimed at.