

CHAPTER 3

ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT IN ASIA

3.1. INTRODUCTION

While analyzing the genesis, nature and characteristics, strategies and objectives of the environmental movements in the foregoing chapter, we have sought to make a distinction between the Northern and the Southern environmental movements. By the term '*South*', we have referred to the developing countries of the Southern Hemisphere, belonging to the continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and by the term '*North*' we have meant the advanced capitalist countries of the Northern Hemisphere. This distinction between the Northern and Southern Environmental movements as made above is quite likely to generate a confusion by simply assuming that all southern movements, and for that matter, all movements in Asia, have a similar nature and content. Although the causes, contents and strategies of all environmental movements in the Global South in general, and the environmental movements in Asian Continent in particular show some occasional similarities, yet one must not ignore the differences existing amongst and between them. In fact, the environmental movements in the global south show glaring differences, which owe to a number of forces and factors both within and without the political system in which a given movement is manifest.

To analyze the environmental movements in Asia first of all we shall briefly survey the literature on the Asian environmental movements in general and then evaluate some case studies of some important movements in the continent. This should enable us to have an understanding of what is called the Asian perceptions of Nature. This exercise shall be followed by the identification of some broad features of the environmental movements in the continent. However, Asia being a vast continent with a varying degree of development and democratization, differences in the nature and content of environmental consciousness and campaigns are obvious. Hence, after locating the commonalities in the movements in the continent, we shall delve in to the differences amongst and between them.

3.2. ASIAN PERCEPTIONS OF NATURE

Some noteworthy literatures on the environmental discourses have come to the lime light in the recent past. Whereas some deal with the general history and Asian perceptions of nature, the other category of the literature deals with the nature, cause and contents of the environmental movements, their general characteristics and the similarities and differences between and amongst them. Some prominent ones among them that broadly focus on the first question as stated above in the Asian continent include works by Richard H Grove, Vinita Damodaran and Satpal Sangwan (eds.) *Nature and the Orient: The Environmental History of South and Southeast Asia* (Delhi: OUP, 1998), Ole Bruun and Arne Kalland (eds.) *Asian Perceptions of Nature: A Critical Approach* (Richmond (UK): Curzon, 1995), J. B. Callicott and Roger T. Ames (eds.) *Nature in Asian Tradition of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), and Larry Lohmann's 'Green Orientalism' in *The Ecologist*, Vol. 23, No. 6 (1993). The *Nature and the Orient* is a general survey of the environmental history in the Southern part of the Asian continent. Other ones focus on the issue of the Asian perceptions of Nature. As regards the Asian perceptions of Nature, it is widely held that the Asian cultures have most positive perceptions of nature than those prevailing in the west. People in Asia are typically portrayed as living in harmony with nature (Callicott and Ames: 1989). This is because the people of Asia are believed to be content with a little, epitomized by the ascetic recluse who subsists in the bare minimum to uphold life functions as has been discussed in the works by Anesaki (1973), Suzuki (1988), Asquith and Kalland (1997). Thus, it is held that because of this image of the Asians, the West has turned to look towards Asia for the solutions of the environmental problems, although the likes of Cobb (1972) and Passmore (1980) strongly assert that West cannot benefit from the Asian perceptions of Nature to solve its environmental problems because Asians have themselves failed to protect their environment.

However, it needs to be understood that there is no monolithic, unified Asian perception of Nature as Asia is a large continent with ecological diversity as well as a diversity of ecological adaptations. Thus there are varied perceptions on Environment in Asia, varying within countries: between sexes, between

occupation groups, and over time. And that, all Asian perceptions towards nature are not as positive as they are said to be. This is revealed from the fact that environmental degradation is not alien to Asia and roots to such ecological degradation can be found prior to the 'damaging' western influence (Hargrove: 1989). Thus, damages to the environment have taken place in Asia despite having a positive perception of nature in the Asian tradition of thought. Consequently, there has been a deluge of environment related protest movements in Asia in the recent past.

3.3. ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT IN ASIA: AN OVERVIEW

Although there is not much of research work that has been done on the environmental movements in Asia and that the general history of the environmental movements in Asia is largely unwritten, yet the numerical size of the environmental protest movements that have taken place in the continent is colossus. Among some illuminating works on the environmental movements in Asia the first and the most prominent is Lee and So (eds.) *Asia's Environmental Movements: Comparative Perspectives* (New York: Armonk, 1999). This illuminating work focuses on the trajectories and characteristics of the environmental movements in the six Asian countries, viz., South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand and the Philippines. It also studies the similarities and differences between the environmental campaigns in these countries. The second major work in this direction is Arne Kalland and Gerard Persoon (eds.) *Environmental Movements in Asia* (Richmond: Curzon, 1998). This volume is based on a critical research on the man-nature relationship in Asia. Other noteworthy literatures in this direction include T. T. B. Koh (1999) 'Asians, Too, Want a Good Environment' in *International Herald Tribune* (February 1), and J. Rush's *The Last Tree: Reclaiming the Environment in Tropical Asia* (New York: The Asia Society, 1991).

Apart from the literature on the Asian perceptions of Nature and the general literature on the ecoprotest movements and the environmental campaigns in the continent as cited above, there is also a host of ever growing literature on the environmental problems, environmental consciousness and environmental campaigns and movements in specific countries in the region. Although it is both

unwise and impossible to detail a list of such literature, yet it would not be out of place to point out some prominent ones among them. Hence, in the section that follows, we shall explore some countries in the continent, which have witnessed strong environmental campaigns and point out the prominent literatures (in the form of a bibliographical note) dealing with them.

3.3.1. Mainland China

The few important literatures dealing with the environmentalism in general and environmental protests and problems in particular in the People's Republic of China include, among many others the following. Vaclav Smil (1980) 'Environmental Degradation in China,' in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 20, No. 8; Lester Ross and Michael A Silk (1987) *Environmental Law and Policy in the People's Republic of China* (New York: Quorum Books); Baruch Boxer (1989) 'China's Environmental Prospects,' in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 7; Tang Yijian and Zhang Shen (1990) 'Economic Development and Water Related Environmental Problems in China,' in *Chinese Geography and Environment*, Vol. 3, No. 3. Vaclav Smil (1993) *China's Environmental Crisis* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe); Qu Geping and Li Jinchang (1994) *Population and Environment in China* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner); World Bank (1997) *Clear Water, Blue Skies: China's Environment in the New Century* (Washington DC: World Bank Publications); Judith Bannister (1998) 'Population, Public Health and the Environment in China,' in *China Quarterly* No. 156; David N. Campbell (1997) 'The Maoist Legacy and the Environmental Implementation in China' in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 37, No. 9; Abigail Jahiel (1998) 'The Organization of Environmental Protection in China,' in *China Quarterly*, No. 156; Michael Palmer (1998) 'Environmental Regulation in Peoples Republic of China: The Face of Domestic Law', in *China Quarterly* No. 156. However, this list of literature does not claim to be comprehensive. There is a lot more dealing with various aspects of the environmental degradation, environmental problems and protest movements, environmental management and environmental policy etc.

A perusal of the aforesaid and other literature reveal interesting facts about the environmental problems and movements in Mainland China. It is found that the problems related to effective environmental management have long challenged the Chinese people and the Chinese state. The Communist

regime only remotely dealt with the environmental problems in the 1950s and 1960s making occasional discussions on issues like environmental conservation and reforestation. The government also lacked a comprehensive body of laws to deal with the environmental issues. Government responses to environmental problems were only ad hoc in nature prior to the Stockholm Conference. However, in the aftermath of China entering the United Nations in 1971 and its 'opening up' in general and, from the environmental perspective, in the post Stockholm period there emerged what is called the state environmentalism in China, a brand of environmentalism which refers to the activities carried out by either the individuals or groups of individuals within officially sanctioned public organizations both within and outside the official government bureaucracy and also including the environmental activities that are carried out directly under the purview of officially sanctioned professional party and mass organizations. Thus, Chinese engagement with state environmentalism, and for that matter, ecopolitics is basically a post Stockholm phenomenon. Thus, there has been a successful institutionalization of environmentalism in China in the recent years, and more specifically in the post-Mao China.

Despite such a trend, environmental movements as such did not develop in the People's Republic of China, as the government and the Communist Party of China are not willing to accept any direct opposition to the established projects and policies. For instance, the Three Gorges Dam in the Yangtze River that was visualized first by the Nationalist Leader Sun Yat-Sen in the 1920s and later revived by Mao was vehemently criticized by brave journalists and environmentalists in the now banned publication, a book named 'Yangtze Yangtze?'. The protest developed as a form of environmental protest finally culminating into a pro-democracy movement. This was dealt with in a very cold way by the Chinese State with a state massacre of hundreds of protesters including students at Tienanmen Square. Thus, although there have been state initiatives in China in the environmental front, no popular protest have been allowed to have taken place in the form of organized environmental movement in the country as the state machinery, and for that matter, the Communist Party of China takes any such move as amounting to Counter-Revolutionary and quashes it.

3.3.2. Hong Kong

Hong Kong's rapid economic development has been accompanied by significant ecological degradation. The environmental deterioration in Hong Kong is, therefore, a by-product of the economic affluence and its allied exigencies. Hence, the issue at the core of Hong Kong's green groups is the issue pertaining to the quality of life, a peculiarly post-materialist approach to environmental problems. The Green groups and their environmental movements capitalizing on these issues are emerging as a strong force in Hong Kong. However, since the approach of these movements is a top-down, consensual approach lobbying and working with the government (Chiu quoted in Lee and So: 1999), the mobilization of the grassroots support by the movement is fairly negligible. This weak connection of the environmental groups and movements with the grassroots is one of the biggest weaknesses of the environmental movement in Hong Kong. Consequently, Hong Kong has failed to develop a dynamic environmental movement capable of mobilizing broad-based public support, and therefore, has failed to exert significant influence on public policy or to transform popular environmental consciousness. Despite this, one notices a strong current of environmental protests in Hong Kong, like the anti-nuclear movement, the fishermen's resistances against the construction of an airport, and also there have been protests from conservationists for the protection of the Chinese White Dolphins. But there is a conspicuous absence of any coalition or networking between and amongst these groups who are involved in one or the other form of environmental movement.

Another conspicuous attribute of the environmental movement in Hong Kong is its alliance with the corporate world. Due to Hong Kong's large service sector and the booming economy, the business class in Hong Kong is able to provide green funding and sponsorship to the environmental groups and organizations. Thus, the large corporations in Hong Kong have been able to exploit green consumerism to create a favourable image to market its products.

3.3.3. Taiwan

Taiwan has experienced a strong current of environmental movements, although environmental consciousness and peoples' participation in environmental campaigns began and proliferated only in the aftermath of 1987 with Taiwan lifting the Martial Law that was in force till then. Since then, grassroots- protests against polluting factories, waste dumps, and development projects have constituted the main pattern of environmental activism in Taiwan. The focus of most of the environmental campaigns in Taiwan is on Pollution and the quality of life of its citizens. It however, does not imply that the environmental campaigns do not mobilize on other issues. Unlike the seemingly NIMBY-ism of the 1980s, the environmental protest movements in the 1990s have been concerned with the issues of conservation, community building and sustainable development.

The most important of the literatures dealing with the environmental movements in Taiwan include Deborah C. Chan (1993) 'The Environmental Dilemma in Taiwan' in *Journal of North East Asian Studies* 12 (1); Randolph T. Hestor *et al* (1998) *Action Plan for Taiwan Coastal Conservation and Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press); Jeffrey Hou (2000a) *From Protest to Planning: new Environmental Activism and New Environmental Planning in Taiwan* (Paper Presented at North American Taiwan Studies Conference, Harvard University, June 16-19); Jeffrey Hou (2000b) 'Will Taiwan Turn Green?' , *Earth Island Journal*, Vol. 15 No. 3 Autumn; Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao (1987) 'Changing Public Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes and Behaviors' in *Taiwan 2000: Balancing Economic Growth and Environmental Protection* edited by T. S. The Steering Committee (Taipei: Academia Sinica); Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao (1988) *The Structural and Processual Analysis of the Anti-Pollution Protests in Taiwan in the 1980s* (Taipei: Environmental Protection Administration); Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao (1994) 'The Characteristics and Transformation of Taiwan's Grassroots Environmental Protest Movement: 1980-1991', in *Environmental Protection and Industrial Policy* Edited by T. R. Foundation (Taipei: Chien Wei Publishers); Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao (1999) 'Environmental Movements in Taiwan' in *Asia's Environmental Movements: Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Yok-Shiu F. Lee and Alvin Y. So (New York: M. E. Sharpe); Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao, L. W.

Milbraith and Robert P. Weller (1995) 'Antecedents of an Environmental Movement in Taiwan' in *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* Vol. 6, No. 3; Roy E. Rickson and Cordia Chu (1989) 'Economic Miracles and Environmental Dilemma: The Case of Taiwan' in *Society and Natural Resources* 2; Shui-Yan Tang and Ching Ping Tang (1999) 'Democratization and the Environment Entrepreneurial Politics and Interest Representation in Taiwan' in *The China Quarterly*, June (158); Robert P. Weller and Hsin Huang Michael Hsiao (1998) 'Culture, Gender and Community in Taiwan's Environmental Movements' in *Environmental Movements in Asia* edited by Arne Kalland and Gerard Persoon (Surrey: Curzon Press); and Jack F. Williams (1992) 'Environmentalism in Taiwan', in *Taiwan: Beyond the Economic Miracle*, edited by D. F. Simon and M. Y. M. Kau (New York: M. E. Sharpe) and such others.

3.3.4. Japan

Kim D. Reimann and Richard Forrest (2002) hold that writers on environmental movements in Japan have all noted the fact that though there was a proliferation of local environmental protests and activism in the 1960s and the 1970s, these activities never fully coalesced in to a strong national level movement led by national associations as they did in many industrialized countries of the West. Until recently, most environmental advocacy tended to focus on local anti-pollution and victim compensation issues. However, with a brief pause, in the 1980s and throughout the 1990s, a new type of environmental activism appeared in Japan that combined the old-style local focus with a new national dimension. These new movements include the activism to save the Shiraho coral reef on Ishigaki Island in Okinawa, national campaigns to prevent dam construction on the Nagara River, a series of campaigns in several Japanese localities to save wetland areas, and campaigns against the construction of new nuclear plants. Most of these new movements aimed to protect the natural environment, ecosystems, and endangered species from future harm and framed their struggles as preserving and defending the environment for its own sake. These new environmental movements in Japan are also very ambitious movements in the sense that they target the large development projects thereby calling to question the state's emphasis on infrastructure-led economic growth and public works oriented development. Thus these new environmental

movements in Japan are regarded as representing a new wave of environmentalism in Japan.

There are some noteworthy literatures on Japanese environmentalism and environmental protest movements. Some of them include Jeffrey Broadbent (1998) *Environmental Politics in Japan, Networks of Power and Protest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Owen Kyle Camcron (1996) "The Political Ecology of Environmentalism in Japan: Protest and Participation (1983-1995)", *Ph. D Dissertation* (Trinity College: University of Cambridge); Ellis S. Krauss and Bradford L. Simock (1980) "Citizens' Movements: The Growth and Impact of Environmental Protest in Japan" in *Political Opposition and Local Politics in Japan* edited by Kurt Steiner, Ellis S. Krauss and Scott C. Flanagan (Princeton: Princeton University Press); Margaret A. McKean (1981) *Environmental Protest and Citizens Politics in Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press); Jim Griffith (1990) "The Environmental Movement in Japan", *Whole Earth Review*, Winter; and Norie Huddle and Michael Reich (1975) *Island of Dreams: Environmental Crisis in Japan* (Tokyo: Autumn Press). Apart from the ones cited above, there are also a host of literatures published by various Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) on environmental issues in Japan. The Japanese Environmental Movement is characterized by the fact that it is fragmented in to several small groups, each dealing with a specific local issue. Thus there are a number of small, single-issue local groups, which collectively form the environmental movement organization in Japan.

3.3.5. Philippines

We come across a deluge of literature on the environmental movements in Philippines. However, some of the most noteworthy literature on the subject include R. Broad and J. Cavanagh (1993) *Plundering Paradise: The Struggle for the Environment in the Philippines* (Manila: Anvil Publishing Inc.); D. M. Kummer (1992) *Deforestation in Post War Philippines* (Quezon City: Anteneo de Manila University Press); World Bank (1989) *Philippines: Environment and Natural Resources Management Study* (Washington DC: The World Bank); Rosario Santos and Filipino, Del (1992) "The Philippine Environmental Crisis" in Edward Goldsmith et al (eds.) *The Future of Progress: Reflections on Environment and*

Development (Bristol: International Society for Ecology and Culture) and Emma Porio and Bron Taylor (1995) "Popular Environmentalists in the Philippines: Peoples' Claims to the Natural Resources" in Bron Taylor (ed.) *Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press). A close perusal of these and other literatures reveal the fact that Philippines experienced a series of environmental resistance movements over the years. Some important environmental protests include the people's alliance against the Chico River Dam Project, protests against the Cellophil Pulp and Paper Plant in Abra, and the Nuclear Power Plant in Morong in the 1970s, among many others. However, the most prominent of the environmental movements in the Philippines is the Peoples' resistance against the construction of a grand cement plant in the coastal town of Bolinao in Northwestern Philippines on the ground that the project would lead to massive marine destruction and foster other allied environmental problems like the loss of biodiversity, cause river siltation, and bring about geological disturbances, so on and so forth.

The study of the environmental resistances in the Philippines brings to the fore a few interesting characteristics of the environmental protest movements in the state. Firstly, the most important characteristic of the environmental protests in Philippines is that the movements are concerned with defending the environments against the *outside* agents like the Japanese and the Taiwanese Companies in case of the resistance against the construction of the Cement Plant, etc. Secondly, the environmental movements in the Philippines are an example of a successful forging of the environmental collaboration across the public-private divide. As revealed, the resistances were grand alliances of citizens groups, farmers, clergy, women's groups, politicians, local non-governmental organizations, media, public officials and the academia.

3.3.6. Thailand

The Thai Society witnessed double-digit growth rates prior to the economic collapse in the later half of the 1990s. This had its impact on the environment, which deteriorated as a consequence of pollution, deforestation, ill effects on the national parks etc. (Komin: 1993). The environmental

deterioration generated a series of environmental protests in Thailand. Hence, the Thai society has been experiencing a series of masses based movements organized by the peasants and the poor whose livelihoods have been threatened by the changes in their environment. In 1994 as many as 274 environmental resistances were recorded which rose to 334 in 1995 (Prapas: 1998). The list reveals varieties of protests ranging from conflicts between the local people and the state on issues pertaining to natural resources and environmental management, the issue of land and water resources, etc to impacts from large-scale development projects and issues of pollution. This sudden proliferation of the environmental movements speaks of the existence of a voluminous literature on Thai environmentalism.

Broadly, the available literature on Thai environmentalism in general may be classified as concerning the causes and magnitude of the environmental problems, concerning the issues of resource conservation and management, concerning the politics of environment and, on the environmental movements in the country. Some prominent literature on Thai environmentalism falling in to either of the aforesaid categories include W. L. Brockelman (1989) 'Differing Environmental Approaches to Environmental Protection in Thailand', in Michael Shari (ed.) *Culture and Environment in Thailand: A Symposium of the Siam Society*, (Bangkok: The Siam Society); Shalardchai Ramitanondh (1989) 'Forest and Deforestation in Thailand: A Pandisciplinary Approach' in The Siam Society (ed.) *Culture and Environment in Thailand: A Symposium of the Siam Society*, (Bangkok: The Siam Society); Larry Lohmann (1991) 'Peasants, Plantations, and Pulps: The Politics of Eucalyptus in Thailand', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 23, No. 4; Pinkaew Leungaramsri and Noel Rajesh (eds.) (1992) *The Future of Peoples and Forests in Thailand after the Logging Ban: Project for Ecological Recovery*, Bangkok; J. L. Taylor (1993) *Forest Monks and the Nation State: An Anthropological and Historical Study*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies); Philip Hirsch (1993) 'Thailand and the New Geopolitics of Southeast Asia: Resource and Environmental Issues', *Fifth International Conference on Thai Studies*, SOAS London; Suntaree Komin (1993) 'A Social Analysis of the Environmental Problems in Thailand', in Michael Howard (ed.) *Asia's Environmental Crisis*, (Boulder: West view Press); Ubonrat Siriyuvasak (1994) 'The Environment and Popular Culture

in Thailand', in *Thai Development Newsletter*, No. 26; Ann Danaiya Usher (1994) 'After the Forest: AIDS as Ecological Collapse in Thailand', in *Thai Development Newsletter*, No. 6; Jonathan Rigg (1995) 'Counting the Costs: Economic Growth and Environmental Change in Thailand', in Jonathan Rigg (ed.) *Counting the Costs*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies); Ganjanapan Anan (1996) 'The Politics of Environment in Northern Thailand: Ethnicity and Highland Development Programs', in Hirsch (ed.) *Seeing Forests for Trees: Environment and Environmentalism in Thailand*, (Chiangmai: Silkworm Books); Philip Hirsch (1996) *Seeing Forests for Trees: Environment and Environmentalism in Thailand*, (Chiangmai: Silkworm Books); Jim Taylor (1996) "'Thamma Chaat": Activist Monks and Competing Discourses of Nature and Nation in Northeastern Thailand', in Philip Hirsch (1996) *Seeing Forests for Trees: Environment and Environmentalism in Thailand*, (Chiangmai: Silkworm Books); Philip Hirsch (1997) 'The Politics of Environment: Opposition and Legitimacy', in Kevin Hewison (ed.) *Political Change in Thailand: Democracy and Participation*, (London: Routledge); Samudee Nicro (1997) 'Environmental Movements in Thailand', *Paper Presented at the Conference on Asia's Environmental Movement in Comparative Perspective*, University of Hong Kong; and Pintoktaeng Prapas (1998) *Politics on the Streets: 99 Day Assembly of the Poor Demonstration, History of Marching and Protesting in Thai Society*, (Bangkok: Kruek Society). However, it needs to be noted that the present list does not claim to be comprehensive list of literature on Thai environmentalism; it is just a list of some prominent ones among many others.

A careful reading of these literatures on Thai environmentalism reveals a few important facts about the environmental movements in Thailand. Firstly, the environmental movements in Thailand are fueled by the conflicts over livelihood issues vital to the survival of the poor. These movements are spearheaded by the rapidly growing middle class in Thailand. Because of the involvement of the emerging middle class in the environmental movements and because of the factors responsible for the environmental degradation, scholars are in favour of arguing that the cause of Thai environmental movements is rooted in 'affluence'. Secondly, the development of the environmental discourses in Thailand is greatly shaped by the role played by the business houses those sponsor and promote environmental education activities with an aim to appropriate the social space in

the environmental arena. Without getting to justify the reasons for the corporate interests to sponsor environmental activism, it can be pointed out that in Thailand, as the corporate houses appear to be promoting environmental consciousness and development, many scholars have come to the conclusion that the environmental movements in Thailand follow a 'Corporatist' path.

3.3.7. Malaysia

Malaysia, comprising of Peninsular Malaysia and the Eastern Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak on the Borneo Island, has experienced rapid industrialization that has caused rapid deterioration of the environment. Consequently, the situation has given rise to environmental movements that play significant roles both at home and abroad. A perusal of some of the literature pertaining to the environmental politics and movements corroborates this fact.

E. N. Anderson (1987) 'A Malaysian Tragedy of the Commons' in B. McCay and J. Acheson (eds.) *The Question of the Commons-The Culture and Ecology of Communal Resources*, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press); J. P. Brosius (1993) 'Negotiating Citizenship in a Commodified Landscape: The case of Penan Hunter Gatherers in Sarawak East Malaysia,' *Paper Presented at Social Science Research Council Conference on Cultural Citizenship in South East Asia*, Honolulu; J. P. Brosius (1997) 'Endangered Forests, Endangered People: Environmentalist Representations of Indigenous Knowledge', in *Human Ecology*, Vol. 25, No. 1; J. P. Brosius (1999) 'Green Dots, Pink Hearts: Displacing Politics From the Malaysian Rainforests', in *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 101, No. 1; and, T. Bending (2001) 'Telling Stories: Representing the Anti-Logging Movement of the Penan of Sarawak', in *European Journal of Development Research*, Vol.13, No. 2 are some prominent articles of environmental politics in Malaysia, with many others focusing on the anti-dam movements and so on.

As revealed, the most important of the environmental protest movements in Malaysia include the Anti-Logging Movement of the Penan in the Borneo Island, the movement against the construction of the Bakun Dam, and the Asian rare Earth Case. These environmental movements are led by several Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) like the Friends of the Earth-Malaysia, the

Consumer Association of Penang, the Rate Payers Association of Penang and the Third World Network. These organizations leading the environmental protests movements have witnessed increasing involvement and exposure in the recent years. The strategies and tactics used by these movements are court litigation, petitions, raising public awareness, dialogues and negotiations with the authorities, etc, falling exclusively within the domain of legal-constitutional framework. Since the environmental NGOs that spearhead the movement are viewed with suspicion over their perceived vociferous 'anti-development' positions, it has posed a serious challenge to the movement itself.

The environmental movements in Malaysia revolve round livelihood issues. The movement has successfully undertaken mobilization of the masses. The support base is wide but despite the opposition being strong, the achievements have not been less significant.

3.3.8. Indonesia

Indonesia long experienced the authoritarian, military dictatorial regime of Sukarno. The situation prior to the transfer of power to Suharto in 1968 was precarious with the virtual collapse of the economy and inflation crossing over one thousand percent. Suharto came to power promising to change Indonesia's economic situation, and economic development became the *raison d'être* of the government. One of the aspects of Suharto's development efforts was to focus on rapid exploitation of Indonesia's natural wealth. Timber extraction was massive and so was the process of industrialization with foreign investments at the cost of depleting forest and rising pollution. Deforestation and industrial pollution posed serious environmental challenges to Indonesia. International pressure to check pollution was mounting. Bowing to the international pressure and acknowledging the real need for pollution control in its rush towards development, Indonesian government established the Ministry for Development Supervision and the Environment in 1978 under the charge of an environmentally motivated technocrat Emil Salim. Under Salim, some form of state environmentalism developed in Indonesia; thereby relegating to the backyard the possibility of the emergence of strong environmental movement, a situation approximating the Chinese experience.

Thus, the Indonesian experience with the environmental movement is quite different. A survey of some prominent literature in this regard would be helpful. Some important available literature on the Indonesian environmental politics and movement include R. Cribb (1988) *The Politics of Environmental Protection in Indonesia* (Victoria: The Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Monash University); George J. Aditjondro (1990) *The Emerging Environmental Movement in Indonesia* (Salatiga: Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana); Peter Dauvergne (1990) 'The Politics of Deforestation in Indonesia', in *Pacific Affairs*, Winter; Colin Mac Andrews (1994) 'Politics of the Environment in Indonesia', in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 34, No. 4; and David Potter (1996) 'Democratization and the Environment: NGOs and Deforestation Policies in India and Indonesia', in David Potter (ed.) *NGOs and Environmental Policies: Asia and Africa* (Portland: Frank Cass and Company) among many others. Analyses of the contents in these literatures reveal the fact that there is no powerful environmental movement in Indonesia. This is because the political climate in Indonesia, as has been stated above, does not allow any coalition formation between activists, journalists, students, scientists etc. Only two big state-authorized environmental NGOs dominate the environmental arena of the state. They are WAHLI (Friends of the Earth-Indonesia) and SKEPHI (NGO Network for Forest Conservation in Indonesia). Thus the prospect of a strong, organized environmental movement is yet unborn in Indonesia.

In East Asia, there are many other countries where we find innumerable cases of environmental politics and movements, for instance, like in South Korea. However, it is beyond the scope of the present work to explore all the environmental movements that have taken place in Asia. We have explored some major strands of environmental movements and politics in some select countries of East Asia. Now we shall briefly discuss the theme in the context of the South Asian nations.

In South Asia too, environmental activism is not an alien phenomena. Apart from India, which, according to Rush (1991) has the oldest and most diverse environmental movement in Asia the detail of which shall be discussed in

the following chapter, the small South Asian countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh and even Bhutan have undergone the experience of some environment related activities and movements. Let us briefly look at some of the south Asian countries' experience with the environmental movements.

3.3.9. Nepal

Nepal is a home to some important environmental protests movements in South Asia. The initial wave of Nepalese environmentalism and environmental movements were influenced by culture and tradition based upon Hindu and Buddhist norms and values. Since both Hinduism and Buddhism, the two religions of the East acclaimed for their rich environmental philosophy have deep roots in Nepal; it is obvious that the Nepalese perception of nature is influenced by these values. The approaches of the early environmentalists, therefore, included bioethics, holism and Gaia, which emphasized upon the belief that Earth and its components are living entities and in biological egalitarianism, which implies that all creatures belong to the same unified whole and they deserve equal consideration. However, the rapid urbanization and western fascination have brought an attitudinal variation of the people, and hence, environmental discords are eminent.

In Nepal, for instance, peasants driven by indigenous wisdom had shown their concern for protecting forests as early as in 1954, although it forms an unrecorded instance of an environmental protest in Nepal. Recorded variety of environmental movement in Nepal first sprouted in the Katmandu Valley in the second half of the 1980s. In 1989, it is said that an NGO named LEADERS Inc. appealed against the Godavari Marble Factory in Lalitpur to put an end to the extraction as this activity was ruining the pristine environment of Godavari. Another instance of the people's action was filing an appeal to stop the import of the banned pesticide DDT from Indonesia for its environmental impacts in the 1990. In the same year Save Bagmati Campaign worked actively for the restoration of the massively exploited Bagmati River System. The opposition by the left parties to the proposed hydroelectric project at the Mahakali also bore some environmental issues.

Hence, despite national rules and regulations that ensure environmental protection, gaps in their implementation have given way to occasional outbursts of environmental movements in Nepal. The environmental movements ignited on different occasions as cited above struggled to stand vigilant against obscure fallouts that pose a threat to both human life and the environment. Society and environmental activists crusading for the environmental cause have often opposed industries that spill out poisonous effluents, development that depletes the environmental resources and disturbs the ecological balance and so on. However, Nepal's failing democracy has miserably failed to take any significant environmental steps in the recent years owing to its preoccupation with the insurgent Maoist rebels, and consequently, the environmental damage that has taken place is simply massive.

3.3.10. Bhutan

Bhutan, a tiny Himalayan Kingdom, is an abode of Buddhism. Buddhist values and norms have shaped the Bhutanese perception of Nature. It still has a bulk of virgin forests with very rich flora and fauna. The Bhutanese government, as a response to the growing global concern over environment and the subsequent international regimes for environmental governance, has evolved state mechanisms to prevent any environmental degradation. At some times, however, Bhutan has even tried to manipulate the environmental and green factor to achieve its political calculations. The pro-democratic movement of later half of 1980s and the 1990s in Bhutan which resulted in the exile of over one-lakh Bhutanese citizens had its root in some basic ecological issues. The movement in the beginning started as a Human Rights Movement and an Ecological Protest.

Bhutan planned to create a 'Green Belt' across the Indo-Bhutan Border in the Southern part of the country irrespective of any ecological consideration of the dense population in the region under the plea of environmental development. This Green Belt had the potential to displace thousands of people from their habitat. Thus, the protest began in the form of land rights and problem of ecological adaptation and feared ecological unsustainability of the displaced population elsewhere in the mountainous region of the country. This finally

turned into a pro-democratic movement in the Kingdom. Thus, Bhutan also has the history of having suppressed an ecological movement although its international reputation in the environmental sphere is quite high. There is hardly any possibility of any form of protest in the kingdom, and therefore, strong, organized environmental movements are quite unlikely in Bhutan.

3.3.11. Bangladesh

The efforts to protect environment in Bangladesh is both old and new. As in other traditional and pre-industrial societies, the life of the common Bangladeshi people was tied closely with the rhythm of nature. The economy was primarily agrarian and agriculture was largely organic. There was not much of antagonism between nature and human economic activity. However, the environmental protection effort in its postindustrial sense is of recent origin in Bangladesh. The beginnings can be traced to 1980s with the establishment of the Ministry for Environment and Forests, emergence of non-governmental environmental organizations, and the emergence of some research and consultation organizations. Despite these developments, environment in Bangladesh continues to deteriorate owing to reasons of ill-conceived projects, absence of right environmental policies, lax execution of the environmental policies etc. This has provided a fertile ground for the emergence of civic environmental movements in Bangladesh since the early 1990s.

Some of the important environmental movements in Bangladesh include *Poribesh Rokkha Shopoth* (POROSH) formed by a collection of some important environment conscious citizens. In the second half of the 1990s, POROSH was deeply involved in organizing citizen's campaigns for the protection of lakes, greenery and air in Dhaka. Doctors for Health and Environment (DHE) formed to mobilize doctors and health workers for the protection of the environment are another, which spearheads the civic environmental movements in Bangladesh. Several other issue-based environmental movements in Bangladesh include movement to save the trees of the *Osmany Uddyan*, a movement in Jessore to save *Bil Dakatia*, and the movement against the consequences of shrimp cultivation in the coastal areas of Khulna District (Ahmed: 2000).

A study of the environmental movement in Bangladesh helps us to locate a few important characteristics of the Bangladeshi environmental movement. Firstly, there is a good unity among and between pro-environmental organizations in Bangladesh. Secondly, environmental movement in Bangladesh is non-partisan in character and embraces peoples from all walks of life. Thirdly, significant role is played by non-resident Bangladeshis in the mobilization and networking of the environmental movement. These apart, the movement is forward looking, focusing on future environmental problems, it has a voluntary spirit and is self reliant in the sense that it survives predominantly through the contributions made by its members.

There are good future prospects for the environmental movement. The popular environmental consciousness and the fast growing civil society are likely to boost the morale of the Bangladeshi environmental movement to achieve its desired objective of environmental protection in future.

Apart from these countries, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Maldives and other countries of the region also have experienced steady environmental degradation and consequent environmental movements on which we shall not delve in the present study. However, it is not also to suggest that these have less important contributions to the environmental movements and their study in Asia.

3.4. SALIENT FEATURES OF ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT IN ASIA

From the critical reading of the literature on environmental activism and environmental movements in some specific countries of Asia, and as revealed from the two major works on Asian Environmental Movements, that is Lee and So (1999) and Kalland and Persoon (1998), we can make out some broad features of the environmental movements in Asia. The broad features that characterize the Environmental Movements in Asia have been summarized below:

Diverse Character:

The first and the foremost feature of the environmental movements in Asia is that Asia's environmental movements are diverse in terms of both their

organizational structures and their agenda. There is a diversity of social groups that have engaged in a variety of political actions, forming loose networks of diverse interest groups whose goals occasionally coincide, compliment or compete with each other.

Socially Constructed:

Broadly, Asian environmental movement is socially constructed and are inherently political because they inevitably involve the distribution of resources among different regions and different social groups. The readings on the environmental activisms in Japan, India and Malaysia suggest that the environmental consciousness and environmental activism in the Asian region is never simply about the environment *per se*. In most of the cases, the environmental activities and movements in Asia are for environmental and ecological integrity. For instance, the environmental movements in India that center around the protection of natural resources as primarily driven by local people's concern for maintaining control over the principal sources of their livelihood.

Environmental Movement Bind up Environmental and Social Issues Together:

As a corollary of the feature as discussed above, another important feature of the Asian environmental movement is that they entail environmental uses which are very intimately bound up with other (non) environmental issues. Thus, one of the two points Kalland and Persoon (1998) made on the nature of the Asian environmental movements is that they cannot be understood in terms of environmental issues alone. The environmental issues in Asia are intimately bound up with developmental issues (Adams: 1990; Yearley: 1991); and therefore, the environmental movements must be analyzed from a broader perspective covering all these dimensions, which make up the organic whole of the environmental movement.

Locally Focused

According to Kalland and Persoon (1998), 'the environmental movements in Asia tend to have a local focus'. Whereas many of the most

successful western environmental movements, at least in terms of fund raising, focus on perceived environmental problems in distant parts of the world, for instance, the campaigns against whaling, sealing, etc. Contrarily, the Asian environmental movements are 'usually responses to very concrete problems in people's immediate neighborhood'. In other words, the environmental movements in Asia center on issues of local dimension.

Shaped by External Influences:

Asian environmental movements are shaped considerably by external factors. Some forces and factors from outside Asia have made significant contributions to movement formations in the Asian region. For instance, the '*Chernobyl Nuclear Accident*' of 1986 was decisive in providing a critical momentum for burgeoning anti-nuclear environmental movements at least in South Korea and probably in Taiwan. Similarly, the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development has helped elevate the profiles and agenda of local environmental groups. Local environmental groups have at times been successful in mobilizing support from international organizations to combat and reverse environmentally unfriendly actions taken by their national authorities. On the negative side, local pollution problems in countries like India and Malaysia have been attributed to non-actions of global actors such as multinational corporations. Thus, in other words, external global forces have played an important role in terms of both supporting and limiting the agenda and actions of local environmental groups. This is to say, the environmental movements in Asia, and for that matter, their origin, objectives, strategies, targets, successes and failures have to be understood within the context of their interactions with larger international institutional factors.

'Culture'-Factor:

Yet another feature of the Asian environmental movements is that 'Culture'-factor plays an important role in them. First, at one point, the environmental movements in Asia are generally regarded as a form of 'cultural critique', and are frequently forms of political resistance in situations, which make open political statements risky. At other times, they are convenient ways of manipulating local, ethnic and national identities (Kalland and Persoon; 1998).

Secondly, it is also argued that although environmentalism in Asia in general and the environmental movements in Taiwan, the Philippines and Hong Kong in particular had western origins and have borrowed heavily from western green thinking, there is an indigenization process of environmentalism going on over the past couple of decades. Domestic religious discourses like folk religion, Buddhism, etc.; cultural values like Familism, Feng Shui Cosmology etc. have played a significant role in '*framing*', '*enhancing*' the solidarity, and empowering the environmental movements. To cite a few examples in this context, Taiwanese local temples are held as important sites of environmental protests. Local deities, religious parades, etc are the key components of the environmental protest movements directed against the pollution and polluting companies. In the Philippines, the spirits of the ancestors who reside on the mountains, trees, and lakes are used as claims for the indigenous communities to protect their natural environment from the poaching of the developers. In fact, it is this fusion of the local religion and native cultural values into the environmental discourses and movements that have created a distinctive style of the environmentalism in Asia.

'Contingent Politics of Alliance' of Asian Movements:

Although the Asian environmental movements may share similar outlooks their interests, mobilizations and activities may not converge. This diversity of interests in the Asian environmental movements have led to a 'Contingent Politics of Alliance' among and within the various environmental movements, which have at times rendered environmental movements and activities in each country and the region unsustainable. This is one of the unique features of the Environmental Movements in Asia.

3.5 DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE ASIAN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS

We have located some broad features common to most of the environmental movements in Asia. However, a comparative analysis of the environmental movements in different countries of Asia reveals some noteworthy differences in them. Some prominent differences in the nature and content of the environmental movements in Asia have been summarized below:

Firstly, all the environmental movements in Asia do not follow a singular path. Lee and So (1999) have pointed out that the environmental movements in different parts of Asia differ in terms of different paths that they have followed. They have pointed out that the environmental movements in Asia have followed three distinct paths. The environmental movements in the countries like Taiwan, South Korea, and the Philippines follow a *Populist Path*; the environmental movements in Thailand follow a *Corporatist Path*; and the movements in countries like Hong Kong follow a *Post-Materialist Path*. These differences in the paths of the environmental movements in different countries of Asia are attributed mainly to such factors as the differences in the phases of democratization process in these countries, the religio-cultural differences, the role of the anti-nuclear campaigns in environmental movements in these countries, and to the strategies adopted by the business corporations and other associated groups towards the environmental movements, and so on. These conditions have been instrumental in shaping the contours of the environmental movements in Asia.

Secondly, what follows from this first difference is that, although it has been often argued that the environmental movements in the South in general are livelihood based, an analysis of the different environmental movements in different countries of Asia reveals that all such movements are not livelihood based. Whereas some of the Asian environmental movements as in India are livelihood based, others, in more developed countries of Asia, are even post-materialist movements.

Thirdly, Asia's environmental movements also greatly differ in terms of the relative importance that they have assigned to the 'Green' (nature conservation) and 'Brown' (pollution) issues. For example, in Malaysia, the environmental movements seem to have centered mostly around nature conservation issues, within a top-down, centralized hierarchy, dominated by few leading non-confrontational environmental groups. In India too, 'Green' or nature conservation issues have comparatively been given more attention and prominence vis-à-vis the 'Brown' issues by the environmental groups and movements which operate in a more decentralized and confrontational fashion than that found in Malaysia. Contrarily, in Japan, however, both nature conservation and pollution issues have

commanded attention from a multitude of local environmental movements, often based on traditional committees that are operating with little coordination with each other at the national level.

Fourthly, the Asian environmental movements, despite sharing some common outlooks, greatly differ in terms of their interests, mobilizations and activities. This difference owing to the diversity of interests, patterns of mobilizations and the nature of activities of the Asian environmental movements have led to a '*Contingent Politics of Alliance*' among and within the various environmental movements.

A cursory look at the Asian Environmental movements itself reveals numerous issues pertaining to the movements in the continent. The movements in Asia, as pointed out by Lee and So (1999) present us with dichotomous sets of issues: The origin of the movement owes to both affluence as well as degradation; the movement discourses are both Post materialist as well as Livelihood issues; movements strategies vary from Top-down to Bottom-up approaches; and the movement impacts are in some cases significant and in others, minimal. This is because of the varied political, economic and cultural contexts of their origin. Thus, Asia's environmental movements are complicated phenomena, comprising a diversity of strands of environmental activities, involving diversity of strategies and a diversity of groups and organizations in differing structural contexts. Hence, whereas some environmental movements approximate the western movements in their approaches and issues, yet others are distinctly different. Even in case of those resembling the western movements, if one element of the movement resembles the western variety of the movement, the other ingredient of the movement does not. Thus, it may not be possible to talk about a monolithic structure of uniformly dressed sets of environmental movement in Asia.

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