

Green Politics and the Indian Middle Class

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Four pillars of green politics—social justice, grass-roots democracy, non-violence, and respect for diversity—have become more or less established principles of Indian political parties. The integration of the environmental dimension of green politics, consisting of the twin pillars of ecological wisdom and sustainability, is in an evolutionary phase. It is likely that increasingly this integration will reflect the views of the growing Indian middle class.

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, was a practitioner of “green politics” far ahead of his times. His politics in the first half of the last century embraced the six principles of green politics, namely social justice, ecological wisdom, grass-roots democracy, non-violence, ecological wisdom and sustainability, that were adopted in 2001 at the first Global Greens Congress at Canberra, Australia.

Despite Gandhi’s green politics, no established political party in India can claim to be a “green party” in the accepted sense of the term. Perhaps, a vibrant middle class of reasonable size, necessary to support such a green party, has emerged or is emerging in India only in the last couple of decades. In this context, two questions of considerable interest are: Why has a green party not occupied more political space in India for so long? (See for example Narain 2009.) How green is the politics of the Indian middle class? This article is an attempt at answering these questions. It is not about the right approach to the environment and associated lifestyle, including such important issues as consumerism, large-scale industrialisation and urbanisation. It is a simple attempt at examining whether, with the emerging Indian middle class, a conventional political party contesting elections is likely to champion environmental issues in the same way as green parties do in the developed North.

Gandhi had a significant impact on the new social movements in Europe and America, whose participants were middle-class people concerned about nature (Bjork and Ulvila 2008). In India also, the environmental groups, for example, the Chipko (embrace) movement and Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), have adopted Gandhi’s methods of protests

such as demonstrations and hunger strikes. But the protesters have been generally the people at the margin—peasants, tribal communities, fishermen and other underprivileged people—“empty-belly” environmentalists in Ramachandra Guha’s spectacular words, very different from the “full-stomach” environmentalists in the North (Guha and Martinez-Alier 1997).

The classification of people into “full-stomach” and “empty-belly” environmentalists, or omnivores, ecological refugees and ecosystem people (Gadgil and Guha 1995) perhaps does not deal adequately with the emerging middle class in India in the context of green politics. The Indian middle class is neither rich nor poor, nor ecological refugees, nor ecosystem people. With their education and access to the media, they have some awareness of the ecological issues. At the receiving end of many environmental problems, day to day, they suffer problems of unsafe and inadequate water supply, poor air quality and sewerage. Furthermore, ecological wisdom and sustainability are two critical, but only two of the six pillars of green politics. The Indian middle class has a strong commitment to the other four pillars, namely social justice, grass-roots democracy, non-violence, and respect for diversity.

Essence of Green Parties

Before taking up the two questions under discussion, it is useful to recall that the term “green” of green parties comes from a heightened concern for the environment and its sustainability. “Greenpeace”—the well-known organisation that carries out non-violent campaigns and creative confrontations to expose global environmental problems—has “green” in its name. The term “green” also became popular worldwide with the “green bans” movement in Australia in the early 1970s. Workers under the New South Wales Builders’ Labourers’ Federation (NSWBLF), on a large scale, refused to work on ecologically unsound projects. It came to be known as the “green bans” movement after the term was used by the Australian trade union leader and

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environmentalist Jack Munday in May 1973. Soon the term “greenies” designated not only supporters of the NSWBLF green bans but also environmentally concerned people in general (Burgmann 2008: 69).

Single-issue parties find it difficult to mobilise popular support. Thus, given the reach of politics beyond just the environment, green parties slowly came to embrace a few more fundamental agendas. Environmentalists and peace activists in erstwhile West Germany came together to form the political party “The Greens” on 13 January 1980 and adopt the “Four Pillars of Green Politics”—social justice, ecological wisdom, grass-roots democracy, and non-violence. Soon, these became the four accepted pillars of green politics. The four pillars got expanded to six principles in 2001 at the first Global Greens Congress at Canberra. The additional two principles were sustainability and respect for diversity.

The emergence of the six principles is partly explained by the roots of the green parties. These parties were established in countries across Western Europe in the 1980s and arose from four different social movements—the environmental movement, the labour movement, the civil rights movement, and the peace movement. The philosophy of the four movements got enshrined in the six principles. There is widespread popular support in India across classes for four of the six pillars of green politics, namely social justice, grass-roots democracy, non-violence and respect for diversity, and these are endorsed by almost all political parties in India.¹ Thus, in what follows, the discussion on green politics in India focuses on the residual two environmental pillars, namely ecological wisdom and sustainability.

Emergence of the Middle Class

Green parties are a characteristic of Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and of some Latin American and East Asian countries. All of them have a sizeable middle class. A post-materialist philosophy is congenial for the growth of a green party. The appeal of such a philosophy gained in popularity with

humanity’s demand on nature exceeding, for over four decades, what nature can replenish. The danger from the regenerative capacity of 1.5 Earths required to supply the ecological goods and services that mankind needs every year has more resonance in the middle class placed comfortably far beyond the poverty line. Poverty is not conducive for such a world view. That brings us to the important development: the recent emergence of the Indian middle class.

The median, a technical term in statistics, refers to the entity that separates the lower half of a sample or population from the upper half. The celebrated “median voter rule” states that, in a majoritarian democracy, political parties and leaders will select the policy or outcome most preferred by the median voter. Thus, the middle class, separating the poor from the rich, often play a critical role in many countries in determining not only who wins the election but also the nature of policies promised by political parties in manifestos and even the nature of political parties. What is important to note, however, is that the median voter will not be from the middle class unless the class is reasonably large. With say more than a half the population in poverty, it will be a poor at the median separating the even poorer from the richer in two equal halves. This brings us to the problem of defining the middle class itself.²

How about self-categorisation? Surely, people themselves will know whether they belong to the middle class or not. But as Harris (2007) reported, curiously, in response to a survey question in the poorest parts of Bengaluru, the great majority of the respondents categorised themselves to be “middle class.” Thus, self-categorisation is not very useful for defining the Indian middle class.

In common parlance, the middle class means beyond the poverty line, but not rich. But defining the poverty line itself and who is rich is a contentious matter. The Asian Development Bank (ADB), in 2010, defined the middle class as \$2–\$20 per person per day in 2005 purchasing power parity (PPP) \$ (Asian Development Bank 2010). But, this definition is not universal. *The Economist* (2009) defines

it as people with roughly a third of their income left for discretionary spending after paying for basic food and shelter. In 2011, in India, this would have left out the poorest with income below Rs 27.2 per person per day and Rs 33.3 per person per day in rural and urban areas, respectively, from the middle class. So it would be “the aspirers” just above the poverty line, who typically were the small shopkeepers, farmers with their own modest landholdings or semiskilled industrial and service workers. They had enough food to eat and might have owned items such as a small television, a propane stove and an electric rod for heating water, but may not have had a third of their income for discretionary purposes to be counted as middle class. Of course, the middle class has been defined in many more ways than these two.

The size of the middle class changes with its definition. For example, Meyer and Birdsall (2012), using the 2005 PPP minimum and maximum thresholds of \$10 and \$50, and National Sample Survey 2009–10 data, estimate the Indian middle class in 2009–10 at less than 6% of the population or just under 70 million people, which is less than half of what the National Council of Applied Economic Research estimates for 2004–05. There appears to be a consensus that no matter how it is defined, the middle class in India is growing with the pace of change also dependent on the definition. However, it is also true that no matter how it is defined, the median voter in India is not from the middle class as yet.

Why No Green Party?

Mahatma Gandhi, right from 1909, when he wrote his book *Hind Swaraj*, had a vision of idyllic, simple and unchanging rural life. In *Hind Swaraj*, he wrote against overconsumption:

We notice that the mind is a restless bird; the more it gets the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied. The more we indulge our passions the more unbridled they become. Our ancestors, therefore, set a limit to our indulgences. They saw that happiness was largely a mental condition. A man is not necessarily happy because he is rich, or unhappy because he is poor... Observing all this, our ancestors dissuaded us from luxuries and pleasures (pp 68–69).

Against mechanisation and urbanisation he wrote, again in *Hind Swaraj*:

It was not that we did not know how to invent machinery, but our forefathers knew that, if we set our hearts after such things, we would become slaves and lose our moral fiber. They therefore, after due deliberation, decided that we should only do what we could with our hands and feet... They further reasoned that large cities were a snare and a useless encumbrance and that people would not be happy in them, that there would be gangs of thieves and robbers, prostitution and vice flourishing in them and that poor men would be robbed by rich men. They were, therefore, satisfied with small villages (pp 68–69).

Between 1909 and independence in 1947, he did modify his views somewhat.³ But the strain of the nostalgic vision of idyllic, simple and unchanging rural life continued. Gandhi believed in decentralised and panchayat- or village-based democracy. And, of course, he believed in *ahimsa* and non-violent struggle.

Many of the green movements or “new popular movements” in Europe, for example, “The Operation Gandhi 1952” in London and the peace movement in the 1960s in which philosopher Bertrand Russell participated, were inspired by Gandhi (Bjork and Ulvila 2008). Yet in India, although there were movements such as Sunderlal Bahuguna’s Chipko movement in Garhwal and NBA led by Medha Patkar and Baba Amte, there are no green parties in the conventional political arena. Four principles of green politics, namely, social justice, grassroots democracy, non-violence and respect for diversity have become integral part of the avowed goals of every major Indian political party. But, commitment to the two others of the six principles, namely, ecological wisdom, and sustainability, appears weak.⁴ While Gandhi in loin-cloth with his simple lifestyle may be worshipped as the Father of the Nation, Babasaheb Ambedkar in a suit also continues to be the role model of many middle-class people.

Studies on Ecology

The lack of a green party in India is in spite of a wide variety of ecological wisdom in the country. Indeed, given the vibrant intellectual atmosphere in India, there are quite a few studies about the

environmental issues in India. First is the measurement of “ecological footprint”, which is an integrated measure of the habitat or space (for example, crop land, pasture, aquatic area, forests) required continuously for biophysical services to support a people’s lifestyle. The measure converts goods and services demanded into area required to supply the renewable resources (for example, food, fuel or fibre) and to absorb the waste (for example, energy lands or forests required for carbon absorption).

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Global Footprint Network did a collaborative study in 2008 entitled “India’s Ecological Footprint—A Business Perspective.” It found that India has the third largest ecological footprint after the US and China, and the footprint was increasing with economic growth. However, much of this was also because of India’s large population. The *Living Planet Report 2014* found that, in 2010, India continued to be the third largest in terms of total ecological footprint, and in per capita terms, it ranked 136th among 152 countries.

Second, there are studies recommending solutions for reducing the ecological problems in India. Some are in the Gandhian tradition. For example, Bhaduri and Patkar (2009) argue against corporate-led large-scale industrialisation and urbanisation because it requires land acquisition and displacement of farmers, and such industrialisation cannot absorb the surplus labour from agriculture fast enough. Benefits come unacceptably slowly to the poor. Instead, they recommend setting up small-scale village-based industry on waste and vacant land. They also note:

The composition of output, produced in this manner at the local level would require less energy; no big dam would be needed to provide electricity nor would expensive and dangerous nuclear power be required; production in general would become much less intensive in its use of natural resources like land, water, forest and mineral products.

Kothari (2009) argues from “a more fundamentally ethical perspective that respects all life forms” against consumerism and the pursuit of growth in general and even the use of waste and non-cultivated land for industry in

particular. He reminds the reader how with human encroachment on nature, “10 to 30% of mammal, amphibian and bird species were threatened with extinction.”

Third, there are studies on the appropriate approach to wildlife conservation. Saberwal, Rangarajan and Kothari (2001), for example, argue against exclusionary wildlife conservation and separation of humans from nature. They recommend giving a greater stake to local communities in conservation, including joint management, limited harvesting of forest products and better incentives through a share of tourism revenue.

Notwithstanding these studies and advocacy, the support base for pro-environment conventional politics has been limited right from the time of independence. Gandhi’s vision of idyllic, simple and unchanging rural life was overtaken by the model of socialist planning and modernisation. After independence, there was a headlong modernisation drive through large-scale industry, such as steel plants, cities and dams. After Lahore, the capital of undivided Punjab went to Pakistan; the first planned city of independent India, Chandigarh, was built to house the capital of Indian Punjab. Steel cities of Durgapur, Rourkela, Bokaro and Ranchi around Heavy Engineering Corporation (HEC), and capital cities of Bhubaneswar and Gandhinagar followed.

For irrigation and water supply, flood control, and hydroelectric power generation, India started to build dams at a rapid pace, and by 2000, it ranked third among all countries of the world (of course, not adjusted by area or population), after China and the US (World Commission on Dams 2000: 9).

Environmentalists now allege that all third-world leaders such as Nasser, Nkrumah, and Nehru, striving to give material solidity to a newly acquired state of independence, were seduced by the symbolism of epic dams. But, these leaders had a different view when these dams were being built. After inaugurating the Bhakra Canal System the previous day, Prime Minister Nehru delivered a speech on 8 July 1954 entitled “Temples of the New Age.”⁵

India after independence sought science and technology to ameliorate the

burden of poverty rapidly. In Guha and Martinez-Alier's words "fertilizer, pesticides, and fungicides and not organic farming" were seen as the solution to the food problem (Guha and Martinez-Alier 1997: xiv). The environmental issues connected with industrialisation, urbanisation and hydroelectric or multipurpose dams had not come to the forefront in the first two and a half decades after independence. Indeed, there were problems of resettlement and rehabilitation connected with projects such as Bhakra-Nangal, but these were seen as issues waiting for appropriate administrative solutions. Over time, since the 1970s, environmental issues attracted greater attention. Of these, Chipko Movement in the Himalayan state of today's Uttarakhand already alluded to and the Silent Valley Movement in Kerala are the most notable.

Environment Movements

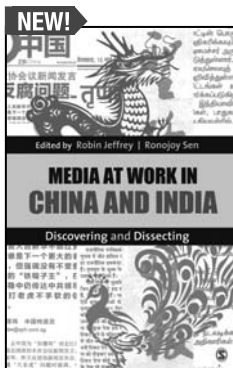
A major environmental movement in post-independence India was the Chipko action launched in Mandal village in Garhwal against the allotment of a forest plot to a sports goods company in 1973. Similarly, a dam for a hydroelectric

project proposed at Sairandhri on the Kunthipuzha River in the Silent Valley in Kerala stirred a major controversy from 1973 because of concerns about the endangered lion-tailed macaque. With participation by poet activist Sugathakumari and Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP), ornithologist Salim Ali, and many others, the movement mobilised a large support base. Though the legal challenges to the project were overcome, the debate, also known as "man versus monkey" debate, ended at least temporarily when the Government of Kerala stopped work on the project in 1980 at the request of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. In December 1980, the Government of Kerala declared the Silent Valley, excluding the hydroelectric project area, as a National Park. The two movements culminated in the promulgation of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 by Parliament mandating, among other things, that "No part of a reserved forest land can be used for non-forest purpose by the state government without prior approval from the central government."

In spite of these movements, significant green parties in India continued to be

conspicuous by their absence. The Indian National Green Party (INGP) was registered with the Election Commission of India on 7 January 1999.⁶ INGP forfeited its deposits in all the four assembly constituencies of Bikram, Gaighat, Motihari and Pipra in Bihar where it contested in 2010. The Indian People's Green Party (IPGP), established in Jaipur in 2011, contested in 27 assembly constituencies in the 2013 Rajasthan Vidhan Sabha polls and lost its deposit in all 27. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, IPGP, the only party with "green" in its name, contested in three constituencies in Rajasthan and forfeited its deposit in all three.⁷ Green Party of India, a non-profit organisation on a predominantly environmental platform, was founded by a self-proclaimed group of young nature lovers in India on January 2010. It was led by environmental activist Subhas Dutta, famous for his public interest litigations in West Bengal for permanently removing Kolkata's most toxic vehicles, those more than 15 years old, from the roads, and for relocating Kolkata's annual book fair from the "Maidan," the largest of Kolkata's few green spaces. Though

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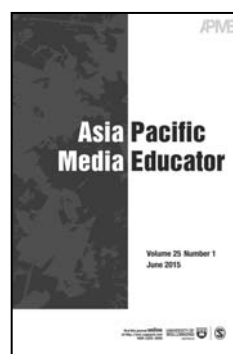


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the founding of the Green Party received quite a bit of media coverage, particularly internationally, nothing much has been heard about it since.⁸

There was a “green party” ring about the spectacular rapid rise of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) since 26 November 2012. In February 2015, AAP won a landslide victory in the Vidhan Sabha election in Delhi, the nation’s capital, bagging 67 of the 70 seats. AAP is an offshoot of the “India Against Corruption” (IAC) mass-agitation led by Anna Hazare. Its supporters were mainly from the middle class.⁹ The birth of AAP from a popular protest movement, its decision on removing government encroachment from Yamuna, opposition to the nuclear power plant in Kundalkunam and support to NBA had unleashed expectations about AAP transforming itself into India’s new green party (Shrivastava 2014). However, even AAP has never laid a claim to be a “green party.”

One of the critical characteristics of a green party is its spontaneous emergence from popular agitations. The agitations in Europe were often against nuclear power generation and deployment of nuclear weapons. After the oil price shock of 1973, there was a move in favour of nuclear power in West Germany. In the mid-1970s, large demonstrations prevented the construction of a nuclear plant at Wyhl, in south-west part of erstwhile West Germany. In 1976 and 1977, mass anti-nuclear demonstrations took place at Kalkar, the site of Germany’s first fast breeder reactor, and at Brokdorf, north of Hamburg. Several local green political groups came together in March 1979 in Frankfurt to form the Alternative Political Union, the Greens (Sonstige Politische Vereinigung, Die Grünen) and get the first green representative elected to the state parliament of Bremen.¹⁰

Similarly, the four-nation Scandinavian Link or Scanlink attracted protests from environmentalists in Sweden in the 1980s.¹¹ The mobilisation culminated in October 1987 when activists climbed trees that were to be cut down to make way for the construction of the road on the west coast. Arrest and conviction of activists attracted a lot of attention and

contributed to a strong emergence of the Green Party in Sweden.¹² Though the Green Party in Sweden was founded much earlier in 1981, its political breakthrough came in the 1988 general elections when it won seats in the Swedish Riksdag for the first time, capturing 5.5% of the vote, and becoming the first new party to enter parliament in 70 years.

When AAP was born, there were popular protest movements in many Arab countries. Christened Arab Spring, it destabilised regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen; and unfolded as civil uprisings in various other countries in West Asia. The Snow Revolution in Russia, which was against the allegedly flawed 2011 legislative election, and Occupy Wall Street movement in the US against social and economic inequality, greed, corruption and corporate capture of government, also coincided with the India Against Corruption (IAC) in India. Many of these movements turned out to be symbolic citizenship movements without converting themselves into political parties, leave alone green parties. Being born out of a popular movement is not a sufficient condition for becoming a green party.

A sizeable middle class is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a green party. Most notably, prosperous Japan and the United States (US), with thriving middle classes, do not have any green party comparable to what exists in western European countries (Naoto et al 2010; Ask 2014). Also, the Indian middle class is not sizeable enough as yet to provide the requisite political support-base for a green party. The “median voter” in India is still not from a middle-class background.

Importantly, the Indian middle class wants the country to harness science and technology to eliminate poverty and usher in growth. Many of its members view the western environmentalists advocating against dams, large industry and urbanisation as compromised idealists who are not willing to repudiate their technological heritage and the benefits of their “progress” in their own countries. As Guha and Martinez-Alier (1997) describe it, “Greenness is the ultimate luxury of the consumer society,” and India is not yet

such a society. Environmentalism in a poor country such as India, to many, appears as “anti-human” environmentalism. Perhaps, there is little popular support for environmentalists whom Gadgil and Guha (1995) describe as the wilderness enthusiast, crusading Gandhians or ecological Marxists.¹³ To the environmentalists they attribute pessimism about human agency, technology, and its effect on nature. The middle class is aspirational and does not share this pessimism.

How Green Is the Politics?

It is not only the size of the Indian middle class that has changed, but also its attitude towards environmental issues. In the initial years after independence, the attitude was, like in many other countries of the world, perhaps close to apathy or even denial. Over time, the middle class appears to be more engaged with environmental issues. These issues can be classified into three categories or a combination thereof—those with an impact on the local, state or national environment, those with an impact on resource distribution, and those with a broader global impact, such as carbon emissions.

Local Environmental Issues: The local “in my backyard” environmental issues, particularly better civic amenities such as roads, public transportation, air quality, water supply, parks and recreational areas, appear to be generating informed support among the Indian middle class. In Bengaluru, residents of upscale Richmond Town and Shanthinagar, otherwise known for their gentle behaviour, took to the streets on the morning of Saturday, 11 April 2015, staging a silent protest march against bad roads, shortage of water and mishandling of garbage by the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagar Palike (*Bangalore Mirror* 2015). On 7 March 2015, the office and plant of a chemical factory was attacked in Kolhapur, Maharashtra because people claimed that the tar pitch emanating from the factory was a health hazard (*Times of India* 2015a). On 6 April 2012, there was a 24-hour agitation to mount pressure on management to improve civic amenities in slums in the steel city of Jamshedpur (*Telegraph* 2012).

A study of willingness to pay—a good measure of demand—for safe drinking water in Kolkata found that qualitative risk perception and the awareness level increases with education. The middle class, who were already spending money on purifiers for drinking water, were willing to pay for quality water supply (Roy et al 2004). Various NGOs and nature lovers gathered at Aarey Colony, Mumbai on the morning of 15 February 2015 to protest against the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority's (MMRDA) proposal to remove 2,298 trees to set up the proposed Metro III car shed.¹⁴

Some of the “local” environmental issues go beyond just purely local and embrace a larger area across the country. An obvious case is the Ganga Action Plan and *Namami Gange* launched in 1986 and 2014, respectively, to clean the river Ganga. The Ganga Action Plan, launched in 1986, has been the subject of considerable research. One key question asked by researchers, for example, Alley (1994), is how to reconcile sacred purity with the concept of “secular” pollution. Many subscribers of the “purity” school used to believe that “Ganga is like a mother,...who cleans up the messes her children make...It keeps carrying away *gangagi* (waste) into the ocean.” It may be argued that with the march of the Indian middle class and the spread of education, the reconciliation has become easier.

There is no denial of the pollution problem of the Ganga anymore. With participation of people like Swami Gyan Swaroop Sanand and Veer Bhadra Mishra in the cleaning of Ganga debate, there has been a major change in the level and quality of the discourse. The Swamiji, before his sanyas (renunciation of worldly things) in 2011, was G D Agrawal, an alumnus of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee and University of California at Berkeley, who had headed the Civil Engineering department at IIT Kanpur. Hydraulic engineer Veer Bhadra Mishra, the founding president of the Sankat Mochan Foundation, was not only a former Head of the Civil Engineering Department at the IIT (BHU) Varanasi but also the Mahant (High Priest) of the Sankat Mochan Hanuman temple,

Varanasi founded by poet-saint Goswami Tulsidas.

Even the conservation of wildlife is attracting more support from the people, including the middle class. A reflection of this support was the introduction in 1976 of Article 51A(g), under Fundamental Duties, which enjoins the citizens “to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures.”¹⁵ Wildlife tourism has been growing at an average over 15% per year and visitors were well-educated spending over \$600 for the visit (Karanth 2012). Wildlife is seen as a national resource, and sympathy appears to favour wildlife more than human settlements within protected areas.

Impact on Resource Distribution: The Indian middle class appears sensitive to the resource distribution issue involved in large projects with environmental impact. The Chipko movement and NBA may not have been able to mobilise middle class support against projects aimed at harnessing nature for the benefit of the people, but what they have done is to bring to the fore the fundamental questions of proper resettlement and rehabilitation of the displaced people.

There is an increasing recognition that many of the protests, stemming from what Guha calls “empty belly” environmentalism of the poor, are inseparable from distributive justice. The genesis of Chipko action lay not in saving the trees in the hills but in a fight between local hill-people and the state over the right to trees growing in the hills in April 1973. Similarly, the NBA started not as a movement against the Sardar Sarovar Dam itself but as a protest by affected people against forced displacement and for proper resettlement and rehabilitation. The dramatic showdown between pro- and anti-dam protestors starting from 2 January 1991 at the dam site at Ferkuwa village in Gujarat on the Madhya Pradesh border demonstrated the complexity of the issues. The pro-dam *Narmada Aage Badhao Shanti Yatra* or Move Narmada Forward Peace March was determined to stop the NBA's *Sangharsh Yatra* or Agitation Rally led

by Medha Patkar and Baba Amte from entering Gujarat. There were many people who supported the dam because of its development impact; they described the Narmada project as “lifeline of Gujarat.” Many saw the problem as one of not being able to compensate the losers by a proper resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) programme. In the end, perhaps the pro-development sympathy of the people was reflected in the project being completed by democratically elected governments in spite of the World Bank and other international funding agencies withdrawing support.

The natural resources, such as coal, necessary for sustaining growth are located in forest areas inhabited by tribal people. There is an increasing recognition that the tribal people not only have strong beliefs about their forests, land and water, but, for their survival, are also heavily dependent on the natural resources of the forests. The sympathy of the middle class appears to be in favour of a win-win solution—developing the projects after formulating a proper R&R programme expeditiously.

Carbon Emissions: The attitude of the Indian middle class towards global environmental public goods such as carbon emission is starkly different from its attitude towards local or national environmental issues. Its position appears aligned with that of its government.

India is often reminded of its global responsibility regarding the control of carbon emissions. In Lima, at the Climate Change Conference in December 2014, after the US and China struck a deal on carbon dioxide emission, there was a lot of pressure on India to commit itself internationally to reducing such emission by 2030 (Koch 2014). India is often reminded that it is the third largest emitter of carbon in the world and its emission is increasing faster than in China or the US. India resisted the pressure and underlined the fact that India is a poor country and, in per capita terms, India's carbon emission at 1.9 tonnes is far less than China's 7.2 and the US's 16.4. India insisted on the principle of “common but differentiated responsibility.”

There appears to be a lot of sympathy among the middle class for the government position and support for former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's pledge at the G8 + 5 Summit in Heiligendamm, Germany, in 2007. The then Prime Minister pledged that India's per capita emissions would never exceed those of the developed world. Given India's low per capita emissions, meeting this pledge does not require any emissions reductions compared to the current policy projections up to 2030.

Conclusions

Four pillars of green politics, namely, social justice, grass-roots democracy, non-violence, and respect for diversity, have become more or less established principles of the Indian political parties. The integration of the environmental dimension of green politics, consisting of the twin pillars of ecological wisdom and sustainability, is in an evolutionary phase. It is likely that increasingly this integration will reflect the views of the growing Indian middle class. The middle class, with a reasonable level of education, information base and income level, has views on environmental issues. These views may be different from those of ecological refugees or empty-belly environmentalists, but may have an edge over other views because of the opinion-maker role that the middle class plays. Parties will get feedback on their environmental policies from the electoral battlegrounds and adapt them suitably.

The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (LARR 2013), enacted six months before the 16th Lok Sabha elections in 2014, provides a good illustration of this adaptive process. Around the same time as AAP was born, the grand old party of India, namely, the Congress started to demonstrate some pronounced greenish hues under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi, supported by the erstwhile environment minister Jairam Ramesh. It got focused on "Three R's"—Relief, Rehabilitation and Resettlement—associated with land acquisition for infrastructure, urbanisation and industry, and culminated in the now controversial LARR 2013.

A major emphasis of LARR 2013 was on the ecological refugees. Opposition in Parliament at the time of its passing was muted at best. The LARR Bill was passed by Parliament in 2013. Electoral outcomes are the result of many factors. Through LARR 2013, the Congress was perhaps trying to transform itself into a green reformist party without rejecting free economic enterprise and the social welfare state. It appears that the electoral dividend from LARR 2013 for the Congress was poor.

The future of any political party is difficult to predict in a vibrant democracy such as India. But, going by the views of the Indian middle class, some parties are likely to gravitate towards becoming reformist green parties. No party is likely to follow Alvarez's (1992) prescription for pursuing alternatives to development and an assertion of peoples' right to "pursue one's way of life, irrespective of nuclear plants, dams, thermal plants, or big industries; the right to refuse to be developed according to whims and fancies of outsiders who think they know best."¹⁶ With the maturing of Indian democracy, the electoral prospect of a green radical party—as against a green reformist party—seeking fundamental changes in social and political institutions and following a new radical democratic paradigm appears dim. Parties will try to harmonise development policies with environmental policies, and instead of opposing industrialisation, markets and globalisation, emphasise national and local environmental issues such as water supply, sewerage and air quality.

Elected representatives and electoral candidates receive and have to respond to the general views and concerns of those who they represent. And these views, in a poor country such as India, have not transformed from materialistic to post-materialistic as yet. The Indian middle class is still too poor to be environmentalists in the western sense of the term. They seem to have more sympathy for transforming nature than just preserving it. They seem to agree with the proposition that "All human activity alters the composition of the natural world which in itself is never static. A critique which regards all change as

decay begs the very legitimacy of human survival."¹⁷ They see the current development process flawed by governance failures but basically positive and inevitable. They are likely to welcome a green party that addresses these governance failures, for example, in resettlement and rehabilitation, without militating against progress, modernity and emancipation from poverty.

NOTES

- 1 The clause "almost all" refers to some parties in the fringe with low commitment (at least in practice) to non-violence and respect for diversity.
- 2 Much of the discussion that follows about the definition of the Indian middle class is from Lahiri (2014).
- 3 As Gandhi himself said in the *Harijan* on 29 April 1933: "In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am in age, I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop at the dissolution of the flesh. What I am concerned, with is my readiness to obey the call of Truth, my God, from moment to moment, and, therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, lie would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject." Furthermore, he recognised that even his Charkha or spinning wheel was a machine, and clarified that he was against machines substituting humans in production activity and in favour of labour-intensive technologies.
- 4 Even on non-violence, particularly nuclear non-proliferation, the political commitment is ambiguous at best. In April 1954, Jawaharlal Nehru was in the lead of non-aligned countries to criticise US hydrogen bomb tests in the Pacific (see <http://www.san.beck.org/GPJ29-AntiNuclearProtests.html>). Over time, India's position on nuclear armament has changed and India itself has become a nuclear power. The geopolitics of the region may explain the lack of enthusiasm for unilateral disarmament or anything beyond a pledge of no first use of nuclear weapons.
- 5 Immerwahr (2015) states that "It does not appear that Nehru actually uttered the phrase dams are the temples of modern India" which is often attributed to him. But he did give a speech in 1954 on dams that has been given the title (perhaps by Nehru, perhaps not) "Temples of the New Age," in which he described the dam as "the biggest temple and mosque and gurdwara of the day." See also http://www.nehruinternationalconference2014.com/nehru_speech4.aspx
- 6 Led by Priya Ranjan Trivedi, described as "the only person of his type having excelled in the new and emerging area of neology and neocracy for his passion for evolving new doctrines for solving different problems of the world in general and of India in particular," it did not gain any traction in the polls.
- 7 In April 2014, the Election Commission sought withdrawal of tax exemption benefit from IPGP from the Central Board of Direct Taxes because of the party's failure to file their mandatory expenditure contribution reports on time to the poll body. See Press Trust of India (2014).
- 8 See, for example, Bhaumik (2009) and Ahmed (2009).

- 9 See Mishra (2012): "Led by Anna Hazare...the movement was presented by sections of the media in both India and the West as a long overdue political awakening of the middle class, even as India's 'second freedom struggle'." See also Ganguly (2011).
- 10 The Three Mile Island accident in the US in 1979 bolstered the anti-nuclear mood and the peace movement in Germany against the US deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles in Western Europe mobilised support for the Greens in West Germany. The Chernobyl disaster in 1986 reinforced the anti-nuclear sentiments, and after unification, between 1998 and 2005, the Greens were minor partners in the coalition government ruling Germany.
- 11 Scanlink, a railway, highway, bridge and tunnel network, starts in Oslo, goes down the west of Sweden, hops over the Danish islands of Zealand and Funen to the Danish mainland and then moves to the Autobahns and rail systems of West Germany near Hamburg. It involved a bridge between Malmö and Copenhagen, and the building of highways along the west coast of Sweden. A particular part of the road, between Uddevalla and Stora Höga was planned to run straight through a town called Ljungskile, spurred a resistance among citizens, environmental justice organisations and youth organisations which was called the largest case of civil disobedience in Swedish history.
- 12 <http://ejatlas.org/conflict/highway-part-of-scan-link-ljungskile-sweden>
- 13 Gadgil and Guha (1995) categorise nine strands of environmentalists, the six other categories are guardians of the sacred, community managers, technocratic conservationists, appropriate technologists, technocrat planners, and judicial activists.
- 14 *Times of India* (2015b). The protest was in spite of the fact that 254 trees would be cut down and 2,044 would be transplanted.
- 15 The Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, s 11 (wef 3-1-1977).
- 16 According to Alvares, "development" is a label for plunder and violence, a mechanism of triage.... The logic of industrialisation demands ample space, geographical space, colonies. The industrialisation effort of the South had to interiorise the concept of the colonies—colonising its own hinterlands, mostly settled with subsistent and ecologically harmonious communities, and subordinating these to the requirements of the industrialisation programme."
- 17 William Beinart and Peter Coates quoted in Nixon (2011), p 255.
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