

Chipko Movement

By IASToppers | 2024-04-23 15:45:00



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Chipko Movement completes 50 years.



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About Chipko Movement

- The Chipko movement, also known as Chipko Andolan, is a **non-violent social and ecological movement** in India that began in the **1970s** to **protect trees from commercial logging** and **government-backed policies on deforestation**.
- It is **one of the earliest examples** of a **collective effort** aimed at forest conservation, revolving around the practice of hugging trees to **prevent them from being cut down**.
- It is also renowned for **mobilizing women for forest preservation** and is recognized as an **eco-feminist movement**.
- This movement **led to a shift in attitudes regarding women's status in society**.

Origins:

- The **Chipko Movement originated** in the **Himalayan** regions of **Uttarakhand** (then part of Uttar Pradesh), in 1973.
- The name of the movement '**chipko**' comes from the word '**embrace**', as the villagers hugged the trees and **encircled them to prevent being hacked**.
- The movement, led by **Sunderlal Bahuguna** in the **Garhwal forests**, ended in 1974.
 - Leaders like Gaura Devi, Amrita Devi Bishnoi, Medha Patkar, A. K. Banerjee, and others strengthened it.
- The movement drew inspiration from the **original Chipko Andolan** initiated by **Rajasthan's Bishnoi community** in the **18th century**.

Women's role in the movement:

- The Chipko movement can be **described as a women's movement**.
- Women formed the **nucleus of the movement**, as the group most directly affected by the lack of firewood and drinking water caused by deforestation.
- The movement saw poor, rural women embracing trees to **halt deforestation**.
- They **became the backbone** of the **movement** and took on **significant roles in afforestation**.

efforts.

Challenging societal norms:

- Women's involvement in the movement **challenged traditional gender roles** and **empowered them to assert their rights and interests**.
- The movement evolved into a **dual purpose of conservation** and **challenging societal norms**.
- Women **aimed to protect the environment** while also **challenging the status quo**, which favored men, demanding a **voice in decisions that impacted them**.

About Eco-feminism:

- Ecofeminism is a **social** and **political movement** that **blends elements of feminism** and **environmentalism**.
- It explores the **relationships between women and nature**.
- It explores the **intersections of gender oppression** and **environmental degradation**, arguing that **both are rooted in similar systems of domination**, exploitation, and hierarchy.
- Ecofeminists believe that **patriarchy and capitalism** are the **causes of both women's oppression** and the **degradation of the environment**, and that any strategy to address one must also consider the impact on the other.

Factors that led to emergence of Eco-feminism:

- **Interconnectedness of exploitation:** Ecofeminism links women's rights and environmental concerns, promoting both simultaneously.
 - Women, **disproportionately affected by poverty**, bear the **brunt of agricultural challenges** due to **climate change**, like **food shortages**.
- **Women's lived experiences:** Women, being solely in charge of cultivation, livestock and children, suffered the most due to floods and landslides, caused due to rise in deforestation in the face of urbanisation.
- **Importance of traditional knowledge:** Eco-feminism recognizes the significance of traditional knowledge, often held and transmitted by women, in promoting sustainable practices.
- **Globalization and industrialization:** It disproportionately affected women, prompting scrutiny of capitalist systems.
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Relevance of Ecofeminism in present time:

- Ecofeminism is relevant in present time because it **helps to analyze the profit-driven**, sexist system of capitalist patriarchy that harms the ecosystem by exploiting natural resources and the people who live there.
- For example, research shows that **climate change is not gender-neutral**, and **women are increasingly vulnerable** to its **impacts than men**.
- Women are often the majority of the world's poor and **more dependent on local natural resources**.

- Ecofeminism also **explores the sustainable relationship between women and the environment.**

Other Important eco-feminist movement in India:

- **Narmada Bachao Andolan:** It started in 1985 to oppose the construction of large dams on the Narmada River.
 - Led by native tribes, farmers, environmentalists, and human rights activists, including **Medha Patkar.**
- **The Appiko Movement (1980s):** It was inspired by the Chipko movement, with women in Karnataka's Western Ghats hugging trees to halt deforestation.
- **The Silent Valley Movement (1973):** It aimed to protect a rainforest in Kerala from being flooded for a hydroelectric project.