



the south asianist

Re-evaluating the Chipko (Forest Protection) movement in India

Shinya Ishizaka

Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 9–27 | ISSN 2050-487X | journals.ed.ac.uk/southasianist

Re-evaluating the Chipko (Forest Protection) movement in India

Shinya Ishizaka

Kyoto University/National Institutes for the Humanities, Japan, ishizaka@asafas.kyoto-u.ac.jp

This paper aims to re-evaluate the Chipko movement (1973-1981), a forest protection movement in the Uttarakhand hill region in northern India, which became widely known throughout the world through its image of local people hugging trees. Although the Chipko movement became famous as a good example of the “environmentalism of the poor” in the 1980s, it began to be criticised after the 1990s as the movement ended in failure due to the fact that the local people’s “true” desire to develop the local economy by using the forest’s resources was denied by the movement’s achievement of a total ban on commercial logging. Moreover, some scholars have stressed that the prohibition of commercial deforestation was not the outcome of the Chipko movement, but rather the consequence of the victory of the Department of Environment over the Ministry of Agriculture at the Centre. Against these previous studies, this paper argues that the Chipko movement did played a role in transforming the forest management systems, and the movement was also significant for the formation of a new network of social activists.

Introduction

This paper aims to re-evaluate the Chipko movement (1973-1981), a forest protection movement in the Uttarakhand hill region in northern India, which became widely known throughout the world through its image of local people hugging trees. Although the Chipko movement became famous as a good example of the “environmentalism of the poor” in the 1980s, it began to be criticised after the 1990s as the movement ended in failure due to the fact that the local people’s “true” desire to develop the local economy by using the forest’s resources was denied by the movement’s achievement of a total ban on commercial logging. Moreover, some scholars have stressed that the prohibition of commercial deforestation was not the outcome of the Chipko movement, but rather the consequence of the victory of the Department of Environment over the Ministry of Agriculture at the Centre. Against these previous studies, this paper argues that the Chipko movement did play a role in transforming the forest management systems, and the movement was also significant for the formation of a new network of social activists.

1. Chipko Movement as an “Environmentalism of the Poor”?

The Chipko movement began in the village of Mandal in April 1973.¹ To resist commercial

deforestation by timber contractors coming over from outside the Uttarakhand, village residents, including many women, used the tactics of hugging trees for the first time. The lumber quota that had been allocated to a local-based association every year was not approved for that year. Instead, a sports goods manufacturer in Allahabad obtained the licence to use the trees in the forest in Mandal. At the town meeting to protest this fact, the participants approved the proposal by Chandi Prasad Bhatt for using the tactic of “hugging” trees that were scheduled to be cut down.² When the timber contractor’s staff entered the Mandal forest, local residents stood at the forefront and risked their lives to protect the forest in a non-violent manner, which prevented deforestation. After that, the contractors came over several times, but could not cut the trees because large numbers of local residents used the tactic of protesting by hugging each tree scheduled to be cut down. From that time onward, this “hugging” approach was employed again and again in other areas in the Uttarakhand. The Chipko movement spread to many locations in the Uttarakhand. When timber contractors came to Reni village in March 1974, it is said that a

movement in this section is based on (Mishra and Tripathi 1978, Weber 1988, Mawdsley 1998, Guha 2009) and the author’s interviews at the locality (2003-2010).

² Some researchers insist that Ghansyam Sailani suggested the “hugging” approach for the first time, while other researchers argue that this tactic was not suggested by either of them, and that local female residents spontaneously took this approach.

¹ The description of the development of the Chipko

large number of women led by Gaura Devi, a leader of the village women's organisation, kept an all-night vigil for four days at the logging area to prevent deforestation, enduring the cold weather as well as the contractor's threats. In addition, Sunderlal Bahuguna and others were active in demonstrations against forest auctions. In October 1974, for instance, he entered the auction hall at Uttarkashi and made a plea for the halting of proceedings. He also played a leading role in conducting the "Askot-Arakot Foot March (*pad yātra*)" in October-November 1974. In this foot march, participants walked from Askot, a village in east Uttarakhand, approximately 700km to Arakot, a village in west Uttarakhand, in order to disseminate the messages of the Chipko movement to the whole of the Uttarakhand.³ In 1978, the Chipko movement entered a new phase in Advani village in the western Uttarakhand with the launch of a new slogan by the villagers. The new slogan was "What do the forests bear? Land, water and fresh air!" This new slogan was said to reflect a new awareness for forest/environmental conservation, which was different from the movement's previous mainstream slogan, "What do the forests bear? Resins, timber and business!" The participants in the movement at Advani called for abandoning local community's rights in addition to the outside contractor's right to cut

trees and insisted that forests should be preserved for environmental conservation purposes. The background to this change was said to be the pitiful conditions in the rural area, such as a shortage of fuel-use firewood or fodder, loss of top soil and water shortages. The villagers considered that this desperate situation was the result of the disappearance of the forests. The villagers around Advani village, and especially Bahuguna, had realized that it was necessary to prevent deforestation if they wanted to improve people's living standards. After that, the Chipko movement came to its climax in January 1979. At Badhiyargarh village, Bahuguna started his "fast unto death" to oppose deforestation. On the eleventh day after he began fasting (*upvās* or *vrat*), he was arrested and went into detention. Since this event further fuelled the resistance of the participants, more than 3,000 people rushed into the village from neighbouring villages. It is said that they continued non-violent resistance for eleven days until the contractor withdrew from the site. Finally, the Chipko movement arrived at a conclusion when the Government of Uttar Pradesh ordered a ban on the commercial deforestation of living trees above 1,000m in Uttar Pradesh on March 18, 1981.

The academic evaluation of the Chipko movement has changed drastically. The literature in the 1980s regarded it as a successful movement because it was thought that the total ban on commercial deforestation,

³ For this "Askot-Arakot Foot March", see (Ishizaka 2007).

which was thought to be a major achievement of the movement, would benefit subaltern people in the area. For example, Guha (2009), who considered the Chipko movement both a shining example of a long tradition of peasant resistance in the Uttarakhand region and an outstanding illustration of the “environmentalism of the poor,”⁴ indicated that the total ban on deforestation not only saved the minimum subsistence levels and livelihoods of the poor people but also prevented the exploitation of natural resources by the private logging companies outside the region. He also stressed that it was remarkable that the forest-based poor people’s voices gained international recognition through their movement. In contrast, subsequent studies since the mid-1990s have revealed that the movement ended in failure because the poor people’s “true” desire to develop the local economy by using the forest’s resources was denied by the

⁴ The “environmentalism of the poor” was the notion proposed by Ramachandra Guha and others. According to these authors, the claim that people in the Third World were too poor to care about environmental issues was totally groundless. In the South, there is another environmentalism, the “environmentalism of the poor”, which is different from mainstream environmentalism in developed countries, which focuses on efforts such as preserving wildlife or the fight against urban pollution. Poor people (often landless or tribal) who largely rely on natural resources for their livelihoods must fight, as a matter of survival, against developmental projects such as large-scale deforestation or the construction of large dams promoted by their governments or private enterprises; such development literally threatens their lives. In many cases, their struggles to protect natural resources not only involve protecting their own lives, they are also about obtaining social justice and equality.

complete prohibition on tree cutting, and the possibility for the economic development in the Uttarakhand through the forest-related industry was shut down by the ban on felling (Mawdsley 1998, Rangan 2000, Linkenbach 2007).

Moreover, another scholar has stated that the transformation of forest policy was not derived from any movements but was the result of a power struggle between politicians and bureaucrats in Delhi (Pathak 1994).

A social movement is defined as “a transformation-oriented collective action, which derives from people’s discontents with present conditions or certain prospective situations” (Hasegawa and Machimura 2004: 19).

Evaluations of the Chipko movement in previous studies were based too much on the following two criteria: the major achievement of the movement (or the most significant “transformation,” which the movement brought about) and whether or not the “people’s discontents” were dissolved. However, the actual process of how the total ban on commercial felling was realised has to be re-examined because, as Pathak (1994) suggested, it was not achieved solely by the movement. Moreover, although the dissolution of the people’s discontents should certainly be an important indicator in evaluating a movement, other ways of evaluation can also be explored.

This paper employs the following two strategies in order to re-evaluate the Chipko movement and establish a methodology for

analysing the outcomes of social movements in general. First, it examines the results of social movements not by using the simple schema of a cause-and-effect relationship but by depending on the proposition that movements are variables inside complex systems of social dynamics. What is going on in society takes place as an accumulation of various intentional or unintentional behaviours and unprecedented events. Social movements constitute parts of such a complex social system. Moreover, social movements themselves are also complex systems. It is important to unravel the chains of various events carefully and identify exactly how movements play a role in the processes involved. Regarding the Chipko movement, we need to investigate the meanings of the complete prohibition on commercial logging, of the process of how the prohibition was realised and of how the movement was involved in this process.

Second, one should not stress too much the subaltern people's view of the movement, or how the movement brought direct profits to the subaltern peoples. The contributions by Mawdsley, Rangan and Linkenbach, who tried, through their fieldwork, to expose the "realities" of how local residents regarded the ban on deforestation were certainly worthwhile. However, we cannot assume that there is such an eternal and unchangeable entity as the "subalterns' voice." There are many kinds of opinions among the local people in many cases,

and these opinions can change according to the situation.⁵ For example, we have to keep in mind that the mood of a period can affect peoples' opinions in that period. In the Uttarakhand, I think the 1990s was the time of a backlash regarding the evaluation of the Chipko movement, which ended in 1983. Especially in 1994-96, the Chipko movement was held up as one of the main reasons for the backwardness of the Uttarakhand by the protagonists of the Uttarakhand movement, which aimed at creating a new and separate hill state of Uttarakhand. According to them, the Chipko movement prevented the people from seizing a precious opportunity to develop forest-related industries in the area.⁶ Since Mawdsley, Rangan and Linkenbach conducted their fieldwork mainly in the mid-1990s, their analyses could have been biased by such an atmosphere in the Uttarakhand movement. Moreover, the focus of peoples' discontents can also change in accordance with the situation. The local people in the Uttarakhand in the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, who every day saw a large number of trees being cut down with chain saws and taken away to the outside plains by truck or through waterways and rivers, and who then suffered from frequent

⁵ Mawdsley, Rangan and Linkenbach originally tried to depict the variety of local opinions, but unfortunately their work focused almost exclusively on people's economic aspirations.

⁶ For the Uttarakhand movement, see (Robinson 1996, Mawdsley 1998, Kumar 2000, Pathak 2000, Robinson 2001, Linkenbach 2005, Kumar 2010).

soil erosion and the drying up of springs on the slopes of the denuded hills, might have been conscious of a crisis or felt angry about the situation. However, it is natural that the same people or the next generation in the Uttarakhand in the 1990s had different discontents because they might feel impatient about the stagnation in the local economy after the ban on commercial logging. I was very surprised when I saw recently a shot in which trees in this region were cut down and dozens of logs were flowing down a waterway in the documentary, “The Axing of the Himalayas”, which was produced and broadcast by the BBC in 1982. For the generations born after the late 1980s, it may be difficult to get a real sense of the crisis that people felt in the 1970s. Therefore, the subjective evaluation of the movement by the local or subaltern people should be complemented with an analysis of the objective context within the framework of a more comprehensive and long-term perspective, although this paper does not deal with this issue further. The latter part of the paper, first, investigates the meanings of the complete prohibition on commercial logging, of the process of how the prohibition was realised and of how the movement was involved in this process. Then, this paper clarifies how the activists’ network was formed during the movement and how it survived after the movement.

1. The Meanings of the Total Ban on Commercial Deforestation in the Uttarakhand

This section, firstly, attempts to outline how forest policy in the Uttarakhand changed from the 1970s to the 1990s by using data from Forest Statistics and the *Working/Management Plans* of the Forest Departments (FD), and then to clarify how the Chipko movement played a role in the process of the realisation of the total ban on commercial deforestation in 1981.

1-1. Transformation of Forest Policy in the Uttarakhand from the 1970s to the 1990s

Forest management policy in the Uttarakhand from the 1970s to the 1990s was totally changed. The changes in and continuities of the policy can be summarised as follows. (1) The basic attitude behind forest management policy was changed from one that was market-oriented to one that was preservation-oriented. (2) The emerging private companies’ access to India’s forests was nearly totally shut down in the Uttarakhand. (3) Although local people’s participation in forest management under the name of Joint Forest Management began in the 1990s, starting in the Uttarakhand as in the other regions in India, the control of the large area of the forest by the FD was unshaken.

First, the basic attitude behind forest management policy was transformed from one that was market-oriented to one that was

preservation-oriented. In other words, the forest started to be regarded in terms of its environmental value, instead of being considered as an economically profitable resource. This change occurred nationwide and we can also clearly perceive the change in the policies of FD in the Uttarakhand. In the Chakrata Forest Division in the western part of the Uttarakhand, for instance, there was a dramatic change between 1977 and 1987 (Srivastava 1977, Joshi 1987). In the “Introduction” to the *Working Plan* for the period from 1977-78 to 1987-88, commercial exploitation of the forest was strongly promoted (Srivastava 1977: 1).

Most of the remote and inaccessible areas of the division have since opened up due to the construction of several motor roads in recent years. The hitherto unexploited species of industrial importance are proposed to be exploited in the new plan under an Industrial Timber (Overlapping) working circle.

However, only ten years later, the “Introduction” to the next *Management Plan* for the period from 1987-88 to 1997-98 in the same Forest Division shows how quickly they changed their stance and started to behave as the prime custodian of the environment (Joshi 1987: 1). Keeping in view the latest Government policies and in order to contribute towards the protection of the fragile Himalayan

ecosystem, a more conservational approach has been adopted. The salient features of the plan are:

- (1) There are to be no green fellings;
- (2) only dry uprooted and broken trees will be removed;
- (3) in vulnerable areas no felling will be permitted for any purpose whatsoever.

The drastic change of attitude in the Forest Divisions in the Uttarakhand in the mid-1980s was precisely in tune with the nationwide current: FD was taken from the Ministry of Agriculture and merged with the Department of Environment, and a separate Ministry of Environment and Forests was formed in 1985 under the strong initiative of the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi (Pathak 1994). However, we also have to pay attention to the phrase, “there are to be no green fellings”, in the “Introduction” to the 1986 Management Plan cited above. The phrase indicated the order of the Government of Uttar Pradesh on the ban on green felling issued on March 18, 1981, which was appended in the same *Management Plan*. It states (Datta 1987: 179):

No fresh contracts, allotment or any commitment for felling of green trees for commercial purposes above a height of 1000 meters above sea level should hereafter be made till the expert committee being set up for the purpose has submitted

its report and the state government has taken a decision on it.

The direct cause for the transformation of the basic attitude toward the management of forests from a market-oriented one to a conservationist one in the Forest Divisions in the Uttarakhand might have been the order from the Centre. However, at the same time, the Uttarakhand had a distinct history, which was preceded by the politics at the Centre at the beginning of the 1980s, as we shall see later in the next section.

Second, the emerging private companies' access to India's forests was nearly totally shut down in the Uttarakhand. Although India started to liberalise its economy in the 1990s, globalisation quickly gearing up after that (with some scholars even arguing that India made a "pro-business shift" in the 1980s (Rodrik and Subramanian 2004)), India's forests, which comprised 23.41% of the geographical area of India in 2009 (Rawat and Chandola 2010: 180), have been kept away from market principles from the 1980s until now.

In the Uttarakhand, the production of timber, for instance, once almost doubled in the 1960s (from 767,000m³ in 1966-67 to 1,411,000m³ in 1971-72), then decreased from the late 1970s (947,000m³ in 1981-82 and 686,000m³ in 1986-87), became less than one-third the amount of 1971-72 at the beginning of the 1990s (41,000m³ in 1992-93), and finally became almost one-sixth of the amount of

1971-72 in 2009-10 (242,621m³) (Misra 1983: 64, Khati 2006: 35-37, Rawat and Chandola 2010: 67-69). Further, in 1966-67 the timber was allotted to various industries such as; plywood to Ashok Plywood Trading Co. (Jawalapur), Plywood Products (Sitapur), Bharat Plywood Udyog (Ramnagar), and Kumaon Plywood Udyog (Ramnagar); matchwood to W.I.M.Co. (Bareilly); and saw mills to Lokmani-Ishwari Datt Sangauri (Haldwani), Bhatia Saw Mills (Hardwar), Kailash Industries (Haldwani), and Himalaya Wood Industry (Haldwani) (Soni 1969: 400-408). However, after the UP Forest Corporation Act 1975 was enforced under the Congress (I) government in Uttar Pradesh, a state-owned Corporation was created and began to monopolise the production and sale of timber and other forest commodities (Rangan 2000: 163).⁷ According to the *Uttarakhand Forest Statistics 2010*, only two private companies were supplied with forest products in 2009-10: Century Paper Mill and Star Paper Mill were supplied 4,336,000kg of Eucalyptus (in 2001-02, those two companies were supplied 65,000,000kg of Eucalyptus) (Rawat and Chandola 2010: 67-69). All timber, firewood and some non-timber forest products (NTFP) have been auctioned and retailed through depots managed by the Uttaranchal Forest

⁷ The UP Forest Corporation was originally meant to employ local people, but it was said that it tended to hire labourers from Himachal Pradesh or western Nepal (Rangan 2000: 163-164).

Development Corporation after 2000-01 (Rawat and Chandola 2010: 67-69). It is doubtful if the Chipko movement was entirely responsible for the de-privatisation of forests because the initiative for this change started already in 1975, which was before some sections of the Chipko movement made an environmentalist turn in 1978.

Third, more than 70% of the total forest area in the Uttarakhand continued to be controlled by the FD, in spite of the increase in the areas of Panchayat Forest (the forests under the management of the village councils) after the 1990s. In India, local people's participation in forest management under the name of Joint Forest Management began in the 1990s (Yanagisawa 2002, Nagamine 2003). The JFM in India aimed to stop the deterioration of the forest and to afforest denuded land in a collaboration between the FD and local people. This venture was launched because the long tradition, lasting from the colonial period, of a unitary forest management by the FD to protect the forests had turned out to be ineffective by the 1980s since deforestation and the deterioration of the forest were continuing at a rapid pace. This participatory approach was encouraged because it was regarded not only as a more effective system of forest governance but also because it

could be an important tool for people's empowerment.⁸ In the Uttarakhand, according to *Forest Statistics*, the areas of the Panchayat forests increased more than twofold from 2,447.640km² in 1969 to 5,449.642km² in 2011.⁹ However, the forest areas under the management of the FD have remained almost the same from 24,960.160 km² in 1969 to 24,414.804km² in 2011.¹⁰ The increase in the areas of Panchayat Forest was produced by the decrease in the forest areas under the Revenue Department (6,072.000km² in 1969 to

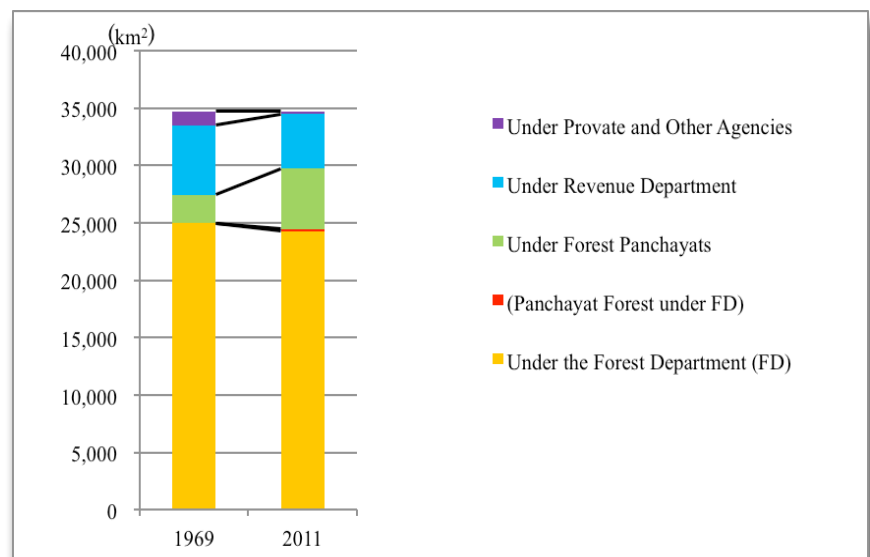


Figure 1: Forest Area in the Uttarakhand according to Management (1969-2011)¹

⁸ After JFM in India in the 1990s, some South Asian countries were said to follow this example of participatory forest management. For critical analyses on JFM in India, see (Poffenberger 1996, Sundar et al. 2002).

⁹ The number for 1969 is calculated by tracing back to the district-wise data, since the seven districts which would constitute the separate Uttarakhand state in 2000 had been in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Of 5,449.642km² in 2011, 139.653 km² was Panchayat forest under FD management.

¹⁰ Of 24,414.804 km² in 2011, 139.653 km² was Panchayat forest under FD management.

4,768.704km² in 2011) and under private and other agencies (1,251.190 km² in 1969 to 157.517 km² in 2011) (Soni 1969: 35-38, Rawat 2011: 1). There is no clear sign of relations between the Chipko movement, the continuity of FD control and the increase in the areas of Panchayat Forest.

1-2. The Chipko movement in the political process

The Chipko movement was one of the key actors in the political process for the transformation of the forest management systems in the Uttarakhand in the following three ways: First, of the four investigation committees, which were established during the 1970-80s regarding the management of forests in the Uttarakhand, at least two were directly set up in close relation with the activists in the movement; second, at least three formal demands of the movement were delivered directly to the top authorities; and third, an activist's activities directly invoked a reaction from the government side.

Regarding forest management in the Uttarakhand, four investigation committees were founded (Mishra and Tripathi 1978, Weber 1988, Rangan 2000): (1) the Virendra Kumar Committee in 1974, (2) the M. S. Swaminathan Committee in 1974, (3) the K. N. Kaur Committee in 1980, and (4) the second M. S. Swaminathan Committee. Of the four, at least the first two were set up as a direct

outcome of the activists' approaches.

According to Anupam Mishra and Satyendra Tripathi, following the Reni struggle in March 1974, the then Chief Minister of the Government of Uttar Pradesh, H. N. Bahuguna, invited Chandi Prasad Bhatt and Sunderlal Bahuguna for discussions at Lucknow on April 24, 1974. In that meeting, Bhatt proposed the setting up of an official committee to investigate whether the deforestation at Reni should be allowed and the Chief Minister agreed. Furthermore, the Minister allowed the appointment as the Chairperson of the committee someone unconnected with the Government, and it was Bhatt who visited and requested Dr. Virendra Kumar, of the Botany Department at Delhi College, to become the chairperson. Kumar accepted the chairmanship. The Governor of UP officially appointed the Reni Investigation Committee on May 9, 1974. Bhatt was also one of the nine members. The Committee was originally meant to submit its report by June 30, but its work took two years because Kumar insisted that the whole region, not only Reni, should be investigated. It finally submitted its report and the UP Government accepted the recommendations of the Committee. On October 15, 1977, tree-felling in the catchment area of Alakananda and its tributaries were banned for ten years (Mishra and Tripathi 1978: 29-35, Weber 1988: 46-51). After being inspired by the agitations at the auctions in October 1974, and following

discussions with Sunderlal Bahuguna, the Chief Minister set up another Committee to conduct comprehensive research of forest abuse in the entire region. M. S. Swaminathan, the Director-General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, was nominated as the chairperson. The Government had also appointed Sunderlal Bahuguna to assist the Committee in surveying the forests in the north-western Uttarakhand. A moratorium on the auction of forests was also introduced up until the time this Committee completed its report. Although, for various reasons, the Committee never completed its report, in March 1982, the second Swaminathan Committee did submit its Report of the Task Force for the Study of Eco-Development in the Himalayan Regions. (Mishra and Tripathi 1978: 31-33, Weber 46-47, 141-150, 156).

The idea for a ban on green felling first appeared in the resolution at the meeting of the Uttarakhand Sarvodaya Mandal at Almora in August 1974 (Weber 1988: 46). The meeting of the Uttarakhand Sarvodaya Mandal in June 1977 again made a resolution to stop commercial green felling and to rest over-tapped resin trees, and this was submitted to the then Prime Minister, Morarji Desai. It was said that Desai seemed sympathetic, but the State Government did not change its policy at that time (Weber 1988: 51, 135). The movement's voice functioned as the real pressure on the State Government finally in October 1980 when Sunderlal Bahuguna submitted a memorandum

signed by prominent public figures for a ban on felling, following the recommendation by the Central Government for the ban (Weber 1988: 140). On March 18 the following year, the State Government ordered a total ban on commercial green felling.

It is also noteworthy that Sunderlal Bahuguna's fast in January 1979 did have an effect on the State Government. After his arrest, he broke his fast on February 2, when the State Government declared that no felling or auctions would be carried out until a meeting was held between Sunderlal Bahuguna and the Chief Minister to discuss the issues (Weber 1988: 55-56).

How did the Chipko movement contribute to the transformation of forest management systems in the Uttarakhand? First, the movement might have had a significant influence on the attitudinal turn from commercial forestry to conservationist forestry in two separate ways. The State Government order on March 18, 1981 on the total ban on commercial logging itself was mainly the direct result of the victory of the Department of Environment over the Ministry of Agriculture at the Centre. However, the idea for the total ban on tree cutting originated from the movement's appeals. Mrs. Gandhi might have felt lucky when she found support from the movement for the formation of her new image as an environmentalist. But, at the same time, it might be more accurate to say that the

movement side also utilised the environmentalist camp at the Centre to meet their own ends.

Moreover, the local activists' appeals concerning the multiple functions of the forest, such as for the prevention of floods or landslides (Bahuguna 1979, 1983, Bhatt 1980), might have greatly contributed to the forging of a general understanding of the importance of forests. It is especially remarkable that Chapter 19 "Scope and Potential for Development" in the *Management Plan* for the Chakrata Forest Division 1997-98 to 2006-07 began with the following paragraph (Singh 1997: 443).

Whatever be the level of technological and material attainments of human being he always needs sustainable environment for his survival. Perhaps, that is why activists of Chipko movement used to chant this slogan for pressing their demand for imposing ban on indiscriminate commercial exploitation of forests in seventies.

KYA HAIN JANGAL KE UPKAAR?

MITTI PAANI AUR BAYAAR.

MITTI PAANI AUR BAYAAR.

ZO HAIN ZINE KE ADHAAR.

(What are the benefits from forests? Soil, water and air that are essential for our survival.)

In the cited paragraph, the FD admitted that the commercial exploitation of forests in the 1970s was "indiscriminate" and praised the

environmental consciousness of the Chipko movement. This indicates how the attitude of the FD completely changed in 20 years because, according to Poldane (1987), almost all FD officials in late 1983 answered the question about what should happen if the felling ban were to be lifted by saying that "though the needs of people and hill industry should be met, there must also be export of the surplus to the plains. Only one man -- a Deputy Conservator - - said that there should be no export. The general opinion is that it is a waste not to fell trees in areas distant from people." (Poldane 1987: 707) In the beginning of the 1980s, soon after the ban on felling was announced in 1981, no one in the FD praised the Chipko movement.

Second, how did the movement affect the anti-business policy? It might be said that the movement was not really responsible for the loss of opportunities for the advancement of private forest industries, because at that time such opportunities could not be realised due to the defeat of the Ministry of Agriculture and Mrs. Gandhi's staunch hostility towards capitalists (cf. Mawdsley 2000: 161-164).

Third, how did the movement contribute to the devolution of forest rights to Panchayats? There is no sign of any obvious contribution to this matter. However, the efforts for tree plantations by the movement might have implanted in the local people a degree of zeal for the self-management of forests.

2. The Formation of the Networks of Local Environmental Activists

A scholar of social movement theory, Tarrow, argued that, as a cycle of protest was extended, simultaneous processes of institutionalisation and radicalisation tended to occur, as some sections of the movement started to become involved in formal political processes (to form a political party, for instance) and the opponents of such a move tried to differentiate themselves by taking more progressive or extreme stands. In the case of the Chipko movement, however, neither institutionalisation nor radicalisation in their proper senses happened. Although the activists of the movement became involved in the political process that we saw in the previous section, no one became a politician or an agent of the government and no political party incorporated the movement. Most of the activists remained activists in another movement, which followed the Chipko movement, by occasionally interacting with the authorities, instead of radicalising and breaking off their interaction with the authorities. In other words, they acquired the art of living as social movement activists during the movement and retained it even after the conclusion of the movement.

During the Chipko movement and the Himalaya Foot March, which followed soon after the movement, many young activists were trained. They became professional social activists later by basing their activities at the

grassroots level in the Uttarakhand and other places in India. It is noteworthy that most of them were educated by a senior activist, Sunderlal Bahuguna, either when they lived together in a student hostel (in the cases of K. Prasun and S. S. Bisht) or when they took part in the foot marches (in the cases of D. S. Negi, K. B. Upmanyu, and P. Hegde).

Soon after the Chipko movement ended on March 18, 1981, Bahuguna, in order to survey the environmental and social situation of the entire Himalayan region and to propagate the Chipko message (to protect trees from cutting by hugging) in that region, started the Himalaya Foot March (also called the Kashmir-Kohima Foot March) on May 30, 1981. The idea was born during Bahuguna's eleven-day fast from April 2, 1981 at Uttarkashi in Uttarakhand. Bahuguna and D. S. Negi completed the 4,870km walk across the Himalayan region from the western edge (at Srinagar in the State of Jammu and Kashmir) to the eastern edge (at Kohima in the State of Nagaland, which they reached in February 1983) with three breaks. Everywhere they went, Bahuguna and the others actively sought meetings with politicians, government officials, scientists and students, compiling reports regarding the environmental situation in each area and submitting them to the local government. Many youths who marched became social activists. In other words, the walkers in the march (and also in the Askot-Arakot march in 1974, which I

mentioned in an earlier section) were educated and trained to become professional social activists.

This section describes, through the example of Dhoom Singh Negi, how some youngsters became activists by committing to the Chipko movement and the foot marches.

Dhoom Singh Negi

Dhoom Singh Negi (1938-) was a principal at an elementary school before he became a full-time activist in 1974. He told me that there were two reasons behind his switching careers.¹¹ After he participated in the study meetings on environmental issues that were carried out by Bahuguna, Negi became acquainted with global environmental movements. He also took part in a learning camp with local loggers, which was conducted as part of the study meetings, and he seriously discussed forest problems with the labourers by sharing room and board with them. In addition to these opportunities to learn about the problems of the forest, he realised first hand the seriousness of the environmental degradation in his locality. At that time, the loggers cut down every tree, including small ones, and landslides frequently occurred on the barren hills. These landslides caused severe damage to the villagers below, but they could not receive any

compensation for their broken irrigation systems, such as the watermills. Negi, after facing such a pitiable situation, changed his opinion and decided that the forest should be protected at all costs, rather than choosing the alternative of inviting small-scale logging contractors in and asking them to employ local people as he had thought in the initial stage of his commitment to the Chipko movement.¹²

These experiences convinced him of the necessity of having committed activists to help solve the forest's problems.

In the agitation at Advani village in 1978, Negi became one of the key organisers. He played a crucial role at the initial stage of the movement by fasting against the 'villagers' mood of abandonment regarding the deforestation. His five-day fast stirred the morale of the villagers and many people started to take part in the movement after that.

After the Chipko movement, he co-organised the Himalaya foot march with Bahuguna in 1981-83. Those days of marching with Bahuguna brought him the confidence to live as an activist and he learned much about the tactics of mobilising local people. During those foot marches, Bahuguna demanded the co-walkers join the march without any money. The marchers were to ask for lodging and meals from the villagers in the villages they reached at

¹¹ An interview with Dhoom Singh Negi by the author on September 21, 2006, at Piplet in the Tehri district, Uttaranchal (Uttarakhand), India.

¹² According to Negi, most of the villagers support the idea because they are basically farmers, and farmers naturally aim to protect their farms, villages and the environment.

the end of each day. Although Negi confessed that they, as vegetarians, suffered a little from the meals they received when they were in Northeast India, where almost all the local people were non-vegetarians, they did not experience any difficulties regarding communication and accommodation. Also, Bahuguna and Negi brought many books in their rucksacks and sold them at each town they visited, and they used this money to purchase necessary items such as batteries for their loud-hailers. In order to mobilise local people to attend their gatherings in the public squares, they employed such strategies as setting one roti (an Indian bread) per household as a participation fee for the meetings. They appealed to people's curiosity and urged them to come to the meetings. Negi was trained to live as an activist through such on-site education.

He also participated in the anti-Tehri dam movement until the mid-1990s and in several other environmental movements in his area, such as the Save Seeds Movement, which aimed to preserve the diversity in traditional grain and vegetable seeds. He has been a professional social activist who is at present also living off his farming.

These activists basically work in their local areas. It is important that most of them are connected with each other through frequent

exchanges by phone, letter or e-mail, occasional visits and irregular meetings called "*mitra milan* (gatherings of friends)." This loose network has been functioning as a mobilisation tool when some of the activists in the network need other activists' help to organise meetings or demonstrations.

Thus, the Chipko movement has also produced a new generation of professional social activists in the Uttarakhand and in other places in India, and these activists are connected with each other through their networks.

Concluding Remarks

This paper clarifies, first, that the Chipko movement contributed to the dissemination of the State Government order for the total ban on green felling. On the other hand, the movement was not responsible for the loss of opportunities for the advancement of private forest industries. Second, the Chipko movement has also produced a new generation of professional social activists in the Uttarakhand and in other places in India, and these activists are connected with each other through their networks. 📍

Cited References

- Bahuguna, Sunderlal, 1979, *Chipko: A Novel Movement for Establishment of Cordial Relationship between Man and Nature*, Silyara, Tehri: Chipko Information Centre.
- , 1983, *Walking with the Chipko Message*, Silyara, Tehri: Chipko Information Centre.
- Baviskar, Amita, 1997, *In the Belly of the River: The Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Bhatt, Chandi Prasad, 1980, *Eco-System of the Central Himalayas and Chipko Movement: Determination of Hill People to Save Their Forests*, Gopeshwar, Chamoli: Dashauli Gram Swarajya Sangh.
- Datta, S. K. (ed.), 1987, *Management Plan for the Chakrata Forest Division, 1987-88 to 1996-97*, Nainital: Working Plans Circle, U. P.
- Guha, Ramachandra, 2000, *Environmentalism: A Global History*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- , 2009, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition, Ranikhet: Permanent Black.
- and J. Martinez-Alier, 1997, *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Guha, Sumit, 1999, *Environment and Ethnicity in India, 1200-1991*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ishizaka, Shinya, 2007, "Leader-Follower Relations in the Foot Marches in Gandhian Environmental Movement in India," *Afrasia Working Paper*, No. 20, pp. 1-17.
- , 2009, "What Has the Chipko Movement Brought About?: Forest Protection Movement and Environmentalist Network Formation in India," *Afrasia Working Paper*, No. 52, pp. 1-18.
- , 2011, *Gendai Indo no kankyuu shisou to kankyou undou: Gandi syugi to "tsunagari no seiji" (Environmental Movement in India: Gandhism and "Connective Politics")*, Kyoto: Showado. (石坂晋哉、2011、『現代インドの環境思想と環境運動—ガーンディー主義と〈つながりの政治〉』、昭和堂。)
- Jenkins, J. Craig and Bert Klandermans (eds.), 1995, *The Politics of Social Protest: Comparative Perspectives on States and Social Movements*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Joshi, R. C., 1987, "Introduction," in S. K. Datta (ed.), 1987, *Management Plan for the Chakrata Forest Division, 1987-88 to 1996-97*, Nainital: Working Plans Circle, U. P., pp. 1-2.
- Khati, D. V. S. (ed.), 2006, *Uttaranchal Forest Statistics 2005-2006*, Dehradun: Forest Department, Uttaranchal.
- Kumar, Anup, 2010, *The Making of a Small State: Populist Social Mobilisation and the Hindi Press in the Uttarakhand Movement*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black.
- Kumar, Pradeep, 2000, *The Uttarakhand Movement: Construction of a Regional Identity*, New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers.
- Linkenbach, Antje, 2005, "Nature and Politics: The Case of Uttarakhand, North India," in Gunnel Cererlof and K. Sivaramakrishnan (eds.), *Ecological Nationalisms: Nature, Livelihoods, and Identities in South Asia*, Delhi: Permanent Black, pp. 151-169.
- , 2007, *Forest Futures: Global Representations and Ground Realities in the Himalayas*, London: Seagull books.
- Martinez-Alier, 2002, *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Mawdsley, Emma, 1998, "After Chipko: From Environment to Region in Uttarakhand," *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 25 (4), pp. 36-54.
- Meyer, David S., 1993, *Protest Cycles and Political Process: American Peace*

- Movements in the Nuclear Age, Political Research Quarterly, 46, pp. 451-479. (<http://prq.sagepub.com/content/46/3/451> accessed on Jun 25, 2012.)
- Mishra, Anupam and Satyendra Tripathi, 1978, *Chipko Movement: Uttarakhand Women's Bid to Save Forest Wealth*, New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation.
- Nagamine, Ryoko, 2003, "Dokuritsu igo no shinrin seisaku (Forest Policy after the Independence)," in Haruka Yanagisawa (ed.), *Kaihatsu to kankyo (Development and Environment)*, Gendai minami ajia (Contemporary South Asia) 4, Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.
(長峯涼子、2003、「独立以後の森林政策」柳澤悠編『開発と環境』現代南アジア4、東京大学出版会、118-133頁。)
- Pathak, Akhileshwar, 1994, *Contested Domains: The State, Peasants and Forests in Contemporary India*, New Delhi: Sage.
- Pathak, Shekhar, 2000, "Beyond an Autonomous State: Background and Preliminary Analysis of Uttarakhand Movement," in Indian History Congress (ed.), *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress: Diamond Jubilee (60th) Session, Calicut, 1999*, Aligarh: Indian History Congress, pp. 893-907.
- Poffenberger, Mark and Besty McGean (eds.), 1996, *Village Voices, Forest Choices: Joint Forest Management in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Rangan, Haripriya, 1996, "From Chipko to Uttaranchal: Development, Environment, and Social Protests in the Garhwal Himalayas, India," in Richard Peet and Michael Watts (eds.), *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development, Social Movements*, London: Routledge, pp. 205-226.
- , 2000, *Of Myths and Movements: Rewriting Chipko into Himalayan History*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Rawat, R. B. S. and Srikant Chandola (eds.), 2010, *Uttarakhand Forest Statistics 2009-2010*, Dehradun: Forest Department, Uttarakhand.
- Robinson, John, 2001, "Regionalising India: Uttarakhand and the Politics of Creating States," *South Asia*, 24 (2), pp. 189-212.
- Rodrik, Dani and Arvind Subramanian, 2004, "From 'Hindu Growth' to Productivity Surge: The Mystery of the Indian Growth Transition," *NBER Working Paper*, No. 10376, pp. 1-45. (<http://www.nber.org/papers/w10376> accessed on Jun 25, 2012.)
- Soni, R. C. (ed.), 1969, *Forest Statistics, Uttar Pradesh, 1969*, Lucknow: Forest Department, Uttar Pradesh.
- Soranaka, Kiyoshi, Koishi Hasegawa, Takashi Machimura and Naoto Higuchi (eds.), 2004, *Syakai undou to iu koukyou kuukan: Riron to jissen no hurontia (Social Movement as a Public Space: Frontier for the Theories and Methods)*, Tokyo: Seibundoh.
(曾良中清司・長谷川公一・町村敬志・樋口直人編、2004、『社会運動という公共空間—理論と方法のフロンティア』成文堂。)
- Srivastava, S. S., 1977, "Introduction," in P. C. Srivastava (ed.), *Working Plan for the Chakrata Forest Division, 1977-78 to 1986-87*, Nainital: Working Plans Circle, U. P., p. 1.
- Sundar, Nandini, Roger Jeffery and Neil Thin, 2002, *Branching Out: Joint Forest Management in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, Thomas, 1988, *Hugging the Trees: The Story of the Chipko Movement*, New Delhi: Viking.
- Yanagisawa, Haruka, 2002, "Indo no kankyuu mondai no kenkyuu joukyou (A Review for the Studies on Environmental Problems in India), in Nobuko Nagasaki (ed.), *Chiiki kenkyuu eno syoutai (An Introduction to the Area Studies)*, Gendai minami ajia (Contemporary South Asia) 1, Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, pp. 213-236.
(柳澤悠、2002、「インドの環境問題

の研究状況」長崎暢子編『地域研究への招待』現代南アジア1、東京大学出版会、213-236頁。）
