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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

A POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF THE CHIPKO MOVEMENT

The Indian Chipko movement is analyzed as a case study employing a geographically-informed political ecology approach. Political ecology as a framework for the study of environmental movements provides insight into the complex issues surrounding the structure of Indian society, with particular attention to its ecological and political dimensions. This framework, with its focus on social structure and ecology, is distinct from the more “traditional” approaches to the study of social movements, which tend to essentialize their purpose and membership, often by focusing on a single dimension of the movement and its context. Using Chipko as a case-study, the author demonstrates how a geographical approach to political ecology avoids some of this essentialization by encouraging a holistic analysis of environmental movements that is characterized by a “bottom-up” analysis, grounded at the local level, which also considers the wider context of the movement’s growth by synthesizing socio-political and ecological analyses. Also explored are questions on the importance of gender-informed approaches to the study of environmental activism and participation in environmental movements in India.

KEYWORDS: Chipko, Political Ecology, India, Geography, Scale

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April 24, 2006

A POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF THE CHIPKO MOVEMENT

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THESIS

Sya Kedzior

The Graduate School

University of Kentucky

2006

A POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF THE CHIPKO MOVEMENT

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Masters of Art in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By

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Lexington, Kentucky

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Chipko movement is popularly regarded as the most influential environmental movement in India's history. In the 1970s dozens of Chipko protests were staged throughout the region of Uttarakhandⁱ by "hundreds of decentralized and locally autonomous initiatives" made up of peasant villagers (The Right Livelihood Awards, hereafter RLA 1987: 1). These mobilizations employed the Chipko method of "tree-hugging" protest and adopted its name, along with the religious and cultural values associated with it, in order to form an increasingly organized movement that attempted to bring an end to deforestation in the northern Indian states. Most accounts of the Chipko movement judge it as having been relatively successful, in that actions of Chipko protestors led directly to long-term bans on logging throughout the region. Due to this success, as well as a number of other factors, the Chipko movement is popularly credited as being foundational in the development of Indian environmentalism. Since the last Chipko forest protests were held in the 1980s, the movement, its messages and leaders, have influenced other Chipko-like protests throughout south and southeast Asia, as well as in Europe, and have changed the face of environmental and developmental policy making as well as political struggle in India. Because of these achievements, the Chipko movement has also become the most studied, most debated, and perhaps most misrepresented South Asian environmental social movement.

In the years since the Chipko mobilizations began, a great number of books and articles have been published on the movement, its membershipⁱⁱ, its relative success, its messages in relationship to westernized development and science, and more. These numerous publications might suggest that all aspects of the movement have surely already been explored. However, many of these studies have tended to over-essentialize the movement, its purpose, and membership, by focusing on what the author often identifies as the single "core issue" of the movement, or by examining only one aspect of the often complex context of movement growth, such as developmental policy or gendered access to natural resources. This has led to analyses of the movement that have alternately classified it as ecofeminist, anti-development, religious or Gandhian

ecological, post-colonial, and peasant-rights based. This essentialization and classification is problematic in that it belies the complex, multifaceted nature of the Chipko movement, its context, and the disparate motivations and interests of its members and representatives. Drawing upon this literature, as well as movement and governmental publications and other primary and secondary sources, this thesis will analyze the Chipko movement by applying a political ecology approach that is informed by geographical, feminist, and “third world” political ecology. This approach is characterized by a critical contextualization of the movement that focuses on synthesizing analyses of the social and ecological circumstances surrounding the movement’s growth, the causes of the environmental issues to which the movement responds, the diverse motivations of its membership, and the wider impacts of its messages (Zimmerer 2003).

For students of Indian environmentalism, understanding Chipko and its history is vital to understanding the shape of environmentalism in India. I first became aware of the Chipko movement through studies on militant environmentalism and the Bisnoi people of India’s Thar desert, who by many accounts inspired the movement’s tactics and whose actions in the 1730s may have set the groundwork for the movement itself. As I learned more about Chipko, I, like many others, was enthralled by the romanticism of the movement, and the message of “right living” put forward in some movement literature, as well as by many of its representatives and interpreters. As I became more familiar with the vast literature available on the movement, I was struck by the inconsistencies in each retelling of the movement’s story. These ranged from minor issues such as whether the Symond Company needed its allotment of trees for the manufacture of tennis rackets or cricket bats, to major issues of when and where the movement originated and for what purpose. These latter inconsistencies were perhaps the most apparent and unaccounted for by simple error or lack of information.

Movement origin and purpose are, of course, not unrelated issues. Accounts of the moment at which the movement is said to have begun tie directly into one’s sense of the movement’s purpose. For example, Elizabeth Kempf (1993), who interprets Chipko as conservationist, dates the movement to 1968, when peasant villagers in Uttar Pradesh first began to protest governmental forest policies after devastating landslides in the region; Others, who often view the movement as one of natural resource distribution or

peasant rights access, cite the movement as having begun in 1973, when the Dashauli Gram Swaraj Sangh (hereafter DGSS), a community forest industry in Chamoli, first began to protest the almost exclusive granting of forest resources to non-regional corporations (see for instance Guha, 1989); Sunderlal Bahuguna, a prominent Chipko leader, dates the emergence of the contemporary movement to 1974, when the tree-hugging tactic was adopted at Reni—accounts such as his largely define the movement as anti-development or anti-globalization, interpreting the “hugging” method of protest as a call for the recognition of human dependence upon nature and as a critique of western scientific forestry and development; Vandana Shiva, on the other hand, interprets the movement as primarily ecofeminist and traces its origins to later years, when women’s role in the movement became more prominent (Mellor 1997).

Of course, these interpretations are not always mutually exclusive. Most will incorporate, for instance, notions of peasant resistance, along with natural resource, class-based, anti-development, and usually, some degree of gendered-based analysis. Beyond their interpretations, these issues themselves are not mutually exclusive. Natural resource use is not unrelated to environmental and developmental policy, nor should peasant rights issues be understood separately from those of class or economics. Environmental destruction is not unconnected to developmental policy, colonialism, or economic injustice. None of these are separate from issues of gender, regional self-determination, or cultural and religious beliefs on the meanings of nature and its relationship to human society. Indeed it is the recognition of this interdependency that is a central motivating factor for this thesis. However, most studies of Chipko still attempt to identify a primary purpose or categorization for the movement which, if not explicitly precluding other interpretations, privileges certain aspects of the movement over others in ways that cloud, if not entirely shadow, these interconnections.

This thesis is built on the assumption that essentialized or singular interpretations of any social movement are problematic, as they fail to consider the many factors that contribute to an environmental problem, and therefore also fail to capture the multifaceted nature of the environmental movementⁱⁱⁱ that develops as a protracted response to that problem. I begin with a review of studies on the Chipko movement that exemplify this kind of essentialization and explore the problematics these analyses create

in frustrating our understanding of multifaceted social movements such as Chipko. Then, I perform an analysis of the Chipko movement that draws upon the tradition of political ecology in geography. I argue that this approach to the study of social movements provides a more holistic and less essentialized interpretation of this movement and its context, as it attempts to account for and subsume, rather than refute, other interpretations of Chipko. A political ecology approach is able to achieve this type of holistic analysis within an analytical framework that focuses upon movement and issue context within a particular social structure. By applying this framework to a study of the Chipko movement, I will attempt to demonstrate that it is far more complicated and multifaceted than can be represented through a single interpretive lens. The significance of this research is that it will exemplify the application of a geographically-informed feminist political ecology approach to the study of an environmental movement and will demonstrate its usefulness for application in future studies, especially of environmental movements in India and the rest of the majority world.

My analysis has been guided by the following research questions: What was the specific social and ecological context that led to the development of the movement, including its historical antecedents, the regional impacts of national developmental and environmental policy, and the gendered dimensions of its activity? How have the messages of the movement and its successes been variously interpreted over time, and how have those interpretations reflected dynamic power relations between movement leaders and members? What does a geographical political ecology approach, with its focus on a scalar analysis of the movement, reveal or obscure in our attempt to understand Chipko as a local-level response to an environmental problem?

In addressing each of these questions, I have focused my research upon what is commonly referred to as the modern or contemporary activity^{iv} of the Chipko movement. Although the movement, as mentioned above, has influenced countless other struggles in India and internationally, and many of its members have gone on to use the Chipko name in protests against large dam projects and other environmental problems, this analysis will focus exclusively on the forests protests that took place in the region of Uttarakhand during the 1970s and 1980s. This study will draw upon a wide variety of documentary resources, including primary sources produced by the Chipko movement and the local

and national government, and secondary sources that have analyzed or interpreted the movement. Examination of the secondary sources have served to establish a perspective on the many conceptual approaches that have been applied in commonly cited studies of the Chipko movement, as well as the various interpretations and contributions of their authors. Other primary and secondary sources have been used in my political ecology analysis of the movement, including documented interviews with Chipko members and leaders, governmental policy publications, local and national media publications, and various other scholarly texts. In general, the resources that have supported this study represent those most cited in the English-language literature on the movement. Where these various texts and their representations of the Chipko movement have contradicted each other, priority has been given to those primary resources, or accounts of the movement that are based on the authors' first-hand fieldwork or on-site research. Although I visited parts of the Uttarakhand region which represents the focus of this study, research relating to this study was not conducted, and therefore is not included in the methodology of the present paper.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I will introduce the Chipko movement and provide a narrative of the movement's chronology that accompanies the timeline found at the end of the chapter. Chapter Two will provide both an overview of other studies of the Chipko movement and will outline the conceptual approaches that inform this analysis, including geographical, feminist and "third world" political ecology. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the characteristics of the particular approach to political ecology that is being applied in this analysis of the Chipko movement. Chapter Three represents my analysis of the Chipko movement, which is structured around four themes: the historical influences on Indian developmental and environmental policy making; the creation of "scaled spaces" of the movement in which resistance took place; the gendered dimensions of movement formation and activity; and finally, the dynamic power relations between movement leaders and members and their impact on movement messages and representation. In Chapter Four, I will conclude by arguing that this thesis has accomplished three main tasks: first, it has contributed to the existing literature a holistic analysis of the Chipko movement that accounts for its multifaceted nature; second, it will demonstrate that the political ecology approach employed in this

case-study is well-suited to the study of multi-issue, multi-causal social movements, particularly environmental movements and new social movements; third, it will argue that the analysis of environmental movements, particularly through a political ecology approach, should be an important line of inquiry within the discipline of geography, as it exemplifies a synthesis of studies on society-environment interrelationships with analyses of scale, space, and locality—important themes within the discipline (Zimmerer 2003).

The Chipko Movement

Although the problematic I have identified above indicates that the literature available is highly dissonant, some general information about the movement seems to be commonly represented and should be traced at this point. The term ‘chipko’ is commonly translated from Hindi as meaning ‘hug’ or ‘embrace’ and refers to a method of protest in which one embraces a tree in order to prevent its felling (RLA 1987; Karan 1994). The contemporary Chipko movement is best known for a string of protests beginning in the 1970s, which most prominently involved an increasingly large number of peasant women. The majority of these protests occurred in the Himalayan foothills in the then region of Uttarakhand in the state of Uttar Pradesh. A majority of the Indian Himalayas lies in this region, which borders both Nepal and Tibetan China. As two of the most heavily forested states in India, Uttarakhand (officially Uttranchal) and neighboring Uttar Pradesh have long been relied upon for their supplies of natural resources, which are regarded as critical to national economic development (RLA 1987). After India lost a conflict with China in 1962, a network of roads was built throughout the region, increasing accessibility to its resources and intensifying their exploitation (Karan 1994).

Two foundational moments are generally cited as having marked the beginning of the Chipko movement. The first of these is largely credited to the activity of the Dasholi Gram Swaraj Sangh (DGSS), a local cooperative based in Gopeshwar, Chamoli, which promoted local community forest industries. Beginning in 1973, the DGSS organized a number of small mobilizations in protest of the contractor system, in which the Indian Government, via the Forestry Department, held title to forests that were preferentially leased to international or extra-regional corporations. The DGSS mobilized in reaction to the subsequent denial of their request for a lease for access to twelve trees needed for the

manufacture of furniture and agricultural implements for local populations. The second foundational event often interpreted as marking the beginning of the Chipko movement occurred in Reni village, when a group of women first employed the “tree-hugging” Chipko tactic to prevent the logging of trees in a local forest. After this event, women’s role in the movement became much more prominent and the prevention of all forms of forest scarcity became more central to the goals of the movement. Of course, which event one regards as having started the Chipko movement seems to depend almost entirely upon how one interprets the movement itself. For those who, along with Ramachandra Guha, define the Chipko movement as an effort to reappropriate forest resources and secure peasant access to forest goods, the activities of the DGSS in encouraging widespread protest and holding educational and organization meetings against the contractor system are obviously foundational to the movement. On the other hand, for those who view the Chipko movement as a feminist movement, or as an attempt to prevent all tree felling through the use of a tree hugging strategy that called attention to the relationship between humans and nature, the protests at Reni marked the “true” beginning of Chipko. The opinion of this author is that both events should be regarded as foundational to the movement, in that they both served to achieve separate goals, spread the shared message about concern over forestry policy in the northern hill districts, and muster additional support and membership for the movement.

These events at Gopeshwar and Reni can also be seen as representing an internal division in Chipko that became increasingly pronounced as the movement spread. Prior to the Reni protests, much of the movement’s goals were articulated by DGSS leadership, including Chandi Prasad Bhatt, who defined the goals of the movement as re-appropriating forest resources for use by local people and local industries. However, these goals failed to reflect the interests of the largely female membership base of the movement, who were less likely to profit from the continued use of forest resources, even if by local interests. Instead, this strand of the movement, which later became associated with leader Sunderlal Bahunguna, identified goals of the movement as preventing all forms of deforestation and promoting “right living” with the environment in order to ensure the health of the forests. This division is exemplified best by the Chipko protest at the Adwani forests near Narendranagar in 1977. A local woman named Bachni Devi

organized the resistance in opposition to her own husband, leading women to embrace the trees he had contracted after previous DGSS protests (Breton 1998; Mellor 1997). According to many ecofeminist representations of the movement's history (see Breton 1998; Mellor 1997; and Shiva 1989), the Adwani protests marked a significant change in the movement, where deforestation became the main problem against which Chipko members mobilized. According to Vandana Shiva, "It was at this point that the Chipko movement became both ecological and feminist" (Mellor 1997: 19).

Despite these accounts, the question of the degree of this division and the primacy of these goals is apt. As Paul Routledge (1993) notes, any split within the Chipko movement exists among its leadership, not its membership, and is rooted in the different and dynamic personalities of its two most commonly recognized representatives, Chandi Prasad Bhatt and Sunderlal Bahuguna. Although each leader espouses different goals and messages of the movement, their discrepancy has not been reflected in the mass mobilizations of Chipko members, or in a distinct spatial division of the movement that could have produced separate "strands" of Chipko. Certainly, the influence of each leader has manifested differently among the movement's membership: Bhatt's involvement in the DGSS has lent his vision of Chipko's goals and messages a certain influence among Gopeshwari populations (where the organization's headquarters are cited) and movement members who are more vested in the development of local forest industry; Bahuguna's trans-Himalayan marches and appeal to the Hindu ascetic ideal, on the other hand, seem to have allowed his notions of the movement to gain more purchase among rural populations and Uttarakhandi women, who are arguably less interested in reaping profit from the further development of extractive forest industries. After conducting interviews with both Bhatt and Bahuguna, Routledge (1993) cites three events as originating the division that should be viewed strictly as a competition between two prominent personalities: first, the leaders' reaction to the use of violent tactics in the burning of the Naini Tal Yacht Club, which Bhatt supported and from which Bahuguna disassociated himself; second, Bhatt's acceptance and Bahuguna's refusal to join the Board of Directors of the Uttar Pradesh Forest Corporation; and finally, Bahuguna's support, against Bhatt, of a total ban on green tree felling (99). It is also difficult to judge the true impact of Adwani, and other later protests, on the movement, as previous mobilizations

had already achieved a degree of success in drawing attention to the issue of deforestation in the Himalayas. The year before the Adwani protests, the Reni Investigation Committee, which included representatives from the Chipko movement, released a report on deforestation in the Himalayas, identifying it as the cause of both economic and environmental problems in the hill regions (Chakraborty 1999).

Of course, the Chipko movement's regional, national, and even international fame largely comes from the degree of success that it is regarded as having achieved. The Reni Investigation Committee's 1976 report led to the ending of the contractor system by the state government and a ban on the felling of green trees over a 1200mi² area for a ten-year period (Sharma et al. 1987). Although tree felling persisted, the rate of deforestation improved, and protests continued, leading to another 15-year ban and the protection of six forested areas (Chakraborty 1999; Sharma et al. 1987). In the end, whether these achievements are regarded as "success" largely depends upon what one considers to have been the goals of the Chipko movement. For those who regard the movement as attempting to offer an alternative to westernized development, or, along with one of the Chipko leaders, Sunderlal Bahuguna, as "a revolt...against the existing values, which regard nature as a commodity and the society only the society of human beings", Chipko may be viewed as having been successful in its degree of renown and its influence over similar movements worldwide (CIC 1987: 22). For those who consider Chipko to be a movement for environmental policy change, natural resource protection, or peasant rights, the movement might be regarded as a success in that it was able to secure tree-felling bans and to change the face of forestry policy in the Indian Himalayas. However, some critics of the movement question whether Chipko activities truly led to greater social justice for the peasants of Uttarakhand. Haripriya Rangan (2000) expresses this concern in *Of Myths and Movements*, wherein she argues that the result of the Chipko movement was increased, though altered, governmental control of local forest resources and decreased opportunities for economic justice in the Uttarakhand hills.

Despite these as yet unresolved debates over whom, if anyone, has benefited from Chipko movement activities, it is difficult to deny the impact of this struggle upon other environmental movements in India and upon similar conflicts abroad. After 1981, only a few Chipko protests against forest felling were documented, although the movement

spread to southern India as 'Appiko', whose members fought against deforestation and commercial forestry programs in the Western Ghats. However, Chipko members became active in other struggles, including most notably the organized resistance against the damming of the Narmada River in central India. Beyond these influences, the Chipko movement is also credited for raising environmental consciousness of people both in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, as well as throughout India (Routledge 1993). For the international community, however, the Chipko movement is perhaps best known for its critique of Westernized developmental practices and its members' tactic of "hugging" trees, one which inspired many western "tree-hugging" movements. Indeed, not only the Chipko tactic, but also its messages were popularized in many countries, leading to Chipko-like protests in Switzerland, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand (Hall 1994).

A Chronology of the Chipko Movement^v

As mentioned above, the Bisnoi people of the Thar desert in Rajasthan are often credited for the first use of Chipko tactics in resistance to tree felling. The Bisnois (Rajathani for "twenty-niners") adhere to a sect of Vashnavite Hinduism that dictates a lifestyle of ecological awareness and militant conservationism based on the 29 principles of environmental preservation set forward by Guru Jameswarji in the 15th century (Kemf 1993; Verma 1998). Among the 29 principles, the Guru specified that animals, trees and other wild vegetation were not to be destroyed. In particular, the indigenous desert tree khejari and antelope-like blackbuck were specified as sacred and revered for their value as indicators of environmental health and quality (Verma 1998). The Bisnois first adopted the Chipko tactic in defense of the sacred khejari tree in 1730, when the Maharaja of Jodhpur sent axemen to the village of Khedjarli to collect wood to fire kilns at the Mehrangarh Fort. According to legend, the axemen failed to listen to the protests of the Bisnoi villagers until a local woman, Amrita Devi, wrapped her body in an embrace around a tree. When she refused to move, the Maharaja's men chopped through her body in order to fell the tree. Devi's actions inspired her three daughters and the men, women, and children from 49 surrounding Bisnoi communities to do the same. At the

end of the protest, 363 trees were felled, surrounded by the 363 beheaded bodies of Bisnoi villagers (Breton 1998; CIC 1987).

The story of the Bisnoi's protest led the Maharaja to declare that Bisnoi trees would never again be cut, and became legendary in northern India as an example of local people protecting their interests^{vi} against external forces (CIC 1987). Although there are popular accounts of 19th century protests against forest felling in the Himalayas, they are poorly documented and seem confined to the period after the British occupied the Northern Hills District in 1815 (Saidullah 1992). At first, the British limited their use of forests to those lying in the lower foothills of the Himalayas. However, after the 1821 Tribal Forest Settlements in Kumaon, the forest area reserved for British use was expanded and resistance became widespread, including both violent and nonviolent methods of protest, such as marches, noncooperation, and incendiarism (Karan 1994; Routledge 1993). These confrontations between villagers from the forests and the British Forestry Department exploded on May 30th 1930, when hundreds of protesters were injured and dozens killed at Tilari village in Tehri Garwhal during mobilizations "against [the] reservation of forests for exclusive exploitation by commercial British interests" (Chakraborty 1999: 28). Thereafter, May 30th became "Tilari Martyrs' Day", on which many other similar protests were held in memoriam.

Many future Chipko members were involved in these early struggles against British colonial policy, as well as in the national independence movement, but were sorely disappointed when no significant changes were made to national forest policies after India achieved independence in 1947. However, there was a great deal of attention being paid to the political and ecological situation in the Himalayan foothills, because of their importance to national economic development plans. As early as 1949, Mira Behn, a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi had written, *There is Something Wrong in the Himalayas*, a paper describing the link between deforestation and contemporary water crises. At the time, Behn concluded, "unless the Ganga catchment area was replanted with broad-leaved trees, drought and floods would worsen" (Breton 1998: 5). Still, few changes were made and intermittent protests against the sale of local timber rights to extra-local contractors continued (James 2000).

During the monsoon season of 1970, Mira Behn's predictions materialized in the widespread and destructive flooding of the Alaknanda River and its tributaries, which destroyed 101 villages, 604 houses, 500 acres of crops, and killed 55 people and 142 cattle (James 2000). Since most of the destroyed areas were located beneath timber operations and deforested areas, people began to question forest policies more actively and to organize more frequently against unchecked tree felling (Hall 1994: 51). According to Somen Chakraborty (1999), the protesters' initial demands included the strengthening of local access to forests and for preference in the allotment of forest resources. Over the next two years, numerous mobilizations were held throughout the region, including 1971 protests in Tehri and Gopeshwar organized by the DGSS in response to governmental forestry meetings in the area during October (Saidullah 1992). The DGSS had been established in Chamoli in 1964 by Gandhian sarvodaya workers whose "aim was to organize village laborers and craftsmen to compete...with private (outside) contractors and wholesalers" (Routledge 1993: 83).

In 1972, the DGSS was denied their allotment of twelve ash trees from the local Mandal forest by the state Forest Department. Instead, their trees, along with 300 others, were auctioned to the Symond (or Simons) Company, a sporting goods manufacturer in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh (Sharma 1987: 29). This denial of material access, combined with the existing discontentment with forest policies, sparked mass protests throughout the district. In reaction, the DGSS worked with local people to organize meetings and protests on a regular basis to educate forest people about the government's decision and the ills of the contractor system (Chakraborty 1999). When the Symond Company arrived to fell the trees in the Mandal Forest in March of 1973, they were met by a procession of villagers who successfully blockaded the forest and prevented any tree loss (Hall 1994). The company's permit was quickly transferred, and they were allotted trees in the forests near Phata Rampur. However, the protesters followed the contractor and used non-violent strategies to chase them away, successfully saving both forests while obtaining a logging permit for themselves (Chakraborty 1999). However, this created a conflict within the DGSS "between men, who wanted cash from commercial forest products, and women, who wanted to conserve the forests as local life-support systems" (Breton 1998: 4). The

priorities of the men remained foremost in the beginning of the movement, as they assumed the role of leadership in negotiations with the government.

The role of women in the Chipko Movement experienced a dramatic shift after the incident at Reni village in March of 1974. The forests near Reni had been marked for felling the year before and the DGSS had organized protests, but they continued to be unsuccessful. On the 26th of March, government officials invited the men of Reni village to the District Administrative Center in Chamoli to collect unpaid compensations due from land loss during the Chinese invasion in 1962. Meanwhile, contractors entered the forests near Reni village in order to remove marked trees while the men were gone. The 27 women who had been left in the village to protect the forests gathered under the leadership of Gaura Devi, the president of the local women's organization, and successfully took control of the forests. The women confronted the contractors and embraced the trees, saving the forest. As Gaura Devi recounted, "it was not a question of planned organization of the women for the movement, rather it happened spontaneously. Our men were out of the village so we had to come forward and protect the trees. We have no quarrel with anybody but we wanted to make the people understand that our existence is tied with the forests" (Guha 1989: 159). The women's actions in Reni led to an increased recognition of women's role in the Chipko movement and a greater emphasis on female participation and representation in leadership (Sharma 1987). It was also at Reni that members of the movement resurrected the tree-hugging strategy and adopted the Chipko name.

Whereas earlier demands had focused on the banishment of the contractor system and the promotion of village industry, the protest at Reni began to articulate demands of ecological preservation. Women supported the return of local forest management, but not at the expense of continued forest scarcity. At Reni, women also demonstrated their ability to mobilize in the face of destruction. According to Somen Charaborty (1999), "It was the first occasion in which women participated in a major way independently of the male activists and without being biased in any ideological preoccupation... With this incident the movement also became a peasant movement. Women were defending their traditional forest rights against state encroachments" (31). Perhaps most importantly, the uprising at Reni led to the establishment of the Reni Investigation Committee (RIC), a

group comprised of both state officials and local representatives of what was now being identified as the Chipko Movement. The Committee was charged with investigating the impacts of Himalayan deforestation and the 1970 floods, as well as other related ecological and economic problems. The committee completed its report in 1976, identifying widespread deforestation as one of the major causes of "floods, unemployment and various economic problems in the mountain valleys" (Chakraborty 1999). Based on this report, the government of Uttar Pradesh ended the private contractor system in the Himalayan hills and banned the commercial felling of green trees in a 1200mi² area around the Alaknanda River for a period of ten years (Chakraborty 1999; Sharma 1987).

In the years following the Reni protest, Chipko mobilizations were held in almost every district of the Uttarakhand region: On Forest Day in 1977 Chipko activists plastered over-tapped chir pines in Hemval Ghati; In 1977 and 1978, forest auctions were stopped by demonstrations in the Chakrata division forest in Dehradun, in the Chamyala forest near Silyara, at Loital, and at Amarsar, as well as at the Chanchridhar forests near Almora, where protests were organized by the Uttarakhand Sangharsh Vahini (USV) against a forest auction that proceeded, despite local landslides (James 2000: 509). The most famous of these mobilizations occurred in 1977, when the Uttar Pradesh state government auctioned 640 trees from Adwani forest and 273 trees from Salet forest at the district headquarters in Narendranagar. These actions led Chipko leader Sunderlal Bahuguna to begin fasting and other Chipko members to take possession of the forests for seven days. It was from this protest that one of the most well-known and long-lasting slogans for the Chipko movement originated when a forest officer stated: "You foolish village women! Do you know what the forests bear? Resin, timber and foreign exchange". The famous reply he received became a chant: "What do the forests bear? Soil, water and pure air! Soil, water and pure air are the very basis of life" (Weber 1987).

Overall, between 1972 and 1979, twelve large-scale Chipko demonstrations were documented, along with various minor confrontations, involving an estimated total of 23,000 people in 175 villages over four districts (Hall 1994). Although members of the movement continued to be active into the 1980s, with notable protests organized in 1985 against the Uttar Pradesh Forest Corporation in Chakrata Tesil and Bahuguna's famous

'Kashmir to Kohima' march spanning 4870km from 1981 to 1983, Chipko activity had noticeably decreased after the passing of the 1980 Forest Conservation Act. The Act, as amended in 1988, prevented state governments from reserving forests, from leasing forests to non-government entities, and from clearing forests for "any purpose other than reforestation" (Ministry of Environment and Forests 1980/1988). Although Chipko forest activity subsequently decreased in the Himalayan regions of Uttarakhand in Uttar Pradesh, movement members began to diversify their activities, using Chipko activism to resist dams, mines, highways and state policies that would disrupt the ecosystem (Breton 1998; Hall 1994). These activities are exemplified in the 1984 protests against limestone quarrying in the Hemval valley and in the participation by Chipko members and leaders in struggles to stop the damming of the Narmada River. Many former members of the movement also became active as leaders in smaller community development programs in the region (Chakarborty 1999). Of course Chipko movement activity has not entirely ended, even today, as activists continue to spread the messages of the movement, to hold educational meetings, and to conduct afforestation programs.

Thanks to the efforts of the movement's participants, environmental awareness increased dramatically in India during the 1980s and 90s, as did the number of organized environmental movements (Epsy 1997). Starting in 1983, the Chipko movement spread to the eastern and southern Indian states of Himchal Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Karnataka. In Karnataka, the movement became known as Appiko (the Kannada language equivalent to 'Chipko'). Appiko activists continued in the Chipko tradition to resist deforestation and commercial forestry programs in the tropical forests of the Western Ghats. At the same time, the movement began to gain international fame, especially in northern Europe after a Swedish couple published the story of the movement for Western audience in 1979. Subsequently, nonviolent Chipko tactics were used in Swiss protests against the destruction of forests by acid rain in 1984 and in resistance to the construction of a motorway in Sweden in 1987. It that same year, members of the Chipko movement were awarded the Right Livelihood Award, also known as the "Alternative Nobel Prize", for "working a socio-economic revolution by winning control of their forest's resources from the hands of a distant bureaucracy which is concerned with selling the forest for making urban-oriented products" (RLA 1987: 2). The movement

was also recognized in America, where the city of New York, NY, declared April 29th "Chipko Day". The Chipko movement also influenced similar grassroots environmental movements throughout Asia and the Pacific Rim in Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand (Hall 1994).

The history of Chipko has shown that it stands out from other Indian forest struggles in that it achieved a higher degree of organization amongst a more geographically diverse population than before, and that "[c]ontrary to the earlier movements, Chipko, for the first time, combined the forest rights of people with the broader environmental questions" (Chakraborty 1999: 26). The movement's success can be attributed, at least in part, to its adoption of a method of protest that resonated with a national tradition of nonviolence, and which called attention to the dependence of human life on natural systems. Although the Chipko movement and a great number of its members were undoubtedly motivated by concerns over local livelihood and equitable access to forest resources, the movement's continuance in the form of educational workshops, environmental camps, and involvement in other environmental movements shows that, regardless of critiques over Chipko's inability to achieve universal environmental and economic justice for its members and the forest people it purports to represent, Chipko, was not an economic movement that "would subside once its demands were met. On the contrary, its main aim was the fostering of love towards trees in the hearts of its [members and the] re-establishment of a harmonious relationship between people and nature" (Sunderlal Bahuguna, as quoted in Chakaraborty 1999: 37).

TIMELINE OF THE CHIPKO MOVEMENT

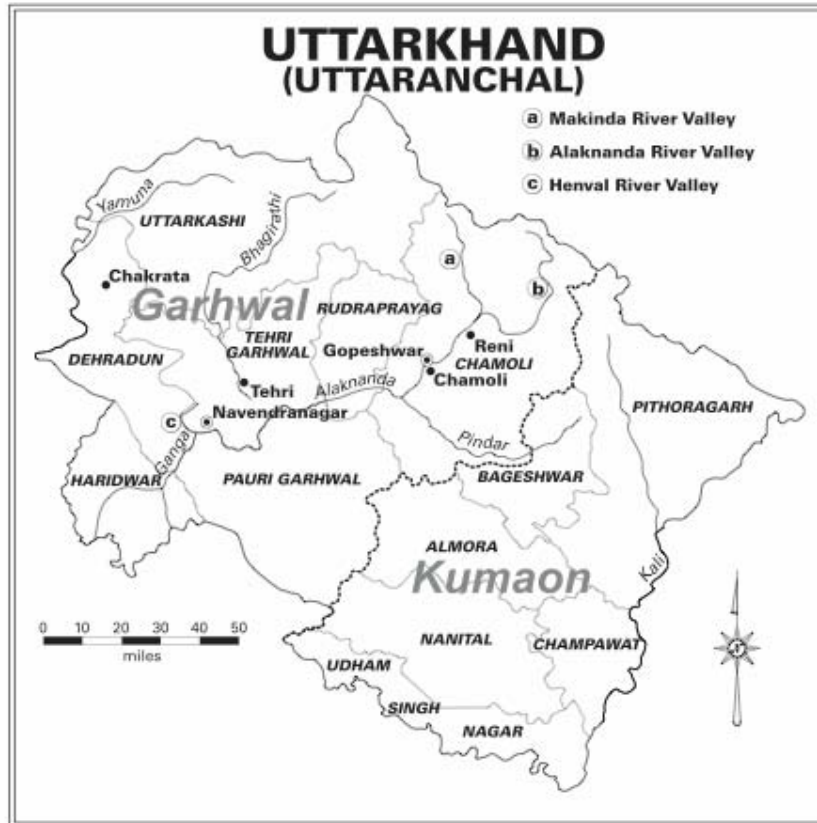
DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
1988 - 2005	Chipko forest protests intermittent; some members involved in struggles against dams, mines, etc., Chipko movement and message continue to inspire activists around India and internationally.	
1988	Draft of New Forest Policy approved by the Indian Parliament.	
1987	Indian government enforces a second 15-year ban on the commercial felling of green trees	Uttar Pradesh
	New York, NY celebrates 'Chipko Day' on the 29 th of April	New York, NY, USA
	Chipko movement members awarded 'Right Livelihood Award'	Sweden
	Chipko-style movement occupies forest to stop the construction of a motorway	Bohuslän, Sweden
1985	Chipko protest against Uttar Pradesh Forest Corporation	Chakrata, Dehra Dun
1984	Chipko protest against limestone quarrying	Hemval Valley, Tehri
	Chipko-style protest held against forest destruction caused by acid rain	Switzerland
1983	Chipko movement begins to spread nationally as Appiko movement	Himchal Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Karnataka
1981	Sunderlal Bahuguna begins famed 'Kashmir to Kohima' 4870km march	Kashmir to Kohima, Nagaland
1980	National Forest Conservation Act enforced; 15-year ban against forest felling in Himalayas	Delhi
1979	Publication by Swedish couple brings international attention to Chipko movement	Sweden
1978	Uttarakhand Sangharsh Vahini (USV) organizes demonstrations against forest auctions	Kumaon

1977	Bahuguna begins fast after government auctions trees of Advani and Salet forests; In October, women from 15 villages control of Adwani forest for 7 days	Narendranagar, Tehri
	In celebration of 'Forest Day' on May 30, activists enter local forests and apply mud and sack plasters to chir pines damaged by overtapping	Hemval Ghati, Tehri Garhwal
1976	Reni Investigation Committee report identifies deforestation as cause of environmental disasters in Himalayas—leads to 10-year limited ban on commercial felling	Kumaon
	Successful Chipko protest	Hemval Ghati, Tehri Garhwal
1975	Uttar Pradesh Van Nigam formed, taking over forest administration and declaring a ban on forest felling	
1974	Reni Protest in March	Reni, Chamoli
1973	Reni forests auctioned at annual government forest auctions in November	Reni, Chamoli
	Second DGSS protest against Symonds' reallocation in June	Phata, Makinda Valley, Chamoli
	DGSS protest against Symonds loggers in March	Gopeshwar, Chamoli
1972	Government denies tree allotment to DGSS, grants to Symonds—sparks widespread protest	Gopeshwar, Chamoli
1971	DGSS members protest a governmental forestry meeting in October	Gopeshwar, Chamoli
1970	Widespread and destructive flooding	Alaknanda Valley, Chamoli
1968	Protests on Tilari Martyr's Day, May 30	Gopeshwar, Chamoli
1964	DGSS receives contract from Forest Department and sets up small industry to produce furniture and agricultural equipment	
1821	British Tribal Forest Settlements	
1815	British occupation of the Northern Hills District	Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh
1730	363 Bisnoi villagers die while using Chipko methods to protest the felling of local trees	Khejadli, Jodhpur, Rajasthan

Figure 1: Map of India and areas of Chipko activity



Figure 2: Map of Uttarakhand (Uttaranchal)



CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF STUDIES OF THE CHIPKO MOVEMENT

There have been many studies of the Chipko movement conducted by scholars from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds. This study seeks to contribute to that literature an analysis of the movement that accounts for its multifaceted nature and which allows for a holistic analysis that subsumes, rather than refutes, other interpretations of Chipko. Before beginning this analysis, it is important to lay a background for the study by reviewing those that have already been published and describing how the conceptual approach adopted herein differs from other studies and contributes uniquely to the literature. In keeping with the tradition of social movement studies within the discipline of geography, the approach applied in this study pays particular attention to the role of context in the shaping of political struggle.

I begin this chapter by reviewing the most commonly cited studies of the Chipko movement, as well as some of the critiques of these studies, in order to develop an idea of how the movement has been variously interpreted. The great amount of literature published on the Chipko movement, some of which is not distributed in America and some of which has been long out of print, prevents me from performing a thorough review of all of the studies of the movement that have been published. However, these inaccessible works do not generally include the most cited scholarly studies of the movement, upon which I will be focusing the bulk of this review. After reviewing previous studies of the Chipko movement, I outline the conceptual approach of this study, which combines aspects of geographical, feminist, and “third world” political ecology.

Chipko as a Feminist Movement

After having both served as a member of the Chipko movement during the 1970s and published prolifically on it since, the name of Vandana Shiva is often associated with international literature on the movement. A physicist from Dehra Duhn, Dr. Shiva is characterized by her ecofeminist approach, reflected in her many books, articles, and other literature on the movement and related subjects. Perhaps the most comprehensive of these in terms of its analysis of Chipko has been *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and*

Development (1989), in which she critiques “development” as a type of neo-colonialism that exploits and oppresses both women and nature. It is in the fourth chapter of this text, titled *Women in the Forest*, that Shiva most explicitly addresses the Chipko movement. Her analysis approaches Chipko through an ecofeminist lens, as a response to the paradigm of ‘scientific forestry’, which Shiva describes as “a narrow, reductionist view of forestry that has evolved from the western bias for maximization of profits” (xix). However, her interpretation of the movement is characterized by her attention to the women who served as its “pillars”, such as Mira Behn and Serala Behn, whom Shiva credits for educating and inspiring many of Chipko’s better known male leaders, and for developing the movement’s organizational structure, respectively (1989: 70). She relegates Sunderlal Bahuguna and C.P. Bhatt, along with other male “leaders” of the movement to the role of “runners” who carried the Chipko message between villages.

Despite, or perhaps because of, her renown, Dr. Shiva has met with a great deal of criticism regarding her interpretations of the Chipko movement, especially in terms of her views on the role of women and their motivations as movement members. In a review of *Staying Alive*, Ariel Salleh (1991) exemplifies many of these critiques by accusing Shiva, amongst a generally kind review of her work, of blaming all environmental destruction and oppression of women on western colonialism and development at the risk of over-idealizing Indian “tradition” and ignoring pre-colonial violence against women by men, as well as the problematics inherent in “traditional” gendered concepts of nature (1991: 212). In addition, Salleh critiques Shiva for an oversimplification of western patriarchy and capitalism that fails to recognize that these institutions have not achieved a “pervasiveness of men’s domination across cultures”, an idea that Salleh describes as “a figment of the western feminist imagination” (1991: 214). Salleh’s critique addresses some of the problems that feminist approaches to the study of the Chipko movement have tended to produce. The first of these occurs when the movement is interpreted as a women’s movement solely because of the presence or centrality of women’s participation without the consideration of whether women’s issues or gendered aspects of other issues are also part of the movement’s agenda. The second problematic tendency within this strand of studies on Chipko occurs when women’s participation in the movement is treated as a result of their gendered status as women, and is disassociated from other

aspects of their social identity such as their class, status as peasants, wider political affiliations, role within an export economy, and so on. Both of these forms of essentialism, though not present in all feminist approaches to studies of the movement, tend to represent both Chipko and its female members in ways that belie the complex nature of the movement and the complex nature of women as social actors whose experiences and political activism, like that of men, are determined by more than their gender alone.

Although Dr. Shiva's interpretation of Chipko as a feminist or women's movement is not unique in the literature, it may be one of the earliest. Indeed, she is only one amongst many scholars who have focused their interpretations of Chipko around the role of women in the movement. The three most notable works among this strand of the literature are those of Shobita Jain (1985), Mary Mellor (1997), and Kumud Sharma with Kusum Nautiyal and Balaji Pandey (1987). Although they share an interpretive lens, each of these works contributes differently to the literature on the Chipko movement in ways that justify their separate analysis. For Jain (1985), the romantic portrayal of women's participation in the movement fits with reality, and should therefore dictate that Chipko be interpreted as a "success story in the fight to secure women's rights, [as well as] in the process of local community development [and] environmental protection" (163). She boldly traces the roots of the Chipko conflict to issues surrounding the status of women in society and their access to local decision-making processes, a claim that other interpreters of the movement, such as Mary Mellor, are not quick to support. Mellor (1997) directly critiques Jain's contention that "the Chipko movement emerged as the spontaneous action of women preserving trees", and argues that, indeed, "the movement has a much more complex political base" that is not grounded in women's identification with nature, but rather the struggle of regional followers of Gandhi (18).

Although addressed relatively briefly in *Feminism and Ecology* (1997), Mellor's interpretation of the Chipko movement sees it as an ideological example of a primarily environmental movement that slowly "became more closely identified with women's relationship to the natural environment" (29). She critiques Shiva's ecofeminist interpretation of the movement as essentializing women everywhere and confusing "the relationship between women *per se* and nature, and between women as representative of

non-westernized peoples (peasants, tribals) and nature” (1997: 66). Consequently, she assesses women’s participation in the movement as being a result of their need to secure subsistence, rather than their possible affinity with nature. Bina Agarwal (1992) also ties peasant women’s concern with the environment to the material reality of their household roles as gatherers of fuel and fodder, rather than to their gender *per se*, arguing that women of the Chipko movement are less concerned than men with issues of regional economic development, as increased household income from commercially profitable projects at the expense of fuel-trees “would not necessarily benefit them or their children” (147). In *The Gender and Environment Debate: Lessons from India* (1992), Agarwal reminds us that, “women’s participation in a movement does not *in itself* represent an explicit incorporation of a gender perspective” (146), but that the Chipko movement does indeed have “the *potential* for becoming a wider movement against gender-related inequalities” because as it has led to the increased mobilization of women against a variety of gender and class issues and to a “shift in self-perception” (148, latter emphasis added). In the end, Agarwal’s analysis of women’s role in environmental movements leads her to conclude that Chipko is an “expression of hill women’s specific understanding of forest protection and environmental regeneration” (1992: 147).

Using a wider frame of reference in their analysis of Chipko, Sharma, Nautiyal, and Pandey (1987) argue that women’s participation in social movements and political processes are “symptomatic” of larger social structures such as “political and economic systems which maintain [socio-cultural gender] norms through an unequal distribution of power, authority and resources” (iii). In *Women in Struggle: Role and Participation of Women in the Chipko Movement in Uttarakhand Region of Uttar Pradesh* (1987), they acknowledge the movement as being an effort to “protect the forests from exploitative commercial policies”, but conclude that “in its essence, the ‘Chipko Movement’ is very much a women’s movement, since women are the real strength behind it” (28). This conclusion is at odds with two central claims made in this work: First, Sharma et al (1987) argue that there are no women in Chipko leadership or decision-making positions and that women’s participation in the movement and their roles as initiators of the protests at Reni were “blown out of proportion by journalists, media and Chipko activists who published Chipko as a women’s movement” (43); Second, they observe,

along with Agarwal, that women's participation in social movements does not automatically result in the inclusion of so-called "women's issues" of gendered rights or exploitation. These arguments counter their definition of Chipko as a women's movement, which is further called into question by their lengthy historical account of regional forest management that traces movement influences as far back as the 18th century and leads them to attribute the "genesis" of Chipko to "the short-sighted forest policies followed by the British Raj and [their] continuance by the Government after Independence" (Sharma et al, 1987: 7).

Chipko as a Peasant Rights or Grassroots Movement

Attention to the membership and identification of participants in Chipko mobilizations is a strong theme within another strand of studies on the movement: the interpretation of Chipko as a form of peasant or peasant-rights protest. Ramachandra Guha, whose name, along with Shiva's, is one of the most cited in Chipko literature, is perhaps the most notable of scholars who have focused upon this theme. Guha's writings on Chipko have been nothing if not prolific. He, sometimes along with Madhav Gadgil, has written on the subject in more works that can be covered here. For that reason, I will focus on only three of his works: *The Unquiet Woods* (1989), *Social Ecology* (1994), and *Ecology and Equity* (1995), written with Gadgil. In *The Unquiet Woods* (1989), Guha argues that Chipko is essentially a rural, peasant social movement. But, he emphasizes that it breaks with, or "goes beyond" other peasant movements in a number of ways (1989: 177). He does this by discussing the "two faces" of Chipko: the 'private' face, which is a "quintessential peasant movement", and the 'public' face, a world-renown environmental movement (1989: 178). He makes this distinction in order to show that although peasant mobilizations of the Chipko movement seemed to end in the 1980s, the environmental aspect of the movement continues to propagate its message through a very active membership. Both of these faces, it would seem, disagree with other assessments of the movement as lacking an organizational structure, showing that Chipko has been, in fact, one of the most organized and long-sustained social movements in India.

In *Social Ecology* (1994), the Chipko movement is explored as only one of a "series of protests against commercial forestry dating from the earliest days of state

intervention” (275). By tracing the history of these protests, Guha attempts to demonstrate that the Chipko movement was able to achieve its degree of success and resonance with the Indian population “precisely because the public had (in a manner of speaking) been prepared for [it]” by both previous protests and a “day to day” familiarity with environmental problems and natural resource shortages (1994: 1). In *Ecology and Equity* (1995), Gadgil and Guha focus less upon the precursors of the movement and more upon its after-effects. They begin by crediting Chipko for a “shift in the way India’s forest resources are being managed” that has seen its official manifestation in the 1988 National Forest Policy, which acknowledged for the first time that “the biomass needs of ecosystem people must have primacy over the commercial demands of omnivores”, although they admit these changes have not necessarily resulted in changes in practice (1995: 23-24). They also cite the participation of Chipko leaders Bahuguna and Bhatt, as well as other movement members, in regional struggles against “displacement” due to development and damming projects, specifically at the Tehri Dam. This evidence supports both of Guha’s contentions that Chipko is at once a localized peasant movement and a regional environmental movement, and that it should be regarded as representative of a wider realm of struggles over forest policy and peasant rights.

Guha and Gadgil are, of course, not the only ones who have studied Chipko as a peasant rights movement or as a struggle over localized access to natural resources. In *Grass Roots Movements and the State: Reflections on Radical Change in India* (1987), Amrita Basu describes the Chipko movement as “a synthesis of external Gandhian influences and indigenous concerns” (649). Relying on accounts of the DGSS’ early protests against the allocation of forests resources to outside contractors, the movement is portrayed here as one against extra-local commercial forest interests, with its more ecological bent explained away as a side-note response to localized flooding. Basu (1987) depicts the story of Chipko briefly, and as only one example of grassroots activism in India, in order to make a larger argument regarding the nature of grassroots protest as a response of oppressed people. However, Basu warns that grassroots movements themselves “tend to focus too narrowly on the grass roots level, thereby neglecting larger social and political forces” and that studies of these movements “may inadvertently reinforce the marginality of tribals, fisherfolk, and hill dwellers” (1987: 668).

Somen Chakraborty shares this critique of studies that interpret Chipko as primarily a peasant rights movement in *A Critique of Social Movements in India* (1999). Instead, he argues that “[p]easants might have participated in large numbers at the early stages of the movement, yet, the demands in Chipko never concentrated exclusively on peasant rights” (1989: 27). In keeping with this analysis, he focuses upon latter stages of the movement when the issue of sustainability became more central to the messages popularized by certain strands of the movement, and concerns of local peasants about control over local forest resources were often overshadowed by concerns about ecological health and ‘right living’. Although his analysis problematically relegates the role of peasant activity in the movement to one of assisting in the spread of activism among a regional population dependent upon agriculture, Chakraborty’s analysis of Chipko fits with more popular notions of the movement “as a social movement aiming at social change” (28), as well as with his definition of social movements in India as “resistances[s] to injustice and [the] violation of people’s natural rights to freedom and livelihood” (v).

Chipko as a Critique of Larger Social Structures

The interpretation of Chipko as a reaction to injustice within wider social structures is supported by another strand of the literature that defines the movement as a post-colonial or anti-development struggle. The most commonly cited of these studies is Dr. P.P. Karan’s *Environmental Movements in India* (1994), in which he argues that the Chipko movement, along with other Indian environmental movements, should be viewed as a response to the “socioecological effects of narrowly conceived development based on short-term criteria of exploitation”, and as an attempt to define an alternative model of development (33). Karan draws these conclusions from an analysis of three non-violent, Indian grassroots environmental movements, which he contrasts with similar movements in the West that do not share their concern with environmental preservation as tied to “issues of economic equity and social justice” (1994: 32). Karan is not alone among scholars studying the movement who acknowledge the numerous labels that have been applied to Chipko by its various interpreters, but choose to focus upon its critique of wider social structures and systems, such as colonialism and development. This attention

to what are often termed the “wider” messages of Chipko is one of the more popular approaches applied in studies on the movement, although these tend to focus upon later stages of the movement and its resonance to national and international audiences, unlike other approaches that mainly consider the origins of the movement and the motivations of its participants. Concerns with this structural approach are expressed by K. Sivaramakrishnan in *Colonialism and Forestry in India: Imagining the Past in Present Politics* (1995), wherein he warns against reifying the state or its policies in analyses of social movements by separating them from the discourses they produce. Doing this, he states, creates the tendency “to romanticize resistance and read all forms of resistance as signs that the systems of power are ineffective”, rather than recognizing the complicity of local communities in forest administration policy (1995: 24).

Part of this critique is shared by Renu Khator in *Forests: The People and the Government* (1989), in which he ties the advent of the Chipko movement in the 1970s to contemporaneous trends that rejected bureaucratic institutions and “pass[ed] blame on to the bureaucracy for every failure”, including the mismanagement of forests (23). Unfortunately, Khator fails to explicitly identify from whom this blame is being passed, although he seems to imply that it lay originally with “the people” themselves (an accusation that is not uncommon in studies on the causes of environmental degradation). He therefore interprets Chipko as a localized protest that has been manifested on a large scale. For Khator, it is the common interests shared by local people over the right to determine local forest policy that led directly to their mobilization, one that he describes as the “unorganized behavior of the masses” (1989: 38).

In a short, but well-cited article titled *Chipko: Nonviolent Direct Action to Save the Himalayas* (1985), Gerald Berreman also interprets Chipko as “a grass-roots movement responding to the needs of most of the [peasant] population of Uttarakhand” (12). However, this assessment does not prevent him from locating the cause of the Chipko movement in the conflict between local and extra-local interests as expressed in national and regional development policies and programs. Indeed, Berreman (1989) interprets Chipko as a response to the status of the Uttarakhand region as a “fourth-world colony”, wherein it is treated as an colony internal to the state of India, or a “domestic colony”, which is “exploited by and for outsiders” (10). He therefore treats the Chipko

movement as a “culmination” of the “repeated violent incidents” involving villagers and the Forest Department that have been taking place since the British Colonial Tribal Forest Settlements in 1821 (Berreman 1989: 10).

Chipko as a Religious or Gandhian Movement

Another widely shared interpretation of Chipko is as a religious or Gandhian movement. These studies tend to pay particular attention to the non-violent tree-hugging tactic employed by Chipko activists and therefore also to the ideological inspiration of movement members and leadership. Some of the most often cited of these types of studies are collected in a volume edited by Christopher Key Chapple and Mary Evelyn Tucker (2000), titled *Hinduism and Ecology: The Intersection of Earth, Sky and Water*. Although many of the essays in this collection call upon the story of Chipko to make broader arguments about the relationship between Hinduism and ecology, the movement is discussed at length in only three of the essays in this collection. The most thorough of these analyses is performed by George A. James (2000) in a chapter titled *Ethical and Religious Dimensions of Chipko Resistance*. In this work, the author employs the example of the Chipko movement to argue against environmental philosopher J. Baird Callicott’s contention that “Hindu religious practice seeks to transcend this world, not to improve it...[and therefore] entails an understanding of reality that is essentially hostile to environmental concerns” (James 2000: 500). In refuting this claim, James (2000) calls upon the example of Chipko protests held at the Advani forests in 1977, where women tied sacred threads around trees and reportedly read stories from the *Bhagavad Katha*, a collection of “narrative tales of the actions of divine beings from which practical moral lessons are often derived” (513). These examples support James’ claim that there is an aspect of dendolatry, “the worship of plants and trees as deities”, in Hindu religious and Chipko political practice (James 2000: 511).

However, James (2000) is quick to note that although there are religious aspects to the Chipko movement, as well as theoretical arguments that underlie its ideology, these do not come from the traditional religious and philosophical texts most familiar to Western scholars. Instead, he points out, “The spiritual value of nature that is affirmed by [those whose lives are most affected by the degradation of nature] is supported not so

much in the “great tradition” of religious life and thought familiar to those occupied with Hindu philosophy as in the “little traditions” familiar to local forest people. These traditions are also unquestionably a part of the living reality that we know as the Hindu religious tradition” (James 2000: 514). James sites much of Chipko’s success to its grounding in this religious tradition. Tying the modern movement and mobilizations to similar protests against forestry policies since the 1950s, he argues that Chipko’s success came from not only its “support of a religious perception of nature, the sacred nature of the trees”, but also its method of protest, which was “coherent with moral duties of purity, truthfulness, and nonviolence” (James 2000: 508). This attention to the historical antecedents Chipko, as well as its “tree-hugging” method of protest, is not uncommon among studies of the movement that focus on its religious aspects or argue for its classification as a Gandhian movement.

Larry D. Shinn adopts the latter of these perspectives in his contribution to Chapple and Tucker’s (2000) collection. His chapter, *The Inner Logic of Gandhian Ecology*, Shinn controversially refers to Chipko as the name applied “to Chandi Prasad [Bhatt]’s environmental movement in the Uttarakhand region” (Shinn 2000: 214). Consequently, he ties the meaning and purpose of the movement to Bhatt’s previous experience with Gandhian *sarvodaya* (“progress of all”) movements that generally promoted many kinds of local, independent industry. Shinn (2000) argues that Gandhian logic indirectly and directly inspired the Chipko movement, which was based on Gandhian ideas about the “inextricable relationship between truth (*satya*) and nonviolence (*ahimsa*)” in politics and religion (218). He cites the Chipko movement as “provid[ing] perhaps the best insight into the third structural dimension of Gandhian ecology: its steadfast adherence to a nonviolent and self-reliant ecological philosophy” (Shinn 2000: 235). Shinn cites three examples to support his assessment of Chipko as a Gandhian movement: first, the stress placed by Chipko activists upon “harmonious and sustainable relations between human and nature”; Second, its “encourage[ment of] local control of basic modes of economic production and...village-based industries”; and, third, the support by Chipko leaders of “nonviolent respect and compassionate concern for those persons and institutions that threaten local self-rule and control of natural resources” (235-6). Shinn’s (2000) view of Chipko as typical of Gandhian *satyagraha*

campaigns is supported by his account of the movement's escalation from direct appeals to government and industrial institutions, to the organization of nonviolent sit-in, and, finally, to the physical confrontation between activists and loggers through the tree-hugging tactic.

As noted above, Shinn's attention to the tactics employed by Chipko activists is not uncommon in studies of the movement that argue for its interpretation as a religious or Gandhian. It is perhaps for this reason that studies under this rubric focus more on the historical use of Chipko tactics by Bisnoi protestors against deforestation in the 1730s. This connection is made by O.P. Dwivedi, both in his contribution to the edited volume by Chapple and Tucker (2000), and in his independent text, *India's Environmental Policies, Programmes and Stewardship* (1997). In the former work, a chapter titled *Dharmic Ecology*, Dwivedi (2000) argues that Bisnoi protests "became the inspiration for the Chipko movement of 1973" (17). Although he recognizes that the modern Chipko movement grew from "grassroots ecodevelopment" concerns, Dwivedi (2000) argues that its background is nonetheless rooted in "religious belief, [along with these] ecological or economic concerns" (17). This position is further argued in *India's Environmental Policies, Programmes and Stewardship* (1997), where Dwivedi states that both the modern Chipko movement and the Bisnoi activism that preceded it "illustrate the fact that when appeals to secular norms fail, one can draw on cultural and religious sources for *forest satyagraha* (persistence in search of truth pertaining to the rights of trees)" (187). In neither work, however, does Dwivedi address the issue of whether Gandhian *satyagraha* inspired the creation and growth of the Chipko movement, or whether these techniques were adopted after the fact, because of their resonance with the wider population and their successful application by other social movements in India.

Chipko as a Mythical Movement

This brings us to one of the most recent themes in the Chipko literature: the widespread and generalized critique of not only the movement, but also its representation in previous literature. Emma Mawdsley reviews many of these critiques in *After Chipko: From Environment to Region in Uttarakhand* (1998), wherein she categorizes these critiques as reactions to "neopopulist theorizing on Chipko" (1). Focusing on

interpretations of the movement as ecofeminist and peasant-rights-based, which she associates with the works of Vandana Shiva and Ramachandra Guha respectively, Mawdsley (1998) argues that these approaches are “one-dimensional” and offer only a “partial understanding of people’s lives in the hills” by reifying notions of tradition village life as “static and inward-looking” rather than recognizing the “familiarity and engagement with a whole series of supra-local influences” expressed in the Chipko movement (48). Although her observations are apt, Mawdsley’s critique tends to entirely dismiss these approaches, rather than attempting to account for some degree of veracity in their interpretations. Mawdsley’s critique of ecofeminist approaches to the study of the Chipko movement, in particular, may be hindered by what appears to be a misinterpretation of ecofeminism, which she feels “celebrate[s]” dichotomies such as nature/culture and man/woman (41). Although she is correct in observing that ecofeminism does not reject these associations in the same way as what she refers to as “traditional” feminism, she downplays most ecofeminists’ recognition that these binaries have been socially constructed through the mutual subordination of women and nature by western patriarchy (Mellor 1997), and instead chooses to portray the acceptance of these associations as “biologically determined” (Mawdsley 1998: 43).

Mawdsley’s critique of Shiva’s tendency toward romantic interpretations of the movement and of Guha’s failure to consider the ability of peasants in the movement to “capture and manipul[at] state power”, as well as oppose it, are in keeping with the overall critiques of essentialist tendencies in studies of the Chipko movement that are a core motivation for the present study (1998: 48). The critique of portrayals of Chipko as a feminist movement is also at the heart of Jayanta Bandyopadhyay’s (1999) discussion of the “myths” that have been depicted in much literature on the movement. In *Chipko Movement: Of Floated Myths and Flouted Realities* (1999), Bandyopadhyay, who identifies himself along with Ramachandra Guha as one of the “early writers on the history of the movement”, addresses three primary “myths” of the movement: its guidance by ideas of deep ecology; its portrayal as a feminist movement; and, whether the tree hugging tactic was employed at the risk of members’ lives or as a media gimmick (1). In regards to the first “myth”, he concludes that there is “no evidence” from documented sources to indicate “any influences of the brand of thinking known as ‘deep

ecology””, and that, rather, the early “resistance to forest felling...was based on economics and aimed at obtaining higher allotment of trees for felling to the [DGSS]” (1999: 1). Similarly, in response to the third “myth”, Bandyopadhyay (1999) locates “only one reported clear instance of actual use of the method of embracing trees, and that too by a male activist” and describes all photographic documentation of Chipko “tree-hugging” tactics as reenactments (4).

Most of Bandyopadhyay’s article reads as a direct attack upon the representation of the Chipko movement as a feminist movement (the second “myth”) by one scholar: Vandana Shiva. In keeping with other critiques of her work, Bandyopadhyay (1999) derides the portrayal of women as “opponents of change [read development] and mere carriers of tradition”, as well as of men as “rapacious agents of economic development and change”, calling for the recognition of the significance of both women and men in movement activities that are based on gender collaboration, rather than gender conflict (2). However, this focus upon gender collaboration does not prevent Bandyopadhyay (1999) from acknowledging that women had a “unique stake in the movement” that and that from the beginning of the movement “[t]here was no lack of recognition of the fact the issue of forests...touches the women much more intensely, than the men (3). Therefore, he concludes that Chipko is not a women’s movement *per se*, but an economic movement in which women had a different stake than men, and which “got its initial start in the conflicts over mountain forests between the economic interests of the mountain communities and the economies of the plains” (1999: 2).

Bandyopadhyay’s (1999) critique is “aimed at a wider examination of the reliability of the media created ‘messages’ and [at] dispelling some of the myths about the movement that have floated around for quite sometime” (1). The concern with “myths” that lie at the heart of interpretations of the Chipko movement also motivated Haripriya Rangan’s influential *Of Myth and Movements: Rewriting Chipko into Himalayan History* (2000). In this work, Rangan considers how “myths” about Chipko have been produced and re-produced by scholars studying the movement, as well as by the movement itself. For Rangan, “these Chipko narratives are persuasive fictions (legitimate or otherwise), which attempt to invest material and cultural practices occurring within a geographical and political configuration with particular meanings.

They have been produced for social and political purposes. Their purposeful production and use intentionally aims to alter cultural and material practices and relations of power within that spatial and political context” (2000: 41). As one of the most visible and conscientious forms of political practice, it is not surprising that one might find that social movements purposely produce stories that imbue their struggles with particular meaning in order to achieve their political ends. It is therefore important that analysts of social movements be aware of these productions and should not fail to consider the ends to which they have been created to serve.

Despite its popularity and frequent appearance as a cited resource for other works, Rangan’s text does not perform an analysis of the Chipko movement *per se*. Instead, the book is an attempt to address this issue of movement narratives by focusing on the practice of “telling stories about stories”. In the case of the Chipko movement, Rangan (2000) argues that its narratives have served to produce a definition of Chipko “by itself” that lends its name meaning beyond its categorical interpretations as a feminist, environmental or peasant-rights movement (9). Rangan interprets the word ‘Chipko’ as “mean[ing] many things at once, yet escap[ing] precise definition”, which has contributed to its interpretation as “meaning” or “being” a variety of things, depending on the information at one’s disposal or the type of interpretation one is attempting to make (9). An important critique offered in *Of Myths and Movements* (2000) is Rangan’s contention that the Chipko movement should not be regarded as a success on all fronts and that, indeed, it has not lead to the alleviation of suffering in the region nor to the existence of social and economic justice for its participants. This argument is also taken up in *Romancing the Environment* (1993), in which Rangan argues that as the Chipko movement spread and gained in popularity, “the issues of sustaining viable livelihoods for local communities...[became] submerged under the polemic and rhetoric raised over deforestation and ecology” (158).

These recent works represent what may become a trend in the literature on the Chipko movement of drawing attention to and critically questioning the many disparate ways in which the movement has been represented, especially the degree to which it has been popularized, romanticized and, by many accounts, wholly distorted. These works need to be regarded as vital contributions to the literature on the Chipko movement if

only in that they remind us to retain a critical eye of the movement, its messages and activities, and not to accept wholeheartedly judgments of its success. Although this is not the line of inquiry that will be applied in the present work, it has, as previously described, been a motivating factor in this analysis, and has influenced the critical approach to the study of social movements that has been adopted in the following chapters.

Studies of Chipko in Geography

The title of this sub-section is somewhat misleading, as some of the authors already discussed are trained as geographers, including P.P. Karan, Emma Mawdsley, Haripriya Rangan and K. Sivaramakrishnan. However, the most explicitly geographic approach to the study of the Chipko movement is likely that taken by Paul Routledge (1993) in *Terrains of Resistance: Nonviolent Social Movements and the Contestation of Place in India*. In this text, Routledge (1993) adopts what he describes as “a place perspective to the study of social movements” as a response to the lack of attention to cultural context that characterizes much of the research on contemporary social movements (xv). In his analysis of the Chipko movement, Routledge argues that the reasons for the movement’s emergence cannot be understood without an analysis of “geography, culture, history and the process of development that has occurred [within the region]” (1993: 76). These characteristics determine the movement’s *terrain of resistance*: “the dialectic between domination and resistance and how this dialectic is manifested within time and space with reference to the agency of social movements” (Routledge 1993: 35). This dialectic occurs at the site(s) of contestation, where social struggle becomes a material reality mediated by the specific character of the movement and the landscape in which the resistance takes place. However, the terrain of resistance “is not just a physical place but also a physical expression...that not only reflects a movement’s tactical ingenuity but also endows space with an amalgam of meanings” (Routledge 1993: 36). The terrains of resistance for the Chipko movement, then, are not just the sites of protests in Uttarakhand, but also the method of tree-hugging as a form of nonviolent resistance that draws upon spatially-specific cultural ideologies.

In terms of Chipko’s regional terrain of resistance, Routledge’s analysis draws attention to the Uttarakhand’s status as an internal colony, administered and exploited by

the both the state of Uttar Pradesh and the nation of India with relatively little self-determination or governmental representation^{vii}. The resultant economic and ecological abuse visited on the region “provided a crucial catalyst for the emergence of the Chipko movement” (Routledge 1993: 79). Also of particular concern to Routledge is the dependence of most of the regional population upon agriculture and forest resources, as well their historical involvement in various types of political activism. The movement’s use of nonviolent tactics is seen as a result of the moral economy of the peasants of Uttarakhand, whose “traditional use of, and spiritual reverence for, the forests” shaped the ecological ideology of the movement (Routledge 1993: 117). In terms of Chipko’s tactical terrain of resistance, Routledge traces the choice to employ tree-hugging in forest mobilizations to the early influence of Chandi Prasad Bhatt and other Gandhian sarvodaya workers who were dissatisfied with the protests methods proposed by DGSM workers (such as lying in front of timber trucks and burning resin and timber depots). All of these factors, along with regional social relations that led to the prevalence of women in Chipko membership but prevented their ideological contribution to the movement, lead Routledge to conclude that the Chipko movement must be understood in terms of each mobilization’s specific terrain of resistance, rather than lumping all protests that adopt the “Chipko” name under one abstract analytical unit. However, he argues that this should not be done at the expense of ignoring “the concerns and issues [Chipko] raises...[and their] wider geographical, ecological and political implications” (Routledge 1993: 116).

Social Movement Studies in Geography

Routledge’s attention to the context in which the Chipko movement developed is exemplary of most contemporary studies of social movements within the discipline of geography. Unfortunately, as Routledge (1993) argues, social movement studies in general have tended to focus almost exclusively on “the goals, organization and success of particular struggles”, while paying little attention to the geography of movements (xv). This problem is addressed by Byron A. Miller (2000) in *Geography and Social Movements*, in which he argues for analyses of social movements that show how “social movement processes... are constituted through space, place, and scale, and [how] that constitution affects how they interact, articulate, and play out” (166). As he contends,

increasing attention is now being paid to the significance of context and geographic themes such as space, place and scale in social movement studies, with direct consequences for our understanding of not only the temporal formation of social movements, but also their spatial distribution and their relationship to the places where resistance occurs: geographical studies of social movements consider not only how space and place shape political resistance, but also, in turn, how these struggles shape the spaces in which they occur. However, it is perhaps in the study of environmental social movements in particular that geography has the greatest opportunity to contribute, because of human geography's "long tradition of engagement with the relationships between people and nature" (Fitzsimmons 2004: 30)^{viii}.

The theorizing of society-environment interrelationships^{ix} has indeed been a major focus of the discipline since its inception, and has at many times been the rallying point around which calls for a more unified discipline have been built. Most research in this tradition has not historically focused on the study of environmental movements, but rather human impacts on the environment, human responses to environmental degradation and change, and, more recently, the study of natural resources and their management. According to Johnston (1991), the latter focus has been the main thrust behind the contemporary revival of interest in environmental issues, which he sees as providing an opportunity for linking human and physical geography. However, most studies in this vein still fail to integrate analyses from both of these sub-disciplines and continue to focus "almost invariably on the processes studied in one of the sub-disciplines only" (Johnston 1991: 209). It is the possibility for the unification of human and physical geography under the rubric of society-environment interrelationship studies that has led to the championing of this theme as the proper focus for the discipline since the beginning of the 20th century. Perhaps the best recent argument for geography's focus on society-environment interrelationships has been made by David R. Stoddart, who argued for the unification of the human and physical geography sub-disciplines into a geography in which "[t]he task is to identify geographical problems, issues of man and environment within regions—problems not of geomorphology or history or economics or sociology, but geographical problems: and to use our skills to work to alleviate them, perhaps solve them" (quoted in Johnston 1991: 206). According to Johnston (1991),

similar calls for a unified discipline based on the study of society-environment interrelationships have also been made by Douglas (1983), Goudie (1986), and Cosgrove and Daniels (1989).

Within the sub-discipline of society-environment interrelationship studies, most research conducted in recent decades on environmental movements has adopted a political ecology approach. Although political ecology developed as an outgrowth from critiques of traditional political economy, it is a truly interdisciplinary approach, combining themes from a variety of the social sciences, as well as biophysical ecology and ecosystems studies, in order to understand environmental problems as a result of social structures. However, the study of environmental movements was not originally one of the key themes taken up in political ecology. Instead, early works tended to examine aspects of human-induced environmental change or the dynamics of resource management, and were characterized by “detailed ecological analysis” (Walker 2005: 75; Watts 2000). Of particular concern in these early studies were the effects of unequal power relations, capitalist modernization, and poverty on human interactions with the environment, particularly the choices made by peasant and agricultural land managers. It was not until the 1990s, with influences from critical social theory and post-structuralism, that political ecology began to incorporate critical analyses of environmental politics through studies of struggles over resources and the symbolic politics they constitute (Watts 1990; 1997)^x.

In *The Politics of Nature* (1998), Peter Walker identifies the main themes of this new political ecology, among which he includes gender analyses of resource use and studies of the household, studies of environmental and livelihood movements, analyses of struggles over social identity and symbolic meaning, studies of discourses of development, social analyses of conservation, and environmental history. Although the present analysis of the Chipko movement will draw upon a number of these themes, it naturally falls under the rubric of studies of environmental and livelihood movements. According to Walker (1998), this theme seeks to examine how particular groups “influence social relations and access to resources” through forms of organization and protest (77). The present study is conducted in this tradition of political ecology, but

adopts an approach that is characterized by the contributions of geography, feminist theory, and “third world” studies to the sub-discipline.

Geographical Political Ecology

The conceptual approach adopted in this study of the Chipko movement draws primarily from geographical political ecology as described by Karl S. Zimmerer and Thomas J. Bassett (2003) in *Political Ecology: An Integrative Approach to Geography and Environment-Development Studies*. In the introductory chapter to this work, they argue that geographical scale is an increasingly “important analytical core” of geographical political ecology, along with continued attention to themes of society-environment interrelationships (2003: 1). Together, these core foci define a geographical approach to political ecology studies that views the environment “not simply as a stage or arena in which struggles over resource access and control take place”, but also as a forceful actor in society-environment interrelationships (Zimmerer and Bassett 2003: 3). It is through the interaction between these dynamic environmental processes and social processes that scales of relation and, ultimately, political ecologies, are produced (4). In terms of environmental movements, then, the political struggle upon which they are based takes places within specific “scaled spaces” that are created through the biogeophysical processes of the region and social processes, such and environmental and developmental policies, natural resource use, cultural views of nature and its value, influences of supra-regional actors such as international NGOs, transnational corporations, and agencies such as the World Bank, and, finally, the political struggle itself. For Zimmerer and Bassett (2003), one of the important questions addressed in geographical political ecology studies of environmental movements such as Chipko becomes *how* these spaces and scales become sites of conflict in which distinctive patterns of resistance occur. It is through this attention to scale that Zimmerer and Bassett argue geographical political ecology will be able to achieve a synthesis of social and environmental analyses.

Another theme that Zimmerer and Bassett (2003) identify as characteristic of geographical political ecology is its “use of a historical perspective”, which incorporates not only studies of the recent past, but also the “time scale of colonial precedents” and

cold-war political alignment (13). Also of concern is how society-environment interrelationships are “differentiated by power relations associated with gender, ethnicity, and class or wealth”, which Zimmerer and Basset (2003) identify as a traditional perspective of society-environment interrelationship studies within geography (9). In his contribution to Zimmerer and Bassett’s volume, Mark Pelling (2003) calls for this attention to power relationships in political ecology studies of political struggle and interaction to be directed specifically toward dynamics between leaders and members within organizational groups. Specifically, he argues that an examination of the respective legitimacy and roles of social movement leaders and members will allow for a better assessment of “local power structures” (Pelling 2003: 86). Together, these themes can be summarized into three main characteristics of the geographical political ecology approach that will be applied in the present analysis of the Chipko movement: first, attention to the multiple “scaled spaces” of the movement in which Chipko activism has taken place; second, an analysis of the historical influences upon Indian environmental policy in general, and the Chipko movement in particular; and third, attention to power relations in the creation of various environmental problems, their effect on different groups of individuals, and their manifestation in the internal dynamics of the movement.

Feminist Political Ecology

According to Michael Watts (2000), political ecology’s current focus on issues of gender has grown from what he refers to as the sub-discipline’s “original silence...on issues of gender” (592). In keeping with many strands of feminist theory, feminist approaches to political ecology have tended to draw attention to the ways in which gender as a part of broader social relations acts to differently constitute community members and how that constitution is reflected in different relationships with the environment. Of particular concern are not only the ways in which these relationships are reflected in the way people use and view natural resources, but also how people are affected by environmental degradation or destruction in different ways. Perhaps the earliest and most influential work describing this approach is Diane Rocheleau, Barbara Thomas-Slayter and Esther Wangari’s (1996) *Feminist Political Ecology: Global Issues and Local Experiences*. In this work, they define feminist political ecology as “deal[ing]

with the complex context in which gender interacts with class, race, culture and national identity to shape our experience of and interests in “the environment” (5). Feminist political ecology achieves this level of analysis by combining perspectives from cultural and political ecology, as well as feminist geography and feminist political economy. Although the authors identify different strands of feminist political ecology, they argue that these are united by an analytical framework that “seeks to understand and interpret local experience in the context of global processes of environmental and economic change” (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996: 4).

Of the three themes of feminist political ecology identified by Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari (1996), the present study is conducted almost entirely under the rubric of “gendered environmental politics and grassroots activism” (14). The authors describe this theme as addressing issues related to “women’s involvement in collective struggles over natural resource and environmental issues...[and how this activity] contribut[es] to a redefinition of their identities, the meaning of gender, and the nature of environmental problems”. (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996: 5). Later, they expand upon this definition by describing five considerations of this approach: first, they draw attention to the relationship between women’s household roles and globally “declining ecological and economic circumstances”, which have particularly detrimental effects for poor and rural households; second, they highlight the impact of structural adjustment policies and the resultant “‘retreat of the state’ from support of public services, social welfare and environmental regulation” upon lives of women in particular; third, they draw attention to trends in environmental movements where activists are linking immediate “ecological and economic crises with recognition of a need for structural political changes”, and apply this reasoning as an explanation of why the Chipko movement moved from immediate economic concerns over natural resource access to wider issues of ecosystems sustainability and its relationship to “larger social and political systems”; fourth, they cite “the political marginality of most women” as an important issue in the attempt to understand gendered roles in collective action campaigns, such as the Chipko movement; fifth, they draw attention to the role of the women’s movement in shaping women’s activism (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and

Wangari 1996: 15-16). Each of these issues will be addressed to greater or lesser degree in this analysis of the Chipko movement.

“Third World” Political Ecology^{xi}

Since its inception, political ecology has been characterized by its focus upon communities and issues in the global south. In *Power, Knowledge and Political Ecology in the Third World* (1998), Raymond L. Bryant cites radical development geography as having been particularly influential in the development of third world political ecology during the 1980s, as “part of a broader assault on mainstream environmental research [such as cultural ecology] for its neglect of questions derived from political economy” (80). Among these, there was the primary issue of how social and political structures shaped environmental issues. Bryant (1998) argues that most early third world political ecologists adopted a Marxist or Neo-Marxian approach to their studies, as there were few other contemporary theories that “offered a means to link local social oppression and environmental degradation to wider political and economic concerns relating to production questions” in the 1980s (81). Because of this early trend, many studies adopting a third world political ecology approach have tended to focus almost exclusively on wider social structures, such as the state, to the detriment of smaller, or more localized, non-state actors, such as local politicians or political units, NGOs, and, most relevant to this study, social movement organizations and networks. More recent research in third world political ecology has joined traditional political ecology in focusing more on local level issues and experiences, which has resulted in studies that “demonstrate a more complex understanding of how power relations mediate human-environmental interaction than was hitherto the case” (Bryant 1998: 82).

Similar to certain aspects of geographical political ecology, a central theme of contemporary third world political ecology is an examination of the way in which unequal power relationships serve to constitute a politicized environment (Bryant 1998). Of particular concern are the ways in which historical influences, such as colonialism, served to shape these power relationships, and ultimately, how their historical legacy continues to shape society-environment interrelationships. In third world political ecology, the centrality of this historical perspective has led to a view of colonialism as

“crucial to understanding contemporary patterns of human-environment interactions and associated power relations” (Bryant 1998: 85). According to Bryant (1998), many of the studies conducted under this rubric consequently focus upon issues of poverty and economic marginalization, contested perceptions of environmental problems, conflicts between Western and “indigenous” scientific knowledge, and, increasingly, the ways in which widespread social structures such as political and economic systems serve as obstacles to meaningful change in the global south.

My Approach

The conceptual approach adopted in this study of the Chipko movement draws upon themes from geographical, feminist, and “third world” political ecology. I have selected a political ecology approach for my study of Chipko, as it reflects my belief, best expressed by David Harvey (1993) that, “all ecological projects (and arguments) are simultaneously political-economic projects (and arguments) and vice versa. Ecological arguments are never socially neutral any more than social-political arguments are ecologically neutral. Looking more closely at the way ecology and politics interrelate then becomes imperative if we are to get a better handle on how to approach environmental/ecological questions” (25). Specifically, my approach will be characterized by attention to the following themes:

- In keeping with all of the political ecology approaches described above, this analysis of the Chipko movement will be structured around an in-depth contextualization of the movement and the specific places in which it developed. Of particular concern will be how the movement was and is shaped by these spaces, and how it has in turn, served to shape them;
- In order to support this contextualization, a great deal of attention will be paid to the historical influences of British colonialism and colonial policy in India, India’s tradition of socialist democracy (particularly its influence on environmental policy and the adoption of the 5-year development plan strategy), the influences of political leaders such as Gandhi and Nehru on the perceived relationships between society, politics, religion and the environment. These historical factors will be considered not only for their

national political effects, but particularly for their localized influences in Uttarakhand and on the structure and goals of the Chipko movement;

- In keeping with Zimmerer and Bassett's (2003) focus on scale, this analysis will look at the specific sites and "scaled spaces" of conflict in which Chipko activity has taken place in order to understand how they have been shaped by dynamic regional environmental and social processes.
- Part of the scalar analysis that characterizes this study of the Chipko movement will consider how society-environment interrelationships are differentiated by unequal power relationships, with particular attention to the ways in which gender, caste, and wealth are reflected in society-environment interrelationships and social roles at the household, village, regional, national and international levels. Consideration will be given to the questions of how gendered identities are reflected in and possibly changed by participation in the Chipko movement, and how changing dynamics between leaders and members of the Chipko movement come to be reflected in the movement's messages and goals, as well as its representation.

CHAPTER THREE

A POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF THE CHIPKO MOVEMENT

In the preceding chapter, I described the political ecology approach that will be applied in the present analysis of the Chipko movement. It should be noted, however, that the contents of this chapter are intended to build upon, not stand separate from, the discussions of Chipko in previous chapters: the historical narrative of the movement found in Chapter One and the review of interpretations of the movement in Chapter Two. In addition, the reader should keep in mind that the title to the present chapter is *a* political ecology of the Chipko movement, not *the* political ecology. As such, this analysis represents only one of many possible ways to synthesize various political ecology approaches into a framework for environmental movement studies. I begin this chapter with a review of Indian forestry policy from the colonial period to the emergence of the Chipko movement, with particular focus on how these policies affected the Uttarakhand region. Next, I describe the “scaled spaces” of conflict in which the Chipko movement emerged and analyze how the movement reflected these spaces and, in turn, served to re-shape them. Then, I explore the role of women in Chipko, asking both how gendered social roles affected participation in the movement and how women’s political participation changed, and was changed by, the movement itself. Finally, I examine the internal dynamics of the Chipko movement by exploring relationships between movement leaders and members, especially in terms of the various representations of Chipko’s messages, goals, and purpose.

Colonial and Postcolonial Forestry Policy

For most of the three centuries before the British occupation of the Himalayan hills, the two divisions of present-day Uttarakhand, Garhwal and Kumaon, were ruled, respectively, by the Panwar and Chand dynasties. Although access to forests in both of these kingdoms was restricted, both also followed traditional practice of most Indian monarchs and “rarely interfered with local [forest] usage” (Sivaramakrishnan 1995: 14). In the 1790s, Gurkha rulers from Nepal began to invade the region, finally occupying both divisions in 1804. According to HariPriya Rangan (2000), “the Gurkha rulers were

essentially concerned with deriving as much revenue as possible within a short period, even if it meant stripping the region of every asset that could be extracted” (29). The deposed Garhwali leader allied with the British East India Company to oust the Gurkhas in 1815. At that time, Kumaon came under British rule and most of Garhwal was returned to the nominally independent rule of the Raj of Tehri.

British Colonial Forest Policy

Although British Parliament denied the renewal of the East India Company’s charter two years before they gained control in Kumaon, the Company continued its commercial activities in the region until 1933. During that time, the Company focused on extracting forest products from the lower Himalayan foothills for trade and for the expansion of transportation routes in order to promote trans-Himalayan trade (Rangan 2000). After 1833, the Company focused its efforts in the region on the further expansion of transportation networks and the development of agricultural commodity production, especially of tea. Company officers were encouraged to establish large tea plantations, leading to the clearing of forests for farmland, as well as for the production of timber to be used in constructing infrastructure and for export. The demand for Himalayan timber increased after the 1857 mutiny, as the British expanded the railroad system in order to expedite the transport of troops and goods over all Indian territories (Rangan 1993). Ramachandra Guha (1989) attributes the creation of the British Colonial Forest Department in 1964 to this increased demand for timber products. Indeed, the Department facilitated the extraction of 1.3 million cedar railway sleepers from the forests of the Himalayan foothills by 1878 (Kuchli 1997).

The Forest Department was, officially, charged with “conserv[ing] natural resources and prevent[ing] environmental degradation in the interests and welfare of its subjects”, but it also needed to provide low-cost timber and other resources (such as resin) that produced a revenue for the state (Rangan 1993:166). Throughout the late 19th century, the primary purpose of the Forest Department was indeed the facilitation of the export of forest products, primarily timber and resin, to Britain. The first Forest Act adopted by the Department in 1865 allowed the government to declare any land as forest, to make rules for the use of forests, and to prescribe punishment for the breach of laws set

forward in the act (Khator 1989: 13). In addition, three categories of forests, with corresponding rules for use, were created: the reserved forests, which were owned and controlled by State Forest Departments that could extend rights of use to local communities at its pleasure; protected and civil forests, which were owned by the State Revenue Department, but were also accessible to local communities through prescriptive and granted legal rights; and village forests, found only in parts of the subcontinent, which were managed by village institutions, but regulated by the Revenue Department (Rangan 1993: 166). As a majority of forests were classified as reserved, most individual users were forced to pay fees for access to “minor forest produces”, such as leaves and flowers, whereas some “villages were granted collective rights...on the condition that they would...provide labor for maintenance work and fire protection of reserved forests” (Rangan 1993: 166). These laws were applied throughout British Kumaon, as well as in the forests of Garhwal, which were leased from the Raj of Tehri until 1925.

The 1865 Forest Act was redrafted in 1878 in order to make more explicit the imperial right to land and its resources and to address the contentious issue of local or indigenous rights. The primacy of imperial rights was asserted in these laws, which were founded on the claim that, “the right of conquest is the strongest of all rights—it is a right against which there is no appeal” (from *Report of the Proceedings of the Forest Conference held at Simla, October 1875* quoted in Guha 1989: 38). Reserved forests became even more restricted than before, and were increased through the inclusion of all wastelands and uncultivated lands not already classified under the previous act. Local Forest Settlement Offices were also established throughout the region in order to “protect forests [including “village” forests] from nearby villagers” (Khator 1989: 14). Even the collection of fodder and secondary fuelwood became limited and, in 1897, the sale or trade of any forest resources became illegal for all but the relatively few, mostly nomadic cattle herders, whose permits were still closely regulated through the imposition of fees and taxes (Rangan 1993). Eight species of trees also were declared as reserved, regardless of the classification of the forest in which they grew. The result of these policies began to wear on those limited forests that were available for use by local villagers, resulting in visible destruction and deforestation. However, this only provided further fuel for the

Imperial argument that village populations abused forests resources and that the state, then, should intervene further to “protect” or conserve the forests. (Rangan 2000).

The next major action taken by the Forest Department came in 1911, when new forest settlements declared another 3000mi² of forests in Kumaon as reserved. At the same time, new forest usage rules were created that regulated the number of cattle to be grazed and fuelwood allotted to each native rightholder. Increased demands for timber during World War I created greater pressure on forest resources in the Himalayan foothills of Garwhal and Kumaon. However, shortages of imported British goods during the war also led to the realization that investments in infrastructure and the development of industry in India would be more cost efficient than the continued importation of British goods. The Forest Department soon established a turpentine and resin factory in Bareilly, Kumaon, and began to establish commercial forest plantations where profitable species such as the *chir* pine were cultivated. The Indian Forest Act of 1927 institutionalized this practice of “commercialized forest-management”, which continued to provide a guideline for forest policy through the 1980s (Khator 1989). However, a combination of increasing political pressure from the nationalist movement and the collapse of timber prices during the Great Depression led to the reservation of large tracts of forests for preservation. During World War II the rate of deforestation in the Himalayan hills increased again, as the British War and Munitions Board began to set quotas for the extraction of forest resources. In these final years of British colonial occupation, the Forest Department pushed into the more remote areas of the Himalayas, causing further degradation and destruction in the hills in order to maximize exports (and profits) before India achieved independence (Gadgil and Guha 1995).

Postcolonial Forest Policy

The Indian National Congress, or Congress Party, took control of the national government at independence in 1947. The first tasks of this new government were to develop a constitution and, eventually, an economic plan for the country. At that time, the two greatest personalities in the Congress Party were Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, whose ideas for postcolonial governance and economic planning in India stood in stark contrast to each other. Gandhi was a long-time social activist and had

been a political leader and inspirational force behind the nonviolent organization of the independence movement. Gandhi's notion of economic development for India was based on a rejection of large-scale industry and "a revival of the organic village communities of the pre-colonial and pre-industrial past" (Gadgil and Guha 1995: 181). The Gandhian economic plan was articulated through the promotion of village-based handicrafts production and other cottage industries, such as those established through the sarvodaya, or 'progress for all', programs. Gandhi was critical of industrial development, proposing that individuals voluntarily limit their consumption of luxury goods so that society could live a more environmentally sustainable way (Chakravarty 1987). When Gandhian economic theories were originally published in the 1940s and 1950s, they were widely regarded as lacking a "substantive theoretical foundation", in part because they ran counter to the then prevailing modernization theories that advocated a centralized government and investment in industrial growth (Rangan 1993).

Jawaharlal Nehru's vision of the future for independent India was more in keeping with dominant economic theories of the day, and was based on the idea that industrialization, when coupled with a central planning mechanism that served to distribute economic growth among regions, "would promote economic interdependence that in turn would tie the country together as a nation" (Swain 1997; 820). The Nehruvian approach advocated three basic principles: first, that the development of India should not be left to market forces, but rather controlled via a centralized state mechanism; second, that the government needed to be protective of its growing industry; and third, that investment in large-scale industry would produce more immediate economic returns than equivalent investments in agriculture or other sectors (LaRue 1997). Ultimately, both Gandhian and Nehruvian theories were motivated by two contrasting visions of Indian society: Gandhi tended to idealize precolonial village life in India, looking for a return to that traditional and sustainable lifestyle. Nehru, on the other hand, viewed precolonial India as "a once-great civilization that had stagnated and atrophied under the dead weight of tradition", leading to an "intellectual and economic backwardness" that fueled its colonization (Gadgil and Guha 1992: 183). From this perspective, the recommendation was for India to emulate closely the Western approach to economic development,

primarily through the promotion of large-scale industry and planning based on modern scientific principles (Gadgil and Guha 1992).

Gandhi's death in 1948 left Nehru as the head of the Congress Party and as India's first Prime Minister. Although Gandhian principles, such as the alleviation of poverty and promotion of social welfare, continued to inspire national planning rhetoric, Nehru's position as the Head of the Planning Commission during four separate terms provided him with a unique ability to influence the country's economic policies. The approach adopted by the Commission was based on theories articulated in the 1944 Bombay Plan, in which "leading industrialists had agreed upon the importance of a strong and centralized state" and rapid industrialization and urbanization, funded through government investment (Gadgil and Guha 1992: 184). Most evident in the first three Five-Year Plans, Nehru's influence ensured a focus on the development of large-scale industry and the increase of capital goods production, often at the expense of agricultural investment. Nehru's admiration for soviet socialism and economic planning influenced this approach to development through centralized planning and rapid industrialization and also led to India's adoption of the Five-Year Planning system. The first of these plans was launched in 1950 and drew upon the theories of Harrod and Dumar, which viewed economic growth as a product of labor and capital investment. The general aims of the first Five-Year Plan were to increase production through an infusion of capital into industrial agricultural and irrigation systems, as well as transportation and communication infrastructure, in the attempt to address some of the damage to the economy caused by colonial exploitation and post-independence partition (Braibanti and Spengler 1963).

With the Nehruvian emphasis on rapid industrialization and the improvement of transportation infrastructure, the demand for raw forest materials increased sharply in the few years after independence. State access to forest resources came to be viewed as paramount to economic development. At the same time that the first Five-Year Plan was approved, the first national Constitution placed all forests under the state control, specifying that state legislature has exclusive rights to make laws regarding forests (Khator 1989). Although relinquishing national responsibility for forest management left the government able to focus on more pressing post-independence problems, such as war

with Pakistan, problems resulting from Partition, and the drawing of state boundaries, the states governments were then able to dismiss national policy recommendations and lower environmental standards in order to keep forest industries operating profitably in their states. This problem was partially addressed in the national Forest Policy Act of 1952, in which states' rights to exclusive control over forest protection, production, and management was reinforced, but curbed by their need to serve primarily the "national interest" of fostering social stability and economic progress (Swain 1997; 820). The few remaining privately owned forests, though often severely degraded, were transferred to state-run forest departments after land reforms placed a limit on private land holdings (Rangan and Lane 2001). These forests were often classified as vested forests and were, along with others, managed by the state forest departments according to the principles of scientific forestry. Although forest policy had changed little since the colonial period, these first decades of independence saw relatively few protests against state-run activities, perhaps because the trees were finally being used in the national commercial-industrial sector, rather than being exported to fulfill imperial needs, or, as Haripriya Rangan (1993) describes, because of the "considerable popular appeal" of "the idea of a postcolonial state working toward national development, stability, and progress" (169).

The next two Five Year Plans (1956-1961 and 1961-1965) saw increasing investments in industrial development, often made at the expense of non-industrial agriculture and social services (Bauer 1961). State Forest Departments were called upon to produce the raw materials needed for industrial processing, and were encouraged by the National Planning Commission to pursue afforestation programs that managed the planting of rapid-growth species (Rangan and Lane 2001). However, few changes were made in national forest policy until the 1970s, in which time state forest departments prioritized natural resource extraction in order to achieve short-term economic gains concurrent with national development efforts. The national Constitution was amended in 1976 in response to this and other problems, including the lack of available land for afforestation programs after the growth in agricultural production attributed to the widespread introduction of high-yield wheat varieties by the World Bank in what later came to be referred to as the "Green Revolution". The national government then became directly involved in forestry policy formation and program development, which had

heretofore been the domain of the state (Rangan and Lane 2001). The fifth Five-Year plan was drafted in 1973 as Chipko protests began to organize in the Uttarakhand hills. In it, “social forestry” was advocated as an alternative forest management approach in which local communities participated in the maintenance of forests. However, the plan, which was implemented in 1976, was terminated in 1978, when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) defeated Indira Gandhi and the Congress Party in an election that followed a 19-month state of emergency. This government encouraged a return to Gandhian economic policy and implemented a series of two One-Year Plans that promoted village-based cottage industry growth before the Congress Party ousted them, returning Indira Gandhi to serve her third and last term as Prime Minister from 1980 until her assassination in 1984.

In the years after the Chipko movement, forests in India saw increasing control by the national government whose interests were at various times the economic development of the country and the limitation of deforestation and related environmental destruction. This tendency culminated in the Forest Conservation Act of 1980, in which state governments were prohibited from allowing the use of forest lands for any non-forest purpose “without the prior approval of the central government” (Khator 1989; 16). Overall, forestry policy in India did not see significant and meaningful change take place in the 150 years from the beginning of British occupation to the start of Chipko protests in the 1970s. During that period, the forests of Uttarakhand were continually exploited in the name of external growth—first of the British Empire, then of the independent nation and state that it was administered by. Of course, forestry policy does not dictate forestry practice and use, but rather mediates the ways in which forests are accessed, at least locally, and how people interact with governmental and policing powers in order to meet their needs. This is particularly true in the hills of Uttarakhand, where forest policies implemented by a distant state government^{xiii} were often obstacles to be overcome through the bribing of state officials or the continuance of careful “illegal” forest use. The next section will explore the ways in which these forest policies became incorporated into the dynamic socio-environmental relationships that characterize the Uttarakhand region and provided the context for the growth of the Chipko movement.

Scaled Spaces of Resistance: The Uttarakhand

In *Terrains of Resistance: Nonviolent Social Movements and the Contestation of Place in India* (1993), Paul Routledge examines the “terrains of resistance” of Chipko and other Indian social movements. Routledge performs a spatial analysis of these movements in order to reveal their terrains of resistance, or “those places where struggle is actively articulated by the oppressed” and which therefore become sites of place-specific contestation (1993: 35). In keeping with Routledge’s theoretical approach, this study of the Chipko movement also seeks to analyze the “place-specific character” of the Chipko movement in order to illuminate its relation to the “landscape of struggle” in which the movement has, quite literally, taken place (1993: 36). However, rather than approaching this analysis through an examination of the spaces or sites in which Chipko activity has occurred, or in terms of Routledge’s focus on movement location, this analysis incorporates the concept of scale in order to reveal how Chipko’s spaces of resistance are constituted through the social and ecological process occurring within the functional area of the movement, as well as at a multiplicity of other scales that influence the formation and structure of the movement, as well as the social and environmental problems to which it responds. In this analysis, therefore, the term “scaled spaces of resistance” is introduced in order to refer at once to both the space in which Chipko movement activities occurred, in this case the region of the Uttarakhand, and also to the dynamic interactions between distinct social and ecological processes that constitute the scaled nature of that space^{xiii}. This analysis recognizes that the spaces of Chipko resistance, and by implication those of all political struggles involving society-environment interrelationships, are constituted through social and ecological processes occurring simultaneously at and between a multiplicity of scales, which are at once fixed and fluid (Brown and Purcell 2005).

The application of a this type of scalar analysis, although likely limited in studies of other social and environmental movements, is particularly well-suited to the Chipko movement, as the social and ecological processes which shaped the movement, and to which it responded and aimed to influence, were often focused at specific spaces that correspond to ecologically, politically and socially-formed scales, such as the nation, the state, the region, village, and household. For example, the creation of forest policy and

management regimes at the scale of the state of Uttar Pradesh influenced the terms on which local people were able to exercise their rights to local forests and their resources; The multi-regional ecological processes unique to the Himalayan foothills of the Uttarakhand meant that the impact of those state-scale forest policies manifested differently in that region than in others within the state of Uttar Pradesh; The global-scale standard and measure of development influenced the ways in which forest policies were constructed at the state and even national scales, leading to Uttarakhand's experience as an internal colony. All of these multi-scalar processes, however, were in the case of the Chipko movement, mediated at the regional scale of the Uttarakhand, which I examine as the primary "scaled space" in which the resistance of the Chipko movement took place. By discussing the Uttarakhand as Chipko's "scaled space of resistance", I look to convey that the region is more than simply the "stage or arena in which struggles over resource access and control take place", but also a forceful actor in the society-environment interrelationships that constitute, and are constituted by, the region, including the Chipko movement (Zimmerer and Bassett 2003: 3). In the following pages, I examine the Uttarakhand as the "scaled space of resistance" of the Chipko movement. In doing so, I examine how the social and ecological processes that constitute the Uttarakhand have shaped, and in turn have been reshaped by, the Chipko movement^{xiv}.

The Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand (Sanskrit for northern territory) has historically referred to the two kingdoms of Garhwal and Kumaon in the Indian Himalayas, between the Himachal mountain range to the west and Tibetan China and Nepal to the east (Uttarakhand Support Committee 2005). The region is 53,483km² in area, approximately 17 percent of India's total land area or the same size as Nova Scotia, and is home to 8.5 million people (Census of India 2001). Prior to 2000, Uttarakhand was a district within the larger state of Uttar Pradesh, of which it formed a significantly small, but economically and strategically important area (see Figure 1). As the people of Uttarakhand constituted a small percentage of the entire population of Uttar Pradesh, the region was poorly represented in the state government, whose administrative offices were located hundreds of miles to the south in Lucknow. The movement for an independent state of Uttarakhand

developed in 1979, when the Uttarakhand Kranti Dal (Uttarakhand Revolutionary Party) was established and began to organize for statehood (Uttarakhand Support Committee 2005). After a prolonged struggle that involved a number of other social movement organizations, the region achieved statehood in 2000, under the name Uttaranchal, which was “selected for its allegedly less separatist connotations” (Uttarakhand Support Committee 2005). Today, the dual name Uttaranchal/Uttarakhand is used in official reference to the state, whereas the name Uttarakhand is used in popular reference to both the region and the state.

The British East India Company annexed the Uttarakhand in 1815 in order to control existing trans-Himalayan trade routes (Guha 1989). Although the British quickly recognized and began to take advantage of the vast natural resources of the Himalayas, most of their forest-based activities were limited to the lower foothills in the region. At independence, forests still covered 60 percent of the land area in the region and were controlled almost entirely by the state (Rangan 1996: 211). Drastic change in governmental forest resource use did not come, however, until 1962, when India’s war with China ended and the border between the Uttarakhand and Tibet became a “national security concern” (Rangan 1996; 212). The Indian government responded by building an extensive network of roads throughout the Himalayan hills, which opened the region to increased military traffic and expedited the extraction of forest resources and their transportation to the plains for processing and exportation (Karan 1994). War contributed to an existing economic crisis that led to reforms in development policy throughout India. Greater focus was thereafter placed on the development of agriculture through what would later be called the Green Revolution. These policies had little direct impact on the Himalayas, as its “[m]ountainous terrain, lack of infrastructure, and fragmented land holding distributed across different ecological and altitudinal zones were hindrances to the introduction of Green Revolution techniques” (Rangan 1996: 212). The Green Revolution and related policies implemented in 1969 as part of the fourth Five-Year Plan did, however, lead to a redistribution of property in the Uttarakhand, when the national government placed a limit on individual land holdings and subsequently annexed vast tracts of forest land that had previously been private property or had been classified as barren or wastelands. Although national and extra-local access to, and control over, the

forest and its resources increased during this period, local access and decision-making rights were curtailed by new forest classifications that limited individual forest users' rights to the collection of fuelwood and fodder for personal consumption, virtually prohibiting all trade in forest goods by non-state entities.

The combination of restrictive forest access laws and the virtual decimation of trans-Himalayan trade networks with China and Tibet after the war compounded the economic marginalization of the Uttarakhandi people. Many of the small forest-based industries that had been established by local people since independence failed because they were unable to secure the costly logging permits that were often preferentially granted to large-scale, rather than local, extractive industries. Most households failed to see any economic profit from the logging of their local forests, as many of the large corporations that were granted forest access hired cheaper migrant labor from Nepal for its forest felling operations and processed the extracted forest material outside of the region (Rangan 1996). As revenue from deforestation increasingly accrued at timber processing centers in the plains states, male villagers were sometimes forced to leave the Uttarakhand in order to find employment. Many village households gradually became reliant upon remittances from these emigrated workers (Epsy 1997). The absence of so many working-age males left women with the sole responsibility of "running the home, looking after the children, bearing the drudgery of agricultural work, cattle care and bringing fuel, fodder and water from long distances" (Sharma 1987: 25). As rates of deforestation worsened, women were spending over seven hours per day collecting food and fuel. In addition to their other responsibilities, this made the average woman's workday last between 14 and 16 hours (Karan 1994; Sharma 1987). As it became increasingly difficult for women to secure their means of survival by collecting food, fuel and fodder, they became desperate. According to Chipko movement literature, a few women were driven to suicide, some lost family members, and many joined the Chipko Movement to work for meaningful change (CIC 1987). As one Chipko activist described, "When we could not obtain the wood to cook even the little grain we get, we had to resort to a movement" (Guha 1989: 168).

As the Uttarakhand's forest resources fueled national industrial development, restrictive forest policies forced local people to adopt practices that were in direct

violation of forest laws. As Shubhra Gururani (2000) documents for an anonymous Kumaoni village she calls 'Bankhali', the women visit the forest between two and three times each day, walking two to three hours each way to collect a load of approximately 30 kilos of twigs and leaves (177). In order to maintain this degree of use, the villagers persistently monitor the actions and schedule of the local forest guard, timing their forest trips "only after they have made sure that the forest guard has gone past their patch of the forest" (Gururani 2000: 177-178). Gururani interprets this illegal use as a claim to property, or ownership, of the forest, but is careful to note that while Bankhali villagers describe their actions as illegal, they are justified by the "demands of subsistence" (2000: 178). Of course, these actions further served to fuel the government's claim to exclusive control of the forests, based on the "long-standing assumption that indigenous agriculturalists and herders caused deforestation by misuse and overuse" (Karan 1994: 5). Although the effects of the timber contractors were devastating, local people continued to be blamed by the government for deforestation, despite the fact that most peasants do not cut down entire trees for fuel-wood, but rather use branches, dead trees, and brush.

Most of the Indian Himalayas are located in the Uttarakhand region, making this a distinct region rich in both forest and mineral resources. The population of the Uttarakhand, however, is largely homogeneous, with between 80 and 92 percent of people employed in agriculture, 85 percent in the Brahmin and Rajput caste (compared to 11 percent nationally) and 75 percent in one of two Hindu religious sects (Berreman 1983; Mawdsley 1998). Although the area is rich in natural resources, the steep terrain and frequent floods can make it difficult for local people to profit off their lands. Since irrigation systems are not well developed, traditional agricultural methods are employed. In addition, most of the people of the Uttarakhand own property, although the average land holding is relatively small (Chakraborty 1999). By managing the forests as a communal resource, villagers have been able to meet subsistence requirements and occasionally have a surplus of grain they are able to sell through the market economy. Most of this village-scale coordination is accomplished through panchayats^{xv}, which Ramachandra Guha (1989) describes as the institutional expression of the solidarity among landowners and cultivators in the Uttarakhand (21). Even as the region has been administered extra-locally, the panchayats have continued, in many cases, to manage

local internal affairs and to administer social and religious matters, as well as to deal with judicial issues that are “technically under the jurisdiction of civil and criminal courts” (Guha 1989: 21). For these reasons, the village panchayats have remained powerful influences over social and political life in the villages they administer. Not surprisingly, some later Chipko leaders drew upon their panchayat leadership experience in organizing various movement protests.

As described above, both development programs and forest policies implemented under colonial and postcolonial rule tended to exploit the region for governmental benefit with little regard for peasant welfare. In many ways, it was the ecological uniqueness of this region that contributed to its exploitation. The glaciated speaks of the high mountains and the densely forested hills of the Uttarakhand Himalayas contrast with the majority of India’s terrain in the plains. In addition to serving as a critical resource for both the subsistence of local peasants and the material benefit of people throughout the country, the watershed system in the Himalayan hills also stabilizes the soil and regulates drainage into the Indo-Gangeatic plain, controlling both severe flooding and drought. The large and sacred Ganga and Yumna rivers, which irrigate much of the plains downriver, both originate from glaciers in this region (RLA 1987). In the years prior to the development of the Chipko movement, government contractors “clear-cut large mountainside areas, inviting environmental and economic disaster” through practices that have been described as demonstrating ignorance of how the Himalayan watershed ecosystem functioned (Breton 1998: 4). After decades of this type of abuse, the level of environmental destruction became unavoidable and, without adequate vegetative cover, the region began to suffer from devastating floods and landslides that were caused by soil erosion (Sharma 1987). After monsoon flooding in 1970 left the villages located beneath timber operations in ruins, people began to question forest policies more actively and to organize against unchecked tree felling (Hall 1994: 51).

As the Chipko movement grew in both size and significance, it began to affect the socio-political and ecological processes of the region, and therefore contributed to a reshaping of the Uttarakhand. As discussed above, the protests of Chipko activists against tree felling led, at least in part, to the establishment of the Reni Investigation

Committee, and subsequently, to the series of bans against green tree felling in parts of the Himalayas. Whether these bans ultimately benefited the people who live in their enforcement areas is debated. After the 1980 Forest Act, most forest cooperatives at altitudes above 1000m disbanded, and few local people in those areas were able to obtain employment in the remaining forest industries or to find cash employment elsewhere. The bans and other restrictions on forest use have also been cited as the cause for the existence of a Garhwali “timber mafia”, for the cancellation of a number of beneficial development projects in the region, and for a general expansion of governmental bureaucracies at a number of scales (Rangan 1996: 219). By other accounts, the movement has served to lessen women’s workload in some areas, as forest health and abundance have returned and women are able to spend a smaller portion of their workday collecting fuel and fodder (Routledge 1993). The Chipko movement also continued the tradition of local political activism, helping to pave the way for the success of later social movements, such as the struggle for Uttarakhand’s statehood. Ultimately, Chipko’s most long lasting-impacts may be evidenced supra-regionally, as the movement today is best known for its critique of western economic development and its national impact as the “first organized environmental movement in India” that served to raise national public awareness of environmental issues (Chakraborty 1999: 26).

The impact of the Chipko movement has therefore been evidenced at a variety of scales and has been shaped by a multiplicity of scalar processes. Importantly, the political struggle that constituted the Chipko movement served to reshape the regional scale of the Uttarakhand by calling for greater regional self-determination and by reinforcing the tradition of political activism that has long characterized, and continues to distinguish, the region. By applying the concept of “scaled spaces of resistance” in this analysis of Chipko, we have seen how the movement developed in reaction to the particular social and ecological processes that constitute the region, and now state, of Uttarakhand. Although similar struggles against restrictive forest policies have occurred elsewhere, they materialized and manifested differently than the Chipko movement, not only because they occur in different locations, but because the multi-scalar social and ecological processes which constitute those places vary and therefore produce widely disparate patterns of struggle. Although this sub-section examined the regional scaled

spaces of the Uttarakhand, it also sought to illuminate those multi-scalar processes taking place within and outside of the region that have shaped the nature of Chipko resistance. The privileging of the regional scale has, however, undoubtedly overshadowed those other scalar processes, whose further detailed analysis would surely expand our understanding of the Chipko movement in ways not possible within the scope of this thesis. The object of the following analyses of the gendered dimension of the Chipko movement and the dynamic power relations between Chipko movement members and leaders is intended to expand upon our foundational understanding of those multi-scalar processes, particularly those occurring within the Uttarakhand, at the scale of the household and village, as well as within the movement itself.

Women's Participation in the Chipko Movement

There are a number of studies on Chipko in which the prominent role of women is well documented and discussed (see for instance Jain 1985; Mawdsley 1998; Shiva 1989; Sharma et al. 1987, and; Turner 2003). The purpose of this section is not to add to that literature another argument over whether the movement should be considered feminist, or ecofeminist (see Bandyopadhyay 1999), or whether women's participation was really as widespread and central (or men's participation as peripheral) as it has been portrayed (see Rangan 2000). Rather, my interest here is to examine how people's relationships with nature and participation in the Chipko movement were differently constructed by their gendered social roles. The two themes I address are: first, how women's role within the household, village community, and larger society led them to have different relationships with, and subsequent interests in, the forests; and second, how women's participation shaped the Chipko movement. For the first theme, I will examine the role of gender as part of a broader set of social relations that acts to differently constitute community members, and ask how that constitution is reflected in different relationships with the environment. Of particular concern are not only the ways in which these relationships are reflected in the way people use and view natural resources, but also how people are affected by environmental degradation or destruction in different ways. For the second theme, I begin by discussing the history of women's participation in social movements and political struggle in India, then I analyze women's role in the Chipko movement, and

conclude by asking what influence the Chipko movement may have had over the future of women's political participation in India.

Women and the Forests

The relationship between women and forests in the Himalayas is usually examined in one of two regards: the economic relationship between rural women and the environment from which a majority of them draw subsistence, or the spiritual affiliation between the forests as “nature” and the feminine principle. The first of these perspectives locates women's environmental perception in their material reality as the primary guarantors of household subsistence. In *The Unquiet Woods* (1989), Ramachandra Guha argues that despite the equitable sharing of cultivation duties between men and women (except plowing, a religious taboo for women), women in Uttarakhand are solely responsible for all “household chores, [including] the rearing of children, and the collection of fuel, fodder and water” (22). As discussed above, deforestation and restrictive forest laws curtailed women's access to these necessary resources, forcing women to work lengthier hours. The shortage of household access to forest products also limited potential avenues for income generation, forcing many village men to emigrate in order to find cash employment. The absence of a large number of men from the region further exacerbates women's difficulties, as they are left, by default, responsible for all of the household tasks in exchange for what is usually a small cash remittance.

Bina Agrawal (1992) identifies three reasons why Uttarakhandi “women and female children are the ones most adversely affected by environmental degradation”: women's responsibility for household subsistence, inequitable access to “subsistence resources such as food and health care”, and inequitable access to agricultural land and technology (136-137). Although the ownership of private property is fairly common among households in the Uttarakhand, women's influence over its use is limited and access to its products inequitable. If the land is used for the production of cash crops, women seldom share in the profits. The existence of common or shared village forests is therefore vital to ensure that local household subsistence needs can be met. This perspective is expressed by O.P. Dwivedi (2000) in *Dharmic Ecology*: “Women, specifically, have seen how men tend not to mind destroying nature in order to get

money, while they themselves have to walk miles in search of firewood and fodder or other suitable grazing. In a sense, the Chipko movement is a feminist movement to protect nature from the greed of men. In the Himalayan areas, the pivot of the family is the woman. It is the woman who worries most about nature and its conservation in order that its resources are available for her family's sustenance. On the other hand, men often go away to distant places in search of jobs, leaving the women, children, and elders behind" (17-18).

This affinity between women and nature, specifically with the forests, is expressed most explicitly in the writings of Vandana Shiva, who argues for the recognition of nature as a "feminine principle" in Hindu spirituality (Shiva 1989). Shiva (1989) calls this feminine principle Prakriti, or the living and creative force of nature, and argues that it is the part of nature that women in the Chipko movement struggled to protect and from which they derive their power and inspiration (xix). In this perspective, women's affinity with nature comes inherently, and is reinforced through labor practices, such as the collection of fuelwood and fodder, that enhance women's knowledge of their ecosystem, and therefore, the Prakriti that sustains it. Shiva's account is criticized widely and on many points. Her critics oppose her romantic portrayal of precolonial and ancient Indian societies and her treatment of Indian men as universally patriarchal and brainwashed by the commercial forestry system. Shiva's marginalization of men's role in the movement to that of "runners" for a female leadership is also contested (Turner 2003: 10). These critics draw upon examples from Hindu religious texts to argue that the principle of Prakriti has led to the subordination, not veneration, of women in Hindu society (Mawdsley 1998: 43).

Despite the controversial nature of Shiva's views on the relationship between women and nature, the women-nature dualism in Hindu religion has been documented in other sources. One of the most often cited myths that underscore the importance of women's role in sustaining ecological balance between the environment and human society is from the Matsya Puranam, one of the puranas, or "ancient tales" narrated by Lord Vishnu. In it, the goddess Parvati plants and cares for saplings of the Asoka tree. When questioned by the sages as to why she, as a woman, is raising trees and not sons, Paravati replies, "One who digs a well where there is little water lives in heaven for as

many years as there are drops of water in it. One large reservoir of water is worth ten wells. One son is like ten reservoirs and one tree is equal to ten sons (*dasa putra samo druma*). This is my standard and I will protect the universe to safeguard it..." (Matsya Puranam chapter 154: 506-512, quoted in Narayanan 2001: 187). Although this short excerpt is one of the more commonly cited examples of the association between women and nature in Hindu mythology, other tales both celebrating the planting of trees and condemning their cutting have been documented (see for instance Narayanan 1997; 2001). Although debate over the connection between women and nature in Hindu religion continues, the Chipko movement was able to successfully draw upon their perceived affinity through tactics such as ensuring women's presence at the front-line of protests and publicizing their tree-hugging methods.

Women in Chipko

Prior to the Chipko Movement, women in India had been involved extensively in other social movements, such as the Prohibition Movement, which were reform-oriented or religious in nature. Many of these movements focused on establishing basic women's rights by legalizing widow marriages, abolishing caste differentiation, and increasing women's voting rights. According to the Centre for Women's Development Studies in New Delhi, these movements brought Indian women into public life and increased their political participation (Sharma 1987). Hundreds of thousands of women were involved in the Indian Independence Movement that used Gandhian satyagraha techniques to non-violently protest British rule (CIC 1987). Indian women were also active in the long-standing struggle over forests resource use and management that preceded the contemporary Chipko movement. Unfortunately, the rapid growth of women's participation in social movements and other forms of "informal" political organization in India has failed to translate to the sphere of "formal" politics, where women's degree of representation in official political institutions is still relatively limited (Desai and Thakkar 2001: 96).

Narrative accounts of early women's activism in the Chipko Movement give the impression that their participation was "sporadic," radical, and militant, "in response to the immediate crisis... to save their forest from which they drew their sustenance"

(Sharma 1987: 41). These situations often arose when men were absent or unaware of contractors' actions and women were forced to rush to the forest from the fields, often carrying their children, to stop the felling. With the exception of a few organized protests, most Chipko agitations took this spontaneous form, where "women, acting entirely on their own rose up on the spur of the moment" (Sharma 1987: 28). This pattern was true, by most accounts, for the protests that took place at Reni village in March of 1974, which marked a dramatic change in women's participation in the Chipko movement. The women's actions at Reni were successful in saving the marked trees in local forests from being felled, and also in drawing media attention to the event, which popularized the image of village women "hugging" trees and helped to spread the message of the movement. The Reni protests led to an increased recognition of women's role in the Chipko movement and a greater emphasis on female participation and representation in leadership (Sharma 1987). It is unclear, however, whether the dominant presence of women at future demonstrations was a truly "organic" occurrence, or whether the Chipko activists, like those in the Amazonian Rubber Tapper's Union, had realized the value of women's visibility in ensuring a peaceful protest and gaining media attention by appealing to popular notions of women as caretakers (Mendes 1989).

Since the need to secure basic sustenance from the forest was the source of their problems, many women who joined the Chipko Movement began to question why they were not part of the process that appropriated their forest's resources and allowed its destruction (Breton 1998; Sharma 1987). Traditional gender roles in India dictated that men, as leaders of the village, represent the movement and conduct negotiations with the government. The women, although excluded from this process, were viewed as a political "support system", although they represented the greatest number of active protesters. While the women continued to suffer from the more immediate effects of deforestation, the men secured the trees that were 'saved' for use in their own village industries. These men generally tended to benefit more from the cash provided by the short-term labor from forestry programs, while women's work supplied the primary sustenance of the family (Breton 1998). These basic conflicts in interests finally drove the women of the Chipko Movement to action against their own men and their destructive practices. The most renowned example of this occurred in the village of

Adwani, when a local woman named Bachni Devi formed a resistance in opposition to her husband, leading women to embrace the trees he had contracted (Breton 1998; Mellor 1997). Whereas the movement had once identified commercial contracting as the source of the problem, this change in focus meant that deforestation became the main issue.

Women's participation redefined the Chipko Movement, calling it into action against anyone who threatened to destroy the forests, whether local or outsider. Indeed, even after the passing of forest felling bans, it has been the local women's organizations in many communities that provided volunteers or hired watchmen to monitor the extraction of forest produce. In the face of international disapproval, governmental pressure and family dissention, the Chipko women empowered themselves through collective action and demanded that their most basic needs be met. Their choice to prioritize long-term environmental preservation over short-term economic profit is indicative both of their interests and needs, as well as of the inappropriateness of westernized developmental programs that simply focus on economic growth. According to Calman (1989), "The Chipko movement added a new dimension to the perception of what constitutes "women's issues"", by introducing issues such as economic development and environmental conservation into the debate on gender equity and equality (956). Unfortunately, the women's support gained by the Chipko movement failed to disseminate to other feminist movements in India, leaving issues of women's exploitation in many other aspects relatively unaddressed (Sharma 1987).

Internal Dynamics of the Movement

Although understanding the various power relations that contribute to an environmental or political issue is a central theme in political ecology, it is impossible to include in the scope of this project an analysis of all of the power relations that are reflected in, influenced by, and constituted through the political activity of the Chipko movement. In addition, much of this type of analysis had already been included in published literature on the movement. For instance, Amrita Basu (1987) looks at relations between the state and grassroots movements in India, including Chipko; Amita Baviskar (2001) also explores dynamics between class and environmentalism in the Chipko

movement. However, an exploration of the power relations between Chipko leaders and members, and their influence on the representation of the movement, remains relatively absent from the literature. The following analysis focuses on these dynamics in order to explore how they effect representations of the Chipko movement, its messages, and goals. Particular concern is shown for the ways in which leadership and membership are constituted and legitimized, and for the ways in which various actors have differently portrayed the Chipko movement throughout its history. In addressing these issues, I draw upon “official” representations of the movement by its most recognized leaders, Chandi Prasad Bhatt and Sunderlal Bahuguna, movement publications, and documented interviews with Chipko members. This examination of the movement’s internal dynamics should also lend insight into the other “local power structures” at work in the Uttarakhand (Pelling 2003: 86).

Membership and Leadership

As discussed above, most of the members of the Chipko movement were women from villages in the Uttarakhand. In other respects, however, the movement’s membership was notably diverse^{xvi}. As Paul Routledge (1993) notes, members of the movement “bridg[ed] gaps of age, class, region and social experience, and join[ed] with illiterate villagers and village elders in common cause” (96-97). Notable among these achievements was the participation in many protests of both Pahari Hindus and Bjotiya Buddhists, two groups that were traditionally territorially distinct and did not interact (Routledge 1993). Because the region’s population, in terms of caste, was already fairly homogeneous (85 percent elite Brahmin and Rajput castes) the movement is not noted for breaking down the “most important caste barrier” between these castes and the scheduled castes (refers to dalit, or “oppressed”, castes and non-caste tribes) (Routledge 1993: 97). Guha (1989) theorizes that the general diversity of membership in the Chipko movement is attributable to the fact that all social groups “were equally affected by deforestation” (167). Of course, people of the Uttarakhand were undoubtedly affected by deforestation in different ways and to varying degrees; it is well documented that many women faced lengthier workdays, while other families benefited from logging contracts. The people of the region were also differently equipped to respond to the problems of deforestation. However, aspects of deforestation did touch the lives of many people in the region and

large-scale environmental disasters, such as the 1970 flood that helped to coalesce the movement, impacted many people with little concern for distinctions of class, caste, or gender.

The leadership of the Chipko movement was not, by any account, as diverse as its membership. Indeed, most analyses of the movement identify only two “official” Chipko leaders: Chandi Prasad Bhatt and Sunderlal Bahuguna. Bhatt is, as has been mentioned, a Gandhian sarvodaya activist who headed the DGSS during the years in which the Chipko movement first became active. He is credited for inspiring what many consider to have been the first Chipko protest at Gopeshwar in 1973 after the DGSS cooperative was denied their allotment of ash trees by the state Forest Department (Rangan 2000: 22). Bhatt was born to a high caste Brahmin family that was left relatively impoverished after the death of his father. Like his father, Bhatt was trained as a priest, but ended up working as a clerk at a bus station, where he first met pilgrimaging Gandhian sarvodaya workers. Thereafter, Bhatt became involved in agitations for social justice and became a well-known promoter of village-based self-reliance and small industries initiatives (Rangan 2000). As head of the DGSS, Bhatt’s interests in community development later led him to identify the extra-local extraction of timber profits as the main problem faced in the Uttarakhandi hills, and to subsequently encourage protests that were directed against the contractor system used by the state Forest Department. Bhatt’s sarvodaya training prepared him for leadership roles, including a seat on the Reni Investigation Committee and, years later, a position on the Board of Directors of the Uttar Pradesh Forest Corporation (Routledge 1993).

Sunderlal Bahuguna was also a long-time sarvodaya worker, as well as religious philosopher, and had been especially active in the prohibition movement that preceded Chipko. There, according to Routledge (1993), Bahuguna networked with many women in the region who later became involved in Chipko. Along with these women and his wife, Vimla, Bahuguna has developed programs dubbed the “Invisible Chipko”, which focus on reforestation schemes, the provision of forest guards, and the establishment of women’s organizations (Routledge 1993). Bahuguna is usually credited for developing and spreading the environmental ideology of the Chipko movement; particularly through the lengthy trans-Himalayan foot marches he undertook to spread the message of the

movement and recruit members. Paul Routledge (1993) partially credits Bahuguna's marches for the incidence of Chipko activity throughout the region, saying that they "brought people together across lines of traditional cleavages of misunderstanding, tension and conflict and also brought to their collective attention a wide range of issues otherwise recognized only by particular groups or categories of people" (97). Today, Bahuguna continues to be active in campaigning against the Tehri Dam and working closely with government officials to encourage social justice through environmental conservation.

Although accounts differ, other leaders of the Chipko movement are sometimes identified, including Dhoom Singh Negi, Gaura Devi, Mira and Sarala Behn, among others (Guha 1989; Jain 1985). The most contested of these are the stories of Reni organizer Gaura Devi and Mira Behn, a disciple of Gandhi and daughter of a English admiral who's given name was Madeleine Slade. Although most accounts of the movement credit Behn only for helping to draw attention to the problem of Himalayan deforestation in the years before the Chipko movement organized, Shiva (1989) regards her as the "real" leader of the movement, one who educated and inspired Bahuguna and Bhatt, and for whom they served only as "runners" to spread the Chipko message (70). Although Behn was undoubtedly influential, most accounts of the movement do not identify her in a leadership position, and there are few documented accounts of her presence at Chipko protests. Similarly, Gaura Devi is usually only credited for her leadership role in the 1974 protest at Reni, which she was drawn into after serving as a representative on the local panchayat and as President of the Mahila Mangal Dal, a rural women's organization that later became associated with the Chipko movement (Lakshmi 2000). Although Laskshmi (2000) does not argue that Devi was a widely recognized leader of the movement, she is credited for having organized protests and created awareness of the importance of forests in the Reni area.

Representations of Chipko

Chandi Prasad Bhatt is considered to be one of the earliest leaders of the Chipko movement. Not only was Bhatt the head of the DGSS during the Gopeshwar protests in 1973, but also he is often credited for the revival of the Chipko "tree-hugging tactic"

(James 2000; Shinn 2000). Much of Bhatt's role in Chipko and his perspective on its messages and goals is traced to his involvement in the DGSS, where Rangan (2000) argues he developed a "conviction that it was necessary to find occupational alternatives for young men in their own localities so that they would not be forced to migrate outside their villages to seek employment" (22). His dedication to strengthening the village economy is largely attributable to his belief as a sarvodaya worker that the village should act as the basic economic unit for development. Bhatt identified the contractor system in the foothills, along with a general lack of local industry, as the root of both the economic and environmental problems faced in the Himalayas (Weber 1987). Although he granted that local users contribute to forest scarcity, Bhatt argued that it was a result of their separation from the management of forest resources, rather than a reflection of their true patterns of resource use (Guha 1989: 180). The goals of the movement articulated by Bhatt (2001) subsequently focused upon the expansion of local forest rights and control, but not without an understanding of the need to severely curtail general deforestation in the Himalayan hills. For Bhatt, the wealth of the village economy was tied to the wealth of forest resources, leading him to take the DGSS from a village-based extractive industry to a community organization that runs environmental workshops and afforestation programs. Although Bhatt is often credited as the economic, or peasant right's leader of the Chipko movement, much of his rhetoric draws upon a conservationist ideology: "Our movement goes beyond the erosion of land, to the erosion of human values... The center of all of this is humankind. If we are not in a good relationship with the environment, the environment will be destroyed, and we will lose our ground. But if you halt the erosion of humankind, humankind will halt the erosion of the soil" (Shinn 2000: 215).

Sunderlal Bahuguna, on the other hand, is better known for representing Chipko's "wider" environmental message. Although Bahuguna also draws upon Gandhian ideology, the village-based self-sufficiency valued by Bhatt is "secondary to the major ecological objectives" of Bahuguna, which idealize the village as the site of self-sufficient living with nature, rather than as a site of extractive industries (Weber 1987: 622). Although Bhatt is often credited for inspiring the creation of the Chipko movement, Bahuguna is recognized as having popularized its message and rallied much of its

support, both within the region, and internationally through his writings, speeches, and particularly through his lengthy and well-publicized trans-Himalayan marches. This, of course, gave Bahuguna a unique influence over the ways in which different movement message and goals were prioritized, and how the movement was represented in general, perhaps contributing to critiques that he was among other environmentalists that “hijacked” the Chipko movement as early as 1978 (Weber 1987). Although Bahuguna joined with Bhatt in identifying forestry policies and the contractor system as central to the problem of deforestation, where Bhatt saw these occurrences as a result of misguided approaches to development, Bahuguna identified them as manifestations of an anthropocentric worldview that is intrinsic to industrial civilization (Guha 1989). Bahuguna therefore, articulated the goals of the Chipko movement as “not simply to save a few trees in the Himalayas”, but to alleviate the other ills inherent in “our materialistic civilization” (CIC 1987: 23). For Bahuguna, the Chipko message advocates a different view of nature, and therefore, an alternative way of life, which draws upon traditional Hindu beliefs and methods of protest. Leading a Chipko lifestyle requires limiting individual demands and consumption in order to promote ecological health. In order for Chipko to be truly successful, “the relationship between humans and nature must be transformed, which would require also changing the nature of modern society” (Chakraborty 1999: 44). For this transformation to take place, global society would need to reject the western advocacy of human control over nature and see people as part of the environment.

The differences between Bhatt and Bahuguna’s portrayals of the movement have led some scholars to refer to a division in the Chipko movement: Ramachandra Guha (1989) distinguishes between the movement’s “public”, or environmentalist, face and its “private”, or peasant economic struggle, face, where Jayanta Bandyopadhyay (1999) takes the same critique a step further by saying that the peasant economic movement is the “true” face of Chipko and the environmentalist face is entirely superficial^{xvii}. Sometimes, the division between the ideologies of the two leaders is represented as manifesting in two spatially distinct organizations and sets of protests; in other cases, a temporal distinction is made between the two, as if Chipko was a singular movement that changed ideologies along the way, often moving from more economic to more

environmental concerns. All of these interpretations of the movement, however, tend to privilege the representations of individual leaders over the experiences of movement members, who are rarely documented as reflecting this division. Attempting to determine if the membership of a social movement articulates its purpose and goals differently than the leadership is difficult, since a movement's publications are usually created by the leadership, media interviews often focus on one or more leaders, and documented interviews are usually conducted with leaders, since they are assumed to be more knowledgeable about the movement's history, membership, and demands. The ability of these accounts to consistently and reliably represent the diverse viewpoints encompassed in any one movement is further limited when a leader misrepresents a movement, either by overemphasizing their own individual perspective of the movement, or by purposefully presenting an image of the movement or a message that appeals to a wider audience in order to obtain further support for their cause, as is often done.

One approach to capturing the members' representation of a particular movement is through the slogans and chants they employ during various protests. Although this is certainly no litmus test for determining the diverse motivations and perspectives of individual movement members, it can provide insight into the ways in which the movement is conceptualized by some of its members, or at least in such a way that members are willing to recite the slogan or chant. In studies of the Chipko movement, those seeking to argue that Chipko is a religious or spiritually motivated movement have adopted this approach often. For example, George A. James (2000) cites examples of Chipko protestors tying sacred threads around trees and reciting the stories from the *Bhagavad Katha* to support his argument that there is an aspect of dendolatry in Chipko practices. Jayanta Bandyopadhyay (1999) also cites "the excellent and simple summarization of the ecological importance of the mountain forests" expressed in the famous Chipko slogan, "What do the forests bear? Soil, water and pure air!" in his argument that Chipko members were aware of the "positive side" of advertising the ecological aspects of the movement in order to gain popular support (2).

The most reliable method that social movement scholars have found for gauging individual members' perceptions of a movement has so far been the interview. In a set of interviews with former members of the Chipko movement in Chamoli, Jawahara K.

Saidullah (1992) documented various responses to the question of what is the specific message of Chipko. Each of her interpretations of the movement is provided by women from different villages: first, the message of the movement is described simply as, “Plant Trees”, then, it is expressed as being “to save our forest and to prevent it from being cut down”, and finally, a woman describes what the Chipko message meant for her:

“I learned that trees help us. We should not just use them up like that. They give us so much and ultimately it harms us if we destroy them. Did you know that it is trees that give us rain and keep our soil healthy? Yes, it is true. They even purify the air we breathe.” (Interview, Saidullah 1992: 68).

Of course, these accounts are by no means representative of all Chipko members, and are likely mediated through a variety of information networks and recruiting mechanisms for the movement, including messages from various movement leaders. The last quote, in particular, shares not only a perspective, but also actual language with the slogan quoted above from Bandyopadhyay (1999) in which protestors point out the ecological value of the forests resources in terms of “soil, water and pure air”. These quotes also reflect the passage of almost a decade since the last Chipko forests protests, meaning that they may reflect Chipko members’ retrospection on the movement’s messages and purpose, rather than their contemporary interpretation of the movement. Ultimately, whether one is considering the decade-old recollections of previous Chipko members or the recorded speeches of well-recognized movement leaders, comparing various representations of the Chipko movement can increase our appreciation of Haripriya Rangan’s (2000) argument that the *idea* of a movement can be more meaningful than the movement itself at times. Paul Routledge (1993) found this the case during his 1989 interview of an activist who said, “People do not cling to trees; they cling to Chipko” (99).

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY

When it first emerged in Uttar Pradesh in the 1970s, the Chipko Movement was "criticized for being against the developmental interests of the nation and condemned as a narrow, regional movement" (Chakraborty 1999: 41). Because of their demand that the forest rights of local peasants be considered before the economic development of the nation, the Chipko activists were seen as anti-developmental and looking to serve the needs of a few peasants over an entire country of people. In some ways, this critique is accurate, as many protesters were initially inspired by their need for immediate survival and identified the ongoing destruction of their environment caused by developmental policy as the source of their suffering. However, regarding Chipko as solely, or even primarily, a struggle over survival and livelihood fails to grasp the complexity of the movement, as well as its diversity of members, purposes and goals. These approaches therefore also fail to grasp the complexity of the problems to which these social movements are responding. As the preceding pages have served to illustrate, the Chipko movement, like many other environmental and social movements found in the majority world, is multifaceted, often joining a large and diverse membership with appeals for both ecological health and social justice. The complexity of these movements can perhaps be appreciated through approaches to environmental and social movement studies that emphasize their place-based nature and offer an in-depth contextualization of the social and ecological circumstances surrounding the movement's growth. These approaches to social movement studies, such as the political ecology approach demonstrated herein, can be successful in this regard, as their temporal and spatial contextualization encourages the recognition that a singular movement can identify various "primary" messages or goals at different times and places, as well as at different scales.

Although a movement's ability to shift between various ideologies as circumstances change could be considered a "dynamic" approach to framing, perhaps these activists have learned what many scholars are only recently recognizing—that problems of environmental degradation, poverty, social injustice, crime, and more, are at

least implicated in each other, if not separate manifestations of wider societal issues. Successful movements will therefore be those, like Chipko, that are able to incorporate an understanding of the inherent interconnectivity of these problems and to frame their movement's messages and goals to address the issues of social injustice that are at the root of economic problems, to address the issues of poverty that lead to environmental destruction, and to address the issues of a global standard of development that is at the heart of local struggles over self-determination. Increasingly, social movements, especially those in the global south, are bridging critiques of development and globalization with calls for environmental, economic, and human rights improvements. These movements are different from their western counterparts, in that they are often about basic survival, rather than quality of life issues, but that their solutions often call additionally for the equitable use of the environment, along with a redistribution of economic and political power (Guha and Martinez-Alier 1997: 100). Unlike traditional social movements, whose struggles over the access to means of production and labor rights were often targeted toward the government, these new movements are now struggles over the control of natural resources and the attempt to prevent their monopolization by a few actors, who now include corporations and special interest groups as well as governmental entities.

One might view these movements as a type of new social movement (NSM), but their focus on material needs and improvements in standards of living and human rights often belie this classification. The Chipko movement, for example, only shares a few of the eight characteristics of NSMs set forward by Johnston, Laraña and Gusfield (1997). Specifically, Chipko shares with other NSMs a degree of decentralization, as well as ideological pluralism that allows for multi-level decision-making and individual activism. Also in common are Chipko's desire to extend change into everyday lives and relationships with nature, its assertion of a powerful new peasant identity, and its use of what are in the West nontraditional methods of protest. Where Chipko and other movements like it break with this understanding of NSMs, and from their Western environmentalist counterparts, is in the identification of their struggle as class-based and their tendency to draw leadership from upper-classes while lower-classes continue to make up the majority of their mobilizing membership. Finally, the historical tendency to

view NSMs as postindustrial phenomena occurring in societies with a strong tertiary sector often excludes movements, like Chipko, that take place in “developing” countries. This occurs despite the fact that many nonwestern countries share in western institutions, styles of government, and modes of development that influence social movements (Johnston, Laraña & Gusfield 1997).

Although this thesis was motivated, at least in part, by disparities in the vast amount of literature already published on the Chipko movement, these studies have still not yet begun to represent all of the possible avenues of inquiry that could be applied to the Chipko movement. Future research could contribute to our understanding of intra-organization dynamics and the relationship between the Chipko movement and other NGOs, particularly those that operate internationally. A related study could focus on the ways in which various Chipko members and leaders have differently embraced external funding support, and how those decisions influenced the ways in which the messages and goals of the movement are prioritized and represented. In general, future studies of the Chipko movement should pay more attention to the “end” of the Chipko movement, perhaps by exploring the ways in which its members have remained, to various degrees, involved in struggles over environmental destruction and social justice. Each of these suggestions for future research on Chipko would be enhanced by the inclusion of on-site studies of the movement, which should include qualitative field research methods such as interviews with movement members and leaders, focus group discussions with the various political organizations involved with the movement, as well as more quantitative methods, such as surveys of the Uttarakhandi people that could be designed to gauge the various ways in which the movement and the socio-political processes it entailed have impacted lives and livelihood in the region.

Additionally, the political ecology approach to environmental movement studies that was demonstrated in the preceding chapters could be applied in studies of other movements, in both the global North and global South. These studies would be characterized by the temporal and spatial contextualization, as well as attention to issues of scale, that were central in this analysis of the Chipko movement. This analytical framework, applied primarily at the regional scale in this study, helped to reveal the ways in which the social and ecological processes occurring within and involving the

Uttarakhand helped to produce not only the distinct socio-spatial configurations of resource use found in the region, but, as illustrated, also the distinct characteristics of sociopolitical organization that served to shape the Chipko movement (Zimmerer and Bassett 2003: 290). These characteristics include the movement members' choice of protest tactic, the constitutive makeup of that membership, the nature of the movement's struggle over material access to the space of the forests, as well as its goals in terms of a redefinition of development and nature-society interrelations. This analysis also revealed how the political ecological processes of the region influenced the ways in which the Chipko movement was ultimately able to affect change in the forest policies and patterns of natural resource use in the Uttarakhand. Although the focus on regional scale demonstrated herein was particularly well-suited for a case-study of the Chipko movement, and helps to enlighten our understanding of the many social and ecological processes that shaped and were shaped by the movement, aspects of the political struggle it entailed appeared at other scales, such as those of the village and household, that were only cursorily examined and deserve further exploration in order to reveal more fully the nature of that struggle. In particular, these studies might include greater consideration of the ways in which struggles over survival and environmental issues are differently constructed at the local level, and how the scalar politics of social movement organization relate to the scalar arrangement of social processes, such as state power, flows of capital, and constructed meanings of "nature" (Brown and Purcell 2005).

This analysis has illustrated the ways in which studies of social movements in general can benefit from geographical approaches that consider how sociopolitical struggle is "constituted through space, place, and scale", rather than focusing solely on the ways in which individual choices or structures shape social movements at a single scale, as in conventional approaches to the study of social movements, such as resource mobilization theory, political process research, and new social movement studies (Miller 2000: 167). These types of geographical studies of social movements allow us to consider not only the ways in which geography shapes social movements by providing their spatial and temporal context, but also how social movements themselves entail struggles over space, place, scale, and their uses (Miller 2000: xii). Unfortunately, studies of social movements that incorporate these types of geographical analyses remain relatively rare,

even among geographers. As we have seen among studies of the Chipko movement, even those conducted by geographers, few explicitly incorporated the themes listed above into their analyses. Those studies that have applied some of these geographically-informed approaches to analyses of the Chipko movement have been more able to represent and account for the diverse and multiple processes that contribute to the formation of political contestation.

Although the end of the Chipko movement has already been traced to the last forest protests in the then state of Uttar Pradesh during the 1980s, the reality is that many Chipko activists, including recognized leaders C.P. Bhatt and Sunderlal Bahuguna, remain active in struggles over the damming of rivers and other environmentally destructive practices, as well as in less confrontational forest-based activities, such as the educational workshops still run by the DGSS and the tree-planting programs still managed by many village women's organizations. These activities continue to reshape the Uttarakhand in unknown ways, and continue to contribute to debates over whether the changes wrought by the Chipko movement ultimately served to benefit or to harm the people of the region. In addition, the impact of the Chipko movement continues to be felt nationally, in debates over Indian environmentalism and environmentally sound developmental policies and programs, as well as internationally, as Chipko-like tactics and messages are adopted in other struggles and as the story of the movement is called upon as a symbol of grassroots opposition to westernized development.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Uttarakhand was a region within the state of Uttar Pradesh until 2000, when, under the official name of Uttranchal, it was granted statehood. The name Uttarakhand is still applied in reference to both the state and the region in popular and scholarly reference, including the present work. For an account of this process, and its relation to the Chipko movement, see Mawdsley (1998).

ⁱⁱ The terms “member” and “membership” are used throughout this thesis and are applied in their broadest sense. I consider, therefore, Chipko “members” to be anyone who participated in one or more organizational event, meeting, mobilization, or who self-identifies as such.

ⁱⁱⁱ Despite the problem of essentialization and categorization that has inspired this project, I will also refer to Chipko as “environmental” movement throughout this work. I use this terminology, not to express a view of the movement as one whose primary concern is ecological, but rather with the recognition, in keeping with most political ecologists, that most environmental movements are multifaceted and protracted responses to environmental issues that are inherently interconnected with economic problems, issues of social justice, peasant rights, natural resource access, women’s rights, and legacies of colonialism, development, and globalization.

^{iv} See Bisnoi 1992 for a discussion of “early” Chipko activity by the Bisnoi people during the 1700s.

^v This chronology is accompanied by a timeline of the Chipko movement found at the end of Chapter One.

^{vi} According to Richard St. Barbe Baker, “The [Bisnoi’s] love for trees grows from the realization of [human] dependence upon them. Trees can survive without [people], but [people] cannot survive without trees” (CIC 1987: 6). Today, the Bisnoi continue to actively protect their region from both poachers and tourists, chasing away any outsiders that seem to threaten local wildlife. Since the area is not officially protected by the Indian government, it is up to the Bisnoi to actively defend their environment. Stories continue to pour out of the region about villagers beating, and even killing, hunters and poachers. According to Sukhram of Gaud village, “Anybody who tried to even kill a bird or cut a tree in our area, can’t get away easily” (Verma 1998). Despite their militancy, however, the number of poaching reports in Bisnoi forests continues to rise. Regional political parties tend to support the stringent protection of the area in order to secure Bisnoi votes, which can reportedly swing results in at least six to seven assembly constituencies in Rajasthan (Verma, 1998). However, the villagers do not feel that they need governmental support, and come close to defining themselves as autonomously ruled. According to Prahlad Ram Bisnoi of Kankani village, “We don’t follow the government rules. We have our own laws. The government is saying only now not to cut trees, but we have been saying it for centuries” (Verma 1998).

^{vii} Since the publication of *Terrains of Resistance* (Routledge 1993), the former region of Uttarakhand has achieved state status. See endnote i.

^{viii} The study of social movements has been undertaken in many sub-disciplines within geography using a wide variety of conceptual approaches. These have included the study of the ideas and practices of various types of environmentalism within the modern western environmental movement within the humanitarian tradition (see for instance O’Riordan 1996), as well as how new social movements contributed to the creation of and resistance to hegemony within social theory (see for instance Gramsci 1971), and studies of Third World social movements as offering alternatives to development (see for instance Escobar 1995).

^{ix} Also referred to as human-resource relations, human-environment relations, human-nature relationships, and socio-environmental geography. I prefer the term society-environment interrelationships because the term “society” implies more than the physical human and includes human institutions and ideologies, all subsumed under the idea of the “social”. In addition, I prefer the term “environment” to that of “nature”, as environment historically refers to the world external to society or human life, where “nature” historically refers to the world as it existed before humans, or “pristine nature”. Both are preferred to the term “resources” which expresses only one way of valuing the natural environment. I still find this usage of “environment” problematic, especially in its opposition to “society”, as it rests on a belief in the separation between society and environment that I do not support. Lastly, I prefer “interrelationships” because its usage underscores the idea that we are referring to reciprocal relationships between two dynamic actors.

^x With this new political focus, increasing concern has grown over the possible marginalization of “ecology” in political ecology. For a discussion and assessment of this debate see Walker (2005).

^{xi} I prefer the terminology “global south” to that of “third world”, as it seems to imply more of a shared experience among post-colonial countries than the judgment of development toward a Western capitalist ideal entailed in classifications of first, second, and third world countries. However, the terminology “third

world” is adopted in this discussion of third world political ecology in order to reflect the use of this term in current literature.

^{xii} Until 2000, the forests of Uttarakhand were managed by the state forest department in Uttar Pradesh, which was located a few hundred miles out of the region in the plains at Lucknow.

^{xiii} In defining “scaled spaces of resistance” this way, I am drawing upon both traditional notions of scale, which would regard Uttarakhand as Chipko’s scale because it is the functional area in which the movement is active, as well as notions of scale as expressed by Zimmerer and Bassett (2003), who define scale as “social-environmentally produced” (3).

^{xiv} Although Chipko demonstrations and activities did not occur everywhere throughout the Uttarakhand, they did occur in enough districts that I feel justified referring to it as a regional movement. In addition, in much of the literature on the movement, it is identified as such and understood through the distinct processes that have taken place only in the Uttarakhand.

^{xv} The term *panchayat* refers at once to a council of elected village representatives and an organization of five (*panch*) villages into an interdependent political system.

^{xvi} Because of the diffuse nature of the movement, its horizontal organization and communication network, and the spontaneous nature of many of its mobilizations, there is not a membership list of the Chipko movement or of participants in various protests. Information about its membership is therefore most often gathered from accounts of individual protests, attendance at organizational and educational meetings, and accounts of former members and leaders.

^{xvii} Bandyopadhyay (1999) recognizes, however, that the environmentalist face of Chipko was the one that gained political support from urban environmentalists, who helped to draw attention to the struggle and ultimately led to the success of the movement.

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