
UNIT 8 INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

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8.0 INTRODUCTION

This Unit will introduce the concept of social justice and the central role of the idea of social justice in environmental thinking and action. In simple terms, the term social justice refers to the principle that all members of society have equal rights and opportunities (Collins English Dictionary). The notions or conceptions of 'justice' are abstract ideals. They include beliefs about what is good, desirable, correct and moral. The idea of 'social justice' encompasses core values such as the equal status and worth of all citizens and their rights to fulfil their basic needs and enjoy similar opportunities and life chances. It also implies the need to eradicate unjustified inequalities in society, so that all citizens may experience a level playing field. The Unit will discuss the concept of social justice, highlight some important perspectives on the same, discuss its role in the Constitution of India and discuss its relevance in the context of environmental and climate justice. A case study of an environmental movement will also be taken up to illustrate these ideas.

8.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the concept and relevance of social justice;

- explain the concept of environmental justice and
- discuss the significance of social justice in environmental thinking and action.

8.2 UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL JUSTICE

The concept of Social Justice is a relatively new one in the history of philosophy. None of the major philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Averroes, Rousseau or Kant explicitly viewed the idea of justice from a social perspective, but viewed it rather as a philosophical concept. Social justice has strong political overtones and first made an appearance in Western thought with the industrial revolution and the growth of socialist thinking. The perceived exploitation of labour by the capitalists demanded a new thinking and measures to improve the conditions of human beings and a new revolutionary slogan for progress and equality. In the mid-1800s Europe saw a number of revolutions, and social justice became a rallying cry. The idea of justice and respect for human dignity came to be associated with social justice. By the middle of the 20th century, most leftist and centrist political parties embraced the idea of social justice. Many newly independent nations, freed of the colonial yoke, made social justice a part of their national agenda. India too has the concept of social justice deeply embedded in its Constitution. The emergence of the concept can also be linked with the emergence and growth of the social sciences like sociology and economics as disciplines separate from philosophy. Social justice refers to fair and just relations between individuals and society, and can be measured in terms of the distribution of the wealth, social privileges and individual opportunities. There is seen to be a reciprocal relationship between individual duties and responsibilities towards society as well as receiving what is their due from society. Human rights is a closely related concept, although it is a more abstract idea. It requires that the basic prerequisites of justice be fulfilled. Both social justice and human rights depend upon each other for their realisation and are both grounded in the idea of “fairness.” The recent movements for social justice seen all over the globe strive to break down social and economic barriers that prevent communities from availing of social goods, and to provide social security safety nets and economic justice.

The various institutions of society play a key role in ensuring social justice; education, legal systems, public health infrastructure, public distribution system, taxation and insurance, social security mechanisms, etc., contribute towards lessening inequalities and promoting social justice and equity and equal opportunities to all.

The notion of social justice is intimately tied with that of equity. Equity implies fairness and justice without any bias and discrimination, giving people what rightfully belongs to them, and recognising the specific as well as diverse conditions of all individuals in society. According to Falk et al (1993:2):

“equity derives from the concept of social justice. It represents a belief that there are some things which people should have, that there are basic needs

that should be fulfilled, that burdens and rewards should not be spread too divergently across the community, and that policy should be directed with impartiality, fairness and justice towards these ends.”

Social justice has also been conceptualised in terms of the apparent contradiction between individual freedoms and societal good. It is argued that individual rights and liberties must not be sacrificed in the name of promoting social justices. However, it can be counter-argued that in order for each individual to be able to flourish and develop to their full potential, fundamental rights and duties, economic and social opportunities and a spirit of fairness and justice must also be ensured in society.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Write you answer in 50 words.

b) You can check your answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What is social justice? How can it be measured?

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2) How is social justice related with equity?

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8.3 PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

Justice can be conceptualised in terms of the following three components— legal justice, commutative justice and distributive justice. Legal justice refers to what people owe society; commutative justice, with what people owe each other, and distributive justice, or what society owes the person. It is the third of these that we shall focus upon. From a distributive perspective, social justice involves both, approaches to societal choices regarding the distribution of goods and resources, and also structuring social institutions in such a manner that human rights and dignity are ensured, and every person gets equal opportunities to participate meaningfully in the activities of the society. There are three major philosophical approaches towards the distribution of resources in a society: Utilitarian, Libertarian, and Egalitarian. Let us briefly consider these.

8.3.1 Utilitarian and Libertarian theories.

- a) *Utilitarian theory*, whose best-known proponents were Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), emphasises acts that result in the ‘greatest good for the greatest number’. It can be found in much contemporary thought, including the principles of democracy. Utilitarianism upholds the happiness, interests, and needs of the majority. The central principle of utilitarianism is that irrespective of one’s social position, everyone’s happiness has equal moral standing. Bell (2012) writes that even though utilitarian thinking is concerned with the greatest good of the greatest numbers, there are inherent problems. For instance, the emphasis on economic growth and increasing the GDP as a mark of social improvement can be classified as ‘economic utilitarianism’. “In this case, GDP is taken as a direct measure of the greatest source of utility in modern economies: money. If there is more of it around in the economy, people overall must be able to do more of what they want to do, which can only be for the greater good, the argument goes. Similarly, if the use of pesticides and other toxins helps feed the world and keep us in comfort, that must be for the greater good as well.” (p.138). However, what if the use of these pesticides results in a small number of people getting cancer? Can it be justified that some people must lose their lives for the ‘greater good’, i.e greater food production that will fill the stomachs of more people? Thus even though utilitarianism may seem to have the best interests of the majority in mind, it is seen that in practice, it often fails to fulfill this. For instance, economic growth is not always accompanied by equitable distribution and may thus end up benefiting a small group of people, thus violating the very idea of social justice.
- b) *Libertarian theories* insist upon the autonomy and freedom of individuals to pursue their goals without any encroachment or restrictions. They reject the obligations for equal and equitable distribution of resources, and argue for minimal state intervention, allowing people to pursue their own self interests. The kind of free market economy that libertarian theory endorses is however not compatible with a humane society where the weak and vulnerable must also be protected. While this theory addresses individual rights, it does not address duties and obligations as members of society.

8.3.2 Egalitarianism

- a) *Egalitarian theory* holds that all members of society should be guaranteed the same rights, opportunities, and access to goods and resources. Societal resources should be redistributed in such a way that they benefit the most vulnerable people in society. One of the most famous proponents of egalitarian theory was the philosopher, John Rawls. Rawls critiqued utilitarian and libertarian understandings of social justice for their justification of personal hardships in order to achieve a greater common good. Rawls’ theory addresses the following issues: What would be the features of a just society in which basic human needs are met, each person is allowed to maximise their competence, and threats to well-being are minimised and unnecessary

stress is reduced? For Rawls, distributive justice meant “the value of each person getting a fair share of the benefits and burdens resulting from social cooperation,” both in terms of material goods and services as well as non-material aspects such as opportunity and power. In his famous book, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), Rawls explained his theory of ‘justice as fairness’. He asks what sort of idea of justice people would develop if they started from an ‘original position’ in which they had no biases about their positions or statuses. Rawls asks that we put on an imaginary ‘veil of ignorance’ and then ask ourselves what principles of justice we would like to see. According to him, we would all commit to two basic principles:

- 1) Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.
- 2) Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both a) reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage, and b) attached to positions and offices open to all.

Simply put, Rawls says that we would want the greatest good not just for the greatest number, but for *everyone*. “We would also recognize that our own good must be realised within the context of others similarly, and justly pursuing their own good. Liberty has constraints, most notably the liberty of other people. And we would recognize that we would not want others to seek advantage over us and they would not want us to seek advantage over them” (Bell, 2012: 140).

Regarding the second point, it is recognised that justice does not depend upon everyone being completely equal. In certain cases, some forms of inequality can be beneficial too. For instance, children would most probably benefit from the authority exerted upon them by their parents and teachers, who are more experienced and can protect them from harm, and teach them skills and knowledge. Police, medical and legal functionaries, government officials etc also exert authority over other citizens and are expected to maintain social order that will ultimately benefit and protect the common man or woman. Rawls argued that these offices or positions must be of advantage to everyone, not just select individuals or groups; and they must therefore be open to everyone also. He wrote: “All social values- liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and bases of self-respect-are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any, or all, of these values is to everyone’s advantage.”

Rawls’ ‘Justice as Fairness’ approach was a corrective to many of the contradictory or problematic aspects of utilitarian thinking. Bell (2012) explains that the notion of justice as fairness was taken further by scholars like Amartya Sen who attempted to contextualise it and address the ‘plurality’ or diversity of human society, and the diverse needs and wants of people. Individuals and groups may not necessarily have the same values and aspirations at a given point of time. Sen introduced the idea of ‘functionings’ and ‘capabilities’. Functionings refer to the beings and doings they value, and capabilities are the freedoms to achieve these beings and doings. Functionings can include basic things like being adequately nourished, being

in good health, preventing morbidity and premature mortality; to more complex aspects such as having a decent and valuable job, self-respect, a valued place in the community, etc. For Sen, justice means maximising the capabilities of individuals to achieve their functionings. Lack of justice is when we are unable to give people these capabilities. Unlike conventional economists, Sen sees poverty not merely as a lack of money, but as an injustice, a ‘capability deprivation’. If a society is not able to provide adequate health facilities, for instance, it would amount to a ‘capability deprivation’ as a sick person would not be able to carry out his or her functioning. As Bell points out, Sen’s ideas have been incorporated in the United Nations Development Program’s Human Development Index (HDI) which looks at development in a more holistic manner, rather than as a utilitarian outcome of GDP and Per Capita Income. The HDI includes both GDP per capita as well as other indicators such as health and access to education to get a better idea of the level of well-being and capability amongst populations.

The work of the philosopher Ronald Dworkin is also cited by Bell. “Dworkin argues that justice needs to be based on the recognition that we are all different and that across that difference we need to extend an equality of concern.... everyone’s liberty has to be compatible with everyone else’s liberty” (141-142). These ideas of mutual respect and concern for the rights of others are the cornerstone of egalitarian notions of social justice.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Write your answer in 50 words.

b) You can check your answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What is the major premise of utilitarian theory? What is its major weakness?

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2) What do you understand by Rawls’ notion of ‘justice as fairness’?

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3) What are ‘functionings’ and ‘capabilities’ according to Amartya Sen?

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8.4 CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDINGS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice is more than just a way of understanding how material goods are distributed. Marxist and Feminist approaches towards social justice also emphasise the liberative aspect of social justice. Karl Marx, the eminent social thinker had theorized that society moved through various historical stages of development, and class struggle was the feature of all societies. It is only when a classless society is achieved that humans can fulfil their true potential and gain freedom from exploitative social and economic conditions. Feminist perspectives on social justice have also been influential. They contend that the patriarchal systems that exist in society are fundamentally unjust to women, and that merely ‘equal rights’ alone cannot break the stranglehold of gender injustice. Justice, in feminist perspective, demands breaking free from the internalised values of female gender roles and the low self-esteem and sense of helplessness that accompany them. The ability of women to participate in social and political spaces means that childcare and domestic duties must be made social responsibilities, not just female ones. Thus feminist perspective on justice emphasise the all-round development of women, including their health and education, so that they can partake of their rightful share of economic, political and social power. This expanded idea of social justice is widely accepted by contemporary scholars as being inclusive of political, cultural, religious, and sexual freedoms, in addition to socio-economic aspects, and that we should aspire towards a society that is free from injustice of all kinds.

The United Nations’(1948) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) formally recognized “the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family.” The United Nations document *Social Justice in an Open World: The Role of the United Nations* (United Nations, 2006) further elaborates upon the different domains of social justice. It identifies three critical domains of equality and equity that are affirmed in several United Nations documents including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *Charter of the United Nations*, the International Covenants on Human Rights, the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and the United Nations Millennium Declaration, namely, equality of rights, equality of opportunities, and equity in living conditions. Let us look at these domains in greater detail:

- 1) **Equality of rights**, represents the most fundamental form of equality. It involves elimination of all forms of discrimination and respect for the fundamental freedoms and civil and political rights of all individuals. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration states that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. Article 2 specifies: “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”
- 2) **Equality of opportunities**, which requires a conducive and stable social, political, cultural, and economic atmosphere free from discrimination, where people can realise their full potential and fulfill their aspirations. This involves creation of public policies, particularly in the areas of health education and housing, that reduce inequalities and create a level playing field.
- 3) **Equity in living conditions** for all individuals and households. The distinction between equality and equity has earlier been referred to, wherein equity is seen as a more complex concept that considers different life experiences and diverse characteristics. The shift in terms from equality to equity reflects the fact that equality in living conditions is a near impossibility in the real world. The lack of objective indicators to assess equity amongst people of different classes, occupations and age groups is, however a real challenge. Equity is thus hard to define and can be a very problematic concept. At the same time, it is a crucial dimension in any discussion on social justice.

8.5 SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

Social justice, as we have seen so far, deals with the allocation of both material and moral advantages of social life. It also denotes a progressive concept and a model of development which breaks down the social and economic barriers and discriminations based on caste, class, gender, religion, ethnicity, ability/disability and provides opportunities for all. Economic, political, and social justice must go together in order to guarantee a life of dignity to all citizens. Neither economic equality nor political democracy alone can give dignity to all citizens. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution, and the part dealing with the Directive Principles of State Policy, holds the promise of justice-social, economic and political. This implies that society itself has to be restructured and reorganised in such a manner that the material and moral benefits of social effort are made available to the most vulnerable sections also, and not siphoned off by the privileged few. Constitutions can provide peaceful, democratic means to bring about social transformation. For a people emerging free from foreign rule, they also announce and embody the first real exercise of political self-determination.

When India shed the yoke of two centuries of colonial rule and became an independent nation, it had a huge and daunting task ahead. The horrors of Partition inflicted deep new wounds in the newly independent nation. Extreme poverty, malnutrition, social and economic divides based upon caste, class and religion, the depressed status of women and the so-called 'low' castes, were endemic problems. The founders of the Indian Constitution envisaged a new social, economic, and political order based social justice. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar who was the chief architect of the Indian Constitution, was fully conversant with the problems of the Indian society. Although Social Justice is not explicitly defined in the Indian Constitution, it is implicit in its core commitments and the trinity of the Preamble, the Fundamental Rights, and the Directive Principles of state policy. Ambedkar argued that social justice alone could lead to social harmony and social stability, and thus the Constitution also represents an attempt at social transformation and social engineering.

The remarkable feature of our Constitution is its commitment to individual freedom. This was a legacy of the National Movement. The liberalism of the Indian Constitution differs from the Western version of liberalism which privileges individual liberties over social obligations. However, the liberal values embodied in the Indian Constitution are firmly related and linked to social justice. The best example of this is the provision for reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It was believed that by simply granting the right to equality, or the right to vote, centuries of discrimination and prejudices against these communities would not vanish into thin air. Their interests needed to be protected and advanced through special measures or affirmative action. Special constitutional measures were therefore provided, and these made it possible for governments to reserve seats in public sector jobs, educational institutions etc. Thus, a section of the populace that had historically experienced an acute lack of equity and justice, could be brought into the mainstream within a short period of time.

In the above sections you have understood the concept of social justice and its importance in envisaging a society that is based upon fairness, participation and inclusion. Shifting the focus to matters pertaining to the environment and access to natural resources, we can see that the concepts of social justice and equity are of great relevance in understanding how differential relations of power place some communities at risk while others profit and benefit because of their social and political dominance. We have seen how indigenous and marginalised communities have been displaced and deprived of resources that they have traditionally used for generations, because models of economic growth have not paid heed to environmental conservation or sustainability. We see that the impact of human-induced climate change on poor and vulnerable groups is particularly severe and that they must pay the price for the unsustainable and exploitative development pathways adopted. In the following section, we shall discuss the issue of environmental justice and conclude with case studies of environmental movements which have social justice at their core.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Write your answer in 50 words.

b) You can check your answers given at the end of the unit.

Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.

1) What do feminist understandings of justice emphasise?

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2) What is meant by 'equality of rights'?

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3) 'Social justice is deeply ingrained in the Indian Constitution'. Justify the statement.

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8.6 SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

We have read that the concept of Social justice involves fair treatment of groups and individuals and the fair distribution of advantages and disadvantages within a society. Environmental justice refers to the environmental benefits and burdens experienced by people. Benefits include clean air and water, green space, and freedom from pollution. We see that environmental justice, like social justice, involves power relationships between the haves and have-nots, and focuses on communities rather than individuals, to assess carefully which areas are to be developed, and whether disadvantaged areas can benefit from the improvement or development of greenspaces. (<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk>)

The Environmental movements embody the principles of social justice. The Earth Charter, launched in 2000, has Social and Economic Justice as one of its 'pillars' or main principles. It seeks to

- “Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.
- Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.
- Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity, and
- Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities” (<https://en.wikipedia.org>)

Climate Justice movements also reflect ideals and practices of social justice, addressing issues such as greenhouse gas emissions, climate-change induced displacement, environmental pollution, climate change mitigation and adaptation and the unequal impact of these on communities based upon socio-economic factors, race, gender etc.

8.6.1 Environmental justice Movements in India

The Chipko Andolan which took place in the 1970s is often considered to be India's first environmental justice movement. However, the history of India's environmental justice movements can be traced back to the colonial period in which grassroots resistance against the British was seen, for instance, the Bengal peasant revolt of 1859-63 against indigo plantations. The freedom struggle led by Gandhiji also expressed strong concerns for the local ecosystems and village self-sufficiency. Gandhi's notion of 'gram swaraj' based upon self-sufficiency and village economy was strongly opposed to large-scale industrialisation. However, in the post-independence period, India opted for large scale industrial growth and large infrastructure projects like dams, steel plants etc became the symbols of nation-building and economic development. These mega projects and the displacement of local communities, destruction of habitats and livelihoods that they brought in their wake, resulted in several environmental justice movements emerging on the ground, to preserve *Jal, jungle, zameen* (water, forests and land). Appiko, Silent Valley Protest, Narmada Bachao Andolan and in more recent times, the movements against multinational corporations in Niyamgiri, Odisha and Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, indicate the conflict between the dominant model of economic development and the local communities, usually the adivasis or the tribal communities who are most adversely impacted. These movements reveal the multiple sites of inequalities and injustice that are still present in our society and force us to confront head on the issues of social and environmental justice.

Environmental justice movements are rooted within the structural inequalities experienced and clearly reflect the unfair access to natural resources on

account of social inequalities. These inequalities result in the burden of environmental degradation and pollution being unfairly borne by the poor. The health hazards posed by toxic chemicals and the lack of safety measures and the treatment of marginalised and poor people as having no value, can be seen in stark detail in disasters like the Bhopal disaster and other industrial accidents. Increasingly, environmental justice movements are finding space in urban contexts too, such as the recent protest in Mumbai to save the Aarey forest from proposed construction of a metro car shed and the felling of thousands of trees for the purpose.

(see <https://casi.sas.upenn.edu/iit/brototiroy>)

To illustrate the points made above, let us discuss the case study of the Chipko movement. In his paper on Environmental movements in India, P.P. Karan (1994) writes:

“These environmental movements are an expression of the socioecological effects of narrowly conceived development based on short-term criteria of exploitation. The movements are revealing how the resource-intensive demands of development have built-in ecological destruction and economic deprivation. The members have activated micro action plans to safeguard natural processes and to provide the macro concept for ecological development at the national and regional levels (1994: 33-34).”

8.6.2 The Chipko Movement

The Chipko movement was a nonviolent movement to protect trees which began in 1973 in Chamoli district, in present day Uttarakhand. The immediate cause was the allotment of an entire ash tree forest to a private company, a sports goods contractor, for commercial purposes. Karan explains that exploitation of the forest by outside entrepreneurs with governmental approval had long been a source of conflict between Uttarakhand villages and the State Forest Department, ever since 1821, when the British instituted the Tribal Forest Settlements in Kumaon. The villagers, who traditionally depended upon forest products, were denied forest use. The justification given for this was that indigenous agriculturalists and herders misused and overused the forest, causing deforestation. However, villagers did not cut down trees for fuel; rather, they used dead trees, fallen branches, and brush. Trees were felled only for material for construction of houses. Large scale profiteering was indulged in by timber and charcoal contractors, but the local people were blamed for the deforestation. In 1964, Chandi Prasad Bhatt, a Gandhian social worker and environmentalist founded the Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal (DGSM), a cooperative, to promote small industries for the local villagers, using local resources. DGSM soon became a force of opposition against the large-scale logging industries whose activities were causing wide-spread environmental degradation. The conflicts between the local population and the contractors came to a flash-point in 1972 near Gopeshwar in Chamoli district when a local cooperative was denied permission to cut its small annual allotment of twelve ash trees for making implements. The trees were sold by the Government to a sports-goods manufacturer to use to make cricket bats and tennis rackets. To prevent the

trees from being cut, the villagers, and notably the women, clung to the trees ('chipko') in an act of Gandhian nonviolent resistance. Their action resulted in the permit to the manufacturer being cancelled, and thus was born the Chipko movement. The movement had many similar successes over the years leading to national and international recognition. The activists would move from village to village enlisting the participation of the people, conducting training sessions and organising rallies and picketing at the auctions held by the forest department. It is estimated that between 1972 and 1979, more than 150 villages were involved with the Chipko movement, resulting in 12 major protests and many minor confrontations in Uttarakhand. In 1980, Sundarlal Bahuguna, a Gandhian environmentalist who played a leading role in the movement, appealed to the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi which resulted in a 15-year ban on commercial felling in the Uttarakhand Himalayas. Similar bans came into force in Himachal Pradesh and the former Uttaranchal.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of the Chipko movement was the participation of women. It was they who formed the 'frontlines' and whose moral authority and force was hard to resist. They referred to the forest as their maternal home, and used nonviolent means to protect the forests, their livelihoods, and the ecosystem. The Chipko movement also sparked activism in other aspects, including anti-alcohol movements, which was a response to the ill-effects of alcohol addiction in rural areas. Not only does the addiction lead to violence against women, it also impacts the men's health and most importantly leads to a squandering of household income. This affects women directly, especially in rural and tribal areas. In the words of Vandana Shiva, noted environmental activist and eco-feminist,

"The Chipko struggle is a struggle to recover the hidden and invisible productivity of vital resources, and the invisible productivity of women, to recover their entitlements and rights to have and provide nourishment for sustained survival, and to create ecological insights and political spaces that do not destroy fundamental rights to survival. Chipko women provide a non-violent alternative in forestry to the violence of reductionist forestry with its inherent logic of indispensability. They have taken the first step towards recovering their status as the other silviculturists and forest managers, who participate in nature's processes instead of working against them, and share nature's wealth for basic needs instead of privatising it for profit (Shiva, 1988: 95)."

As we can see from the above discussion, the case-study of the Chipko movement clearly demonstrates how social justice and environmental justice are intertwined. Development agendas that do not take on board the interests and welfare of all stakeholders and exploit natural and human resources are likely to result in conflict and unrest. The Chipko movement can be seen as a struggle against this highly iniquitous concept of development. It opposed the commodification of forest resources and waged a non-violent struggle for the rights to subsistence and conservation of locally valued resources. The women, who most often bear the brunt of unsustainable development models, took the reins in their own hands and became agents of change. (Mies and Shiva, 1993). The movement demonstrated how just and equitable use of

natural resources also implies justice and equity in the social and political realms as well, and how pathways to development must take on board the interests and well-being of the most vulnerable.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: a) Write your answer in 50 words.

b) You can check your answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What are the major concerns of 'climate justice' movements?

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2) 'Environmental movements in India are essentially social justice movements'. Explain.

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3) What was the contribution of women to the Chipko movement?

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8.7 LET US SUM UP

The Unit has introduced you to the concept of social justice which has become an extremely important global concept closely related to the idea of human rights. The idea of social justice is at the heart of the Constitution of India which aims to dismantle traditional hierarchies and systems of oppression and discrimination and usher in a new era of transformation and opportunity for all citizens. The concept of social justice is also related to that of environmental justice. Environmental movements have also been movements for social justice and equitable access to resources. We concluded by reading about one of India's best known environmental

movements, the Chipko movement, which exemplified the need to embrace sustainable and non-exploitative strategies of development, which are inclusive and participatory in nature.

8.8 KEYWORDS

Social Justice: The principle that all members of society must have equal rights and opportunities.

Utilitarianism: A philosophical theory that emphasises those actions that result in the good or benefit of the majority.

Egalitarianism: A philosophical theory that is based upon the concept of social equality and prioritizing it for all people.

Environmental Justice: A concept that refers to the fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens.

Eco-feminism: A feminist theory that draws connections between women and nature and how both have been exploited by patriarchal society.

Environmental Movement: A social or political movement for the conservation of the environment or improving the state of the environment.

8.9 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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Weblinks

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(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_Charter)

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fundamental freedoms and civil and political rights of all individuals, irrespective of caste, class, gender religion race etc.

- 3) Social justice is not explicitly defined in the Constitution but is implicit in the Preamble, the Fundamental Rights, and the Directive Principles of state policy. The Constitution is committed to social harmony and social stability, and to bring in social justice through social transformation and eradication of inequalities.

Check Your Progress 4.

Your answers should include the following points

- 1) Climate Justice movements also reflect ideals and practices of social justice. They address issues such as greenhouse gas emissions, climate-change induced displacement, environmental pollution, climate change mitigation and adaptation and the unequal impact of these on marginalised communities.
- 2) Environmental movements in India are basically movements for social justice as they clearly reflect the unfair access to natural resources on account of social inequalities. These inequalities result in the burden of environmental degradation and pollution being unfairly borne by the poor.
- 3) Women were the ‘frontline’ of the Chipko movement as they were the ones most deeply affected by the destruction of the natural habitat and livelihoods. They waged a non-violent protest and extended the agitation to fight against other social evils like alcoholism.