

"A Gandhian in Grahwal"

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A Gandhian in Grahwal

**B.A(Prog.) IInd Year
Understanding Biography :: "A Gandhian in Garhwal"**

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What is a Biography?

The lesson "A Gandhian in Garhwal: Chandi Prasad Bhatt" is a biographical sketch of the environmental activist. It is clear from the title that the writer Ramchandra Guha is an admirer of Chandi Prasad Bhatt and we expect him to discuss his personality and work, as well as the

impact he has had on society. A full and detailed biography of any individual usually gives details about the person's public as well as personal.

Ramchandra Guha's biographical essay is however a short biographical sketch and focuses on Chandi Prasad Bhatt's significant contribution in protection of trees and environment. He motivated and inspired the people of Garhwal in the hill state of Uttarakhand to come together and wage a successful and peaceful struggle for the protection of their forests which are their major ecological and socio-economic resource.

A **biography** is an account of somebody's life in the form of a book, movie or film, written or produced by another person.

An **autobiography** is a similar account of somebody's life written by that person.

Writing biography is an activity that has a long history. It is believed to have been started in ancient Greece when the writers and artisans engraved the achievements of the pharaohs on stones. This added to their royal stature for generations to come.

Biographies can become a source of inspiration when we find how ordinary people have done extraordinary deeds through their sense of mission and hard work, making a difference not only to the contemporary society of their time but for generations to come.

Title of Well-Known Biographies of some famous Indians

- *Mahatma Gandhi* by Romain Rolland
- *Unfinished Revolution: A Political Biography of Jayaprakash Narayan* by Ajit Bhattacharya
- *Subhas: A Political Biography* by Sitanshu Das
- *B.R. Ambedkar* by H.D. Sharma
- *A.P.J. Kalam* by A.N. Chaturvedi
- *Begum Akhtar*

- *Ramakrishna: His Life* by Max Muller

The Importance of trees and forest

THE IMPORTANCE OF TREES AND FORESTS

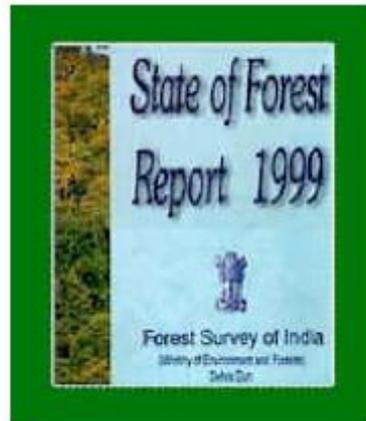


<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forest>

Forests need to be nourished and protected with great care. All of us know the importance of trees and forests for our survival. Forests assist in maintaining the proper balance of chemicals and gases in the environment; produce a variety of products and raw materials; and prevent soil erosion, floods and droughts. Forests play a very crucial role in maintaining the ecological and economic stability of any society.

The forest in India is under immense pressure because of the large population of the country that has crossed the mark of one billion. The Government of India brings out reports on the state of the forest and the forest cover in the country.

Let us have a look at some information that is given in the "**State of Forest Report 1999**" of the "**Forest Survey of India**" of Government of India. You can have a look at the cover of this report in the picture below:



<http://www.goodnewsindia.com/Pages/content/conservation/forestry99.html>

The Report tells us that 147 million people live in 170,000 villages in India and many of them are dependent on the forest for their survival. However, it is a myth that they are the ones who are responsible for the fast disappearing forest cover. The real damage is actually done by the commercial use of timber in paper industry, furnishing and decorating our homes.

Mining for minerals deposits located under the virgin forest cover is another serious reason for the loss of forests. At present it is happening in adivasi areas in several states like Orissa and Jharkhand.

Natural disasters like cyclones also cause severe damage to trees. Environmentalists however believe that deforestation and ecological imbalance itself is the basic cause for the occurrence of many of these natural disasters like floods and famines.

Forests also perish because of natural disasters like cyclones, famines and floods.

Look at the picture below where you see two men who are carrying water through a forest that has been destroyed by a super cyclone near the village of Nollashai in Eastern India in October 2000.



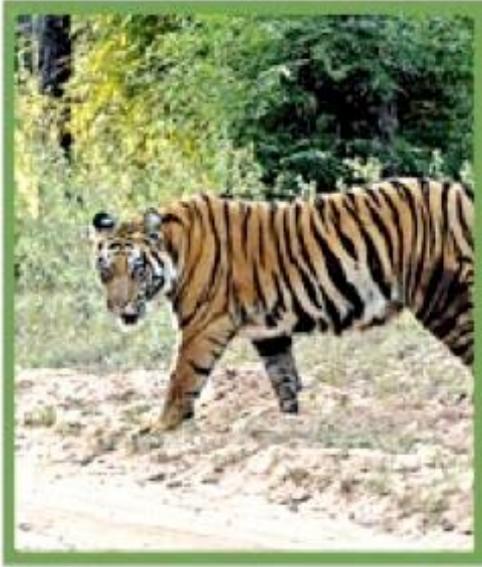
(<http://in.reuters.com>)

If heavy rainfall directly lashes the earth, then the thin layer of rich topsoil rapidly washes away. This happened in the Kumaon-Gharwal region of the Himalayas where, due to the greed of forest contractors and the corrupt forest officers and local politicians, large tracts of forest trees being chopped down led to soil erosion and ecological imbalance.

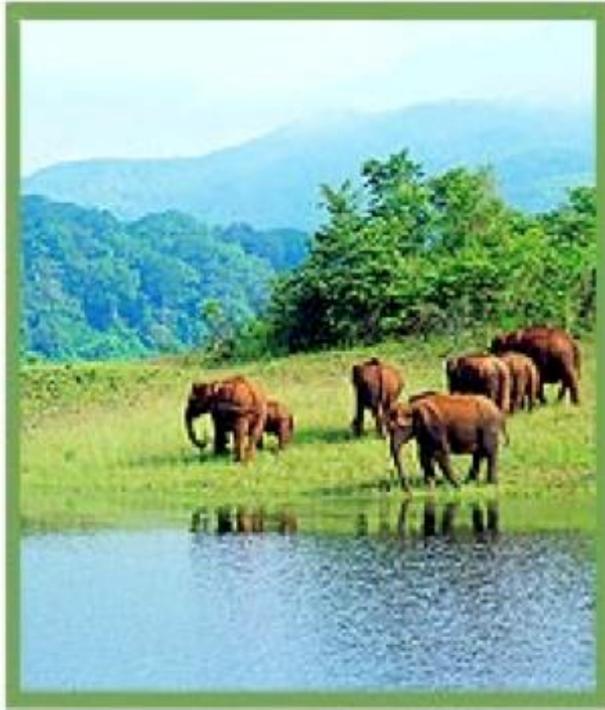
The problem of deforestation has been at the centre of many controversies and policies for long. This has had a positive impact in many ways and the State of Forest Report 2004 has given us some encouraging news. It reports that today in India,

"There are 87 national parks and 484 wildlife sanctuaries with total areas of 4.06 million ha and 11.54 million ha respectively. These together constitute 15.6 million hectares and form 4.74% of the geographic area of the country. In addition, 11 biosphere reserves have also been created with the geographical area of 4.3 million hectares whose areas partly overlapped protected areas."

Have a look at photographs of some of the protected parks and forests.



(Tiger at Bandhavgarh National Park, Madhya Pradesh)



(Elephants at Eravikulam National Park, Kerala)

(For more photographs and more information - Click <http://www.ecoindia.com/parks>)

(Mangrove forest at Sundarbans, West Bengal)



(For more information click - <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/798>)

However the situation regarding the health and extent of forest cover is far from satisfactory.

As against the world average of 0.64 hectare of forests per human, an Indian has only 0.06! http://ifs.nic.in/rt/misc/fwstats04/table2_1.pdf

Trees and forests are closely linked with weather patterns and also the maintenance of a crucial balance in nature. Hence, the 'task of environment protection is a universal responsibility of all of us.

Chandi Prasad Bhatt and The Chipko Movement: A Short

Introduction.

Chandi Prasad was raised in Gopeshwar—a very small village, during his youth. The mountains were overpopulated and there was not enough land for everybody to work on. Neither were there many other jobs available for the people. Like most men of the mountain villages, Chandi Prasad was eventually forced to work in the plains, becoming a ticket clerk in Rishikesh for a bus company.



Chandi Prasad Bhatt (1978)
Photo by Mark Shepherd

Click - www.markshep.com



Chandi Prasad Bhatt in later years
<http://www.hinduonnet.com>

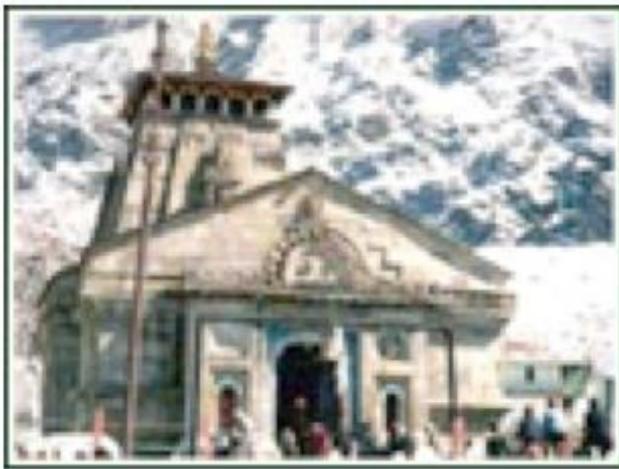
Gopeshwar is the administrative headquarters of the **Chamoli District** of Uttarakhand in India, on the international border with Tibet and China. Chamoli lies at a height of 1308 meters above sea level. Gopeshwar is located 1550 meters above sea level and is surrounded by four famous temples: Tungnath, Anusuya Devi, Rudranath, and Badrinath. The holy town of Kedarnath is also close to Gopeshwar.



(Click - http://www.indyahills.com/garhwal/chamoli/pl_uk_gor.htm)

Above is a photograph of Chamoli hills. Have a look at the beauty of the hills and the forest.

Right below is a picture of **Kedarnath**. You can see the snow-covered Himalayas in the background.



<http://www.euttaranchal.com/tourism/pilgrimage/kedarnath.php>

The magnificent temple of Kedarnath (3581 m) is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas of the Hindu God Shiva.

We already know that the forests in India are a critical resource for the subsistence of rural peoples throughout the country and especially in the hill and mountain areas, both because of they directly provide food, fuel and fodder to the inhabitants and also because of they protect and stabilising soil and water resources.

It was to protect these forests from being cut down by the commercial agents that in 1970s and 1980s Chandi Prasad Bhatt started a peaceful revolution by following the Gandhian method of satyagraha non-violent resistance. It is this movement that came to be known as the **Chipko Movement**.

The efforts of Chandi Prasad Bhatt in making the villagers realize their strength, in organizing them to protest non-violently, and in protecting the environment were recognized and he was awarded the **Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 1982**.

The word 'chipko' comes from the Hindi word meaning 'to stick', 'to hug' or 'to embrace'. In order to save the trees from being chopped down, the men and women of the villages decided to hug the trees and bring their bodies in between the axe and the tree.

You will get an idea of what they did if you have a look at the pictures below:





The first Chipko action took place in **April 1973** and over the next five years spread to many districts of the Himalaya in Uttar Pradesh. It is this movement and its leader Chandi Prasad Bhatt that the writer **Ramchandra Guha** writes about.

The Biographer: Ramchandra Guha



Ramachandra Guha (b. 1958) is an Indian social, environmental and

cricket historian, academician and biographer. He is also a columnist for the newspapers *The Hindu*, *The Telegraph* and the news magazine *Outlook*.

A Gandhian in Garhwal: Chandi Prasad Bhatt

(i) The biographer travels to meet Bhatt:

We already know a bit about Chandi Prasad Bhatt. Let us now see what more the writer Ramchandra Guha has to tell us about him.

The first few lines of the essay provide us with a good entry point into the life and activities of Chandi Prasad Bhatt as well as the writer's appreciation of him. Guha's admiration for Bhatt is actually quite clear in the title itself when he describes him as "a Gandhian in Garhwal". When we read the first few lines, this becomes even more evident.

Let us have a look at these lines:

*In the first week of June 1982 I began **a secular pilgrimage** deep into the Alaknanda valley. My destination was Gopeshwar, a town that clings to a hill somewhat short of Badrinath, and **the living deity** I wishes to pay tribute to was Chandi Prasad Bhatt, founder of the Chipko movement.*

Look at the two phrases in bold -

'a secular pilgrimage' and 'the living deity'

We know that a pilgrimage is a journey to a holy place undertaken for religious reasons. By deity we mean a god, goddess, or any other divine being.

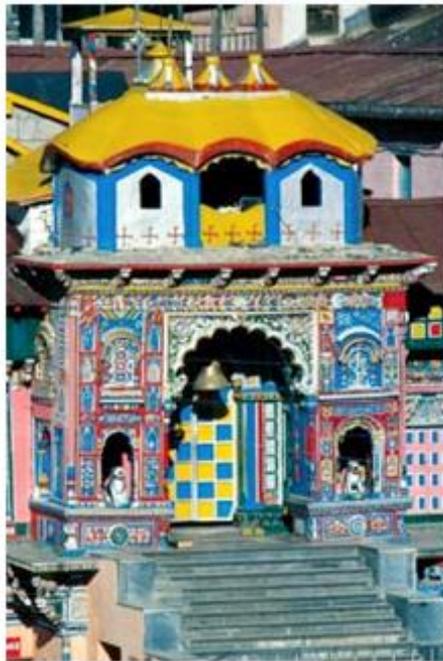
What the writer wants to communicate to us through these two phrases is that his heart was full of reverence and deep respect for the Chandi Prasad Dutt. He was making the journey to meet this man who had challenged the mighty commercial and governmental machinery by bringing together ordinary villagers and had finally been successful in saving the forest. Bhatt was an ordinary, mortal human being and no God, yet his achievement was god-like and he was loved and respected almost like one of the gods. It is for this reason that the biographer calls his journey secular not religious and describes Chandi Prasad Bhatt as a living god.

As we go on with the essay we find mention of many local places, hills and valleys, as well as people who inspired and worked hand in hand in the Chipko movement. The writer first mentions that his destination lay

deep into the **Alaknanda Valley**, "a little short" of **Badrinath**.

Alaknanda Valley is in Chamoli District of Uttaranchal. Alaknanda River, a tributary of Ganges River, passes through this valley. The holy town of Rudraprayag lies on a narrow strip of the valley.

For more information, click: <http://www.india9.com>



Badrinath temple

For a pilgrim, Badrinath the holy town on the bank of the River Alaknanda at an elevation of 3133 m above mean sea level is the ultimate desire.

(For more information, click: <http://www.boloji.com>)

(ii) Birth and Early Influences on Chandi Prasad Bhatt

Ramchandra Guha very briefly tells us about the birth an early life of

Chandi Prasad Bhatt. Some the information he gives is as follows:

*Chandi Prasad Bhatt was born on the **23rd of June 1934**, in a family of priests who tended the temple of Rudranath, which nestles in a forest at 13,000 feet. **Rudranath** is part of the '**Panch-Kedar**', the five Himalayan temples dedicated to Shiva, the most venerated of which is Kedarnath.*

Cradled in these very Garhwal Himalaya's ranges are five of Hinduism's most important temples, popularly known as the Panch Kedar, viz.

- 1. Kedarnath (3584 m)**
- 2. Madhmaheshwar (3289 m)**
- 3. Tungnath (3810 m)**
- 4. Rudranath (2286 m)**
- 5. Kalpanath (2134 m) sprawled over a vast area with altitudes ranging from 1500m to 3680m.**

(For more information, click <http://www.trekkinginindia.com>)

The biographer Ramchandra Guha goes on to describe the emotional bonds that the villagers have with the trees and the forest. They treat the trees as living entities who must not be disturbed during the time that they 'sleep' or 'flower'. They must be protected so that they can grow, increase in number and keep good health. We are told that this concern for the tree is reflected in some of the folk-beliefs, some examples of which are as follows:

*One must take off one's shoes while walking through the *bugiyal* – the alpine pastures. (This was done to avoid causing harm to the flowers)

Alpine pastures in the Himalayas are the vast stretches of land that lie above tree limits but below permanent snow region. These are used as pasture for grazing cattle during summer season. These alpine pastures sustain the economy of the hill people.



The Alpine Pasture

(For more information, click: <http://www.flickr.com>)

- In a four kilometer stretch above the there was a ban on spitting, coughing and pissing: on anything that might cause pollution of the river just below. **Amrit Ganga,**

The Amrit Ganga river is a tributary of Dhaulti Ganga river in Garhwal. It rises from the Bankund glacier.

- There were taboos on plucking plants before the festival of Nandasthmi, in September, after which the restraint was removed so that the plucking of the ripened flowers could release the seeds and spread it around for fertilization.

=====

Guha narrates a real incident here that tells us about the great care with which the villagers followed these social rules. Once Chandi Prasad Bhatt saw a man burning the flowers of **brahamakamal** that is considered to be a holy flower.

Have a look at the picture below to see the delicate flower.



<http://www.ncl-india.org/aboutncl/florafauna/f31.jsp>

What Bhatt saw surprised him. On enquiry, the villager told Bhatt that he was burning the flower to make a medicine for the bad stomach ache he had. However, he had broken off the flower not with his hand but with his mouth like a sheep so that the deity in the tree thinks of it as natural occurrence rather than something done by the rough hand of man.

Ramchandra Guha manages to do two things by talking about these beliefs and incidents:

* He communicates to us that the villagers treat trees like living, breathing individuals. They love and worship them. This demolishes the myth that is widespread amongst the urban society that people who are dependent upon the trees and the forest for their livelihood are the ones who harm them the most.

* The folk stories regarding the trees and the tree gods become a means of protecting the trees and actually form the basis of – what Guha calls “**folk ecology**” and this became the primary and most important “**informal education in ecology**” for Chandi Prasad Bhatt.

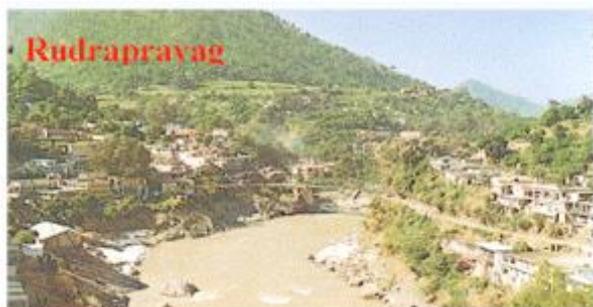
*

(iii) Early Life and Education of Chandi Prasad Bhatt

We are told that Chandi Prasad studied in the schools of **Rudraprayag** and **Pauri**.

See the pictures below to get an idea about how beautiful these

these places are.



<http://rudraprayag.nic.in>

Named after Lord Shiva (Rudra), Rudraprayag is situated at the holy confluence of Alaknanda and Mandakini rivers, at a distance of 34 kms. from Srinagar(Garhwal).

District Pauri Garhwal is surrounded by the districts of Chamoli, Nanital, Bijnor, Haridwar, Dehradun, Rudraprayag and Tehri Garhwal, offering a panoramic view of the great Himalayas from its towns and villages. The majestic Himalaya and its mountain ranges can be seen from anywhere in the district.



<http://www.gmvnl.com>



(A view of the pauri city : <http://www.hillore.com>)



(Garhwal with one of its rivers: <http://www.euttaranchal.com>)

Unfortunately, Chandi Prasad had to drop his studies before he could get a degree. His father had passed away when he was a baby and he needed to support his mother.

To begin with, he taught art to children but soon found a job as a booking clerk in **Garhwal Motor Owners Union (GMOU)**. His job took Chandi Prasad in different parts of the Alaknanda Valley and brought him in touch with pilgrims from various parts of the country. All this made him much more sharply conscious about the diversity in nature, customs and rituals in the country.

(iv) Beginnings of Becoming a Social Worker

It was a public meeting in 1965 that became the starting point of Chandi Prasad Bhatt's life as a social worker and an environmentalist. The main attraction at the meeting was the great leader of people – **Jayaprakash Narayan**, popularly known as **JP**.



Photograph of Jayaprakash Narayan on cover of the book "Jayaprakash" by Lakshminarayan Lal.

Jayaprakash Narayan (1902-1979) was born in Bihar. He is remembered as an [Indian](#) freedom fighter and a political leader. He played a prominent role in leading the opposition against the imposition of political Emergency in the country and giving a call for peaceful *Total Revolution* in the 1970s.

On [April 19, 1954](#), JP announced in [Gaya](#) that he was dedicating his life (*Jeevandan*) to [Vinoba Bhave's Sarvodaya](#) movement and its [Bhoodan](#) campaign, which promoted distributing land to the dalits. He gave up his land, set up an ashram in Hazaribagh in Bihar and worked towards uplifting the village.

He has been awarded the "Magasaysay Award for Public Service". In 1998. He was awarded the highest award of the nation – the "Bharat

Ratna" posthumously.

(For more information, click -
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jayaprakash_Narayan)

The other person who attracted the young Chandi Prasad was **Man Singh Rawat**, the local leader of the **Sarvodaya Movement**.

Sashi Behn, the wife of Man Singh Rawat was also an activist and received her training of non-violent protest from Sarla Behn, who was a favourite pupil of Mahatma Gandhi. In 1947 Sarla Behn established the **Laxmi Ashram** in **Kausani**, a beautiful spot at a height of 1890 meters, with a clear view of snow-covered peaks of the Himalayas



Kausai –A view of the snow-capped Himalayas

Kausani-govt.ua.nic.in/kausani.html

This group of people drew their inspiration and ideological strength from Gandhian Movements, Writings of Gandhi and the Sarvodaya leaders. In 1964 they managed to change the Zila Parishad Rest House into another ashram the **Anashakti Ashram**, established on the lines of Laxmi Ashram.

See the pictures of the ashram and the room devoted to Gandhi.



(For both pictures, click: www.maps.india.com/anasakti-ashram-kausani-htm)

Chandi Prasad began to often travel around with the Rawat couple. He also travelled once with Vinoba Bhave in 1959.



Vinoba Bhave

(Photo from - <http://www.mkgandhi-sarvodaya.org/vinoba/vinoba.htm>)

Vinoba Bhave was born into a Brahmin family in [Gagode, Maharashtra](#) on [September 11, 1895](#). It was at a very early age that he read the [Bhagavad Gita](#), one of the holy [Hindu scriptures](#) and it remained his inspiration throughout his life.

He joined [Mahatma Gandhi](#) in the struggle for India's independence. In 1932 he was jailed for his political activities. In the jail, he regularly gave lectures on *The Gita* to other prisoners. These lectures have been published in the form of a book called *Talks on the Gita* and have been translated into several languages.

Vinoba Bhave closely observed the life of the villagers and tried to find solutions to their problems. It is this that formed the core of his philosophy **Sarvodaya** or awakening of all human potentials. It is this vision that both Chandi Prasad Bhatt as well as JP adopted in their lives. He was also the pioneer of the **Bhoodan** movement that inspired many landed people to voluntarily gift their land to the landless.

Vinoba Bhave was the first recipient of the **Magasaysay Award** in 1958 and was posthumously honoured with the **Bharat Ratna** in 1983.

(Click http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vinoba_Bhave)

In the essay "**A Gandhian in Garhwal: Chandi Prasad Bhatt,**" Ramchandra Guha tells us that this was also the time when "China was

making menacing moves on the Indian frontier”.

It was at this time that JP made a call for volunteers and Chandi Prasad responded by making a *jeevan daan* (a gift of his own life) to the Sarvodaya Movement in 1960. It meant dedicating himself completely to the movement. This was a bold step to take because he was already married with a child at this time.

v) Growth and Maturity as a Social Leader

Chandi Prasad began his work with the people first by organizing a labour co-operative that helped people in repairing their houses as well as building roads. The work and the wages were divided equally among the people.

In 1964, Chandi Prasad founded the **Dashauli Gram Seva Sangh** (DGSS), which may be called the 'mother organisation of the Chipko Movement'. The land for DGSS was donated by **Shyama Devi** and its foundation stone was laid by **Sucheta Kriplani**, who was then the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh.



Sucheta Kriplani ([1908-1974](#)) was an [Indian freedom fighter](#). She became the first woman to be elected as the [Chief Minister](#) of any state in India.

She was contemporary of other prominent of the time like [Aruna Asaf Ali](#) and [Usha Mehta](#). Sucheta Kriplani she came to the forefront during the

[Quit India Movement](#). She later worked closely with [Mahatma Gandhi](#) during the [Partition](#) riots. She was one of the few women who were elected to the Constituent Assembly and was part of the sub-committee that drafted the [Indian Constitution](#).

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sucheta_Kripalani)

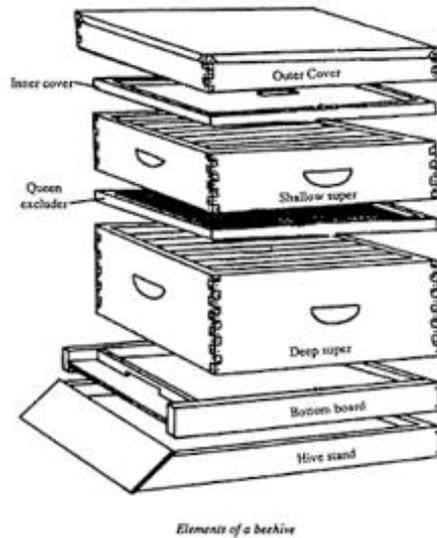
The **DGSS** focused on schemes that had the potential of generating employment for local population from local resources. It therefore began organizing activities like weaving, bee-keeping and herb-collection as well as cottage and small industries. These activities are dependent on the forest, yet sustained it as well. These generally use local resources and cater to the local population. The main industries that form this group are handloom weaving, handicrafts and professions like carpentry, bricks and tiles making, pottery, cane and bamboo works, oil *ghanis* and tasar silk weaving.



A weaver at his loom

<http://www.dhanalakshmi.com/html>

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Various parts of a beehive used for manufacturing honey

<http://www.thefarm.org>

One of the high-points at DGSS was a visit by JP and his wife Prabhavati in 1968. After seeing the work done here they remarked that it reminded them of the sacrifice, selflessness and heroism of Gandhi's movement.

Chipko movement is born: The first phase

(i) The First Major Protest

It was in the year 1973 that DGSS had its first serious confrontation with the Forest Department of the government. The Forest Department refused to allow the villagers to cut some **hornbeam trees** to make agricultural implements.

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Hornbeam Leaf



Hornbeam Tree

<http://images.jupiterimages.com>

What however, completely surprised the villagers was that these very trees were then auctioned off to a sports company known as the Simon Company from Allahabad. The company had plans to cut down the trees to make sports equipment.

In the neighbourhood of these trees lies the village called **Mandal**. The inhabitants of Mandal were very angry with this decision of the government and at Bhatt's suggestion decided to save the trees by going and hugging them and refusing to move till the decision to cut them was dropped.

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Anupam Misra was the first person to write about the Chipko Movement.

<http://www.indianngos.com>

Anupam Misra has recorded that the first term used to describe the hugging of trees was the Garhwali word '**angalwaltha**', which meant 'to hug' or 'to embrace'. The term was later changed to '**chipko**' from the Hindi word meaning the same.

(ii) The Second Major Protest

The Chipko Movement then fought and confronted the government many times to save the trees from the greed of the contractors. Its second major confrontation however, was in **Reni** in the spring of 1974 to save the trees of the Alaknanda Valley from being chopped down for commercial forestry. The special feature of this protest was that it was organized and carried forward mainly by the women, led by the courageous **Gaura Devi**.

Gaura Devi was an illiterate, spirited fifty-year old woman who inspired the women to be ready to bear the axe on their bodies to save the trees. She thus gave form and direction to the non-violent grassroots resistance. A four-day standoff eventually ended in victory for the women and the movement spread like wildfire across the Himalayas.

This is what Gaura Devi had to say about the protest at Reni.

"It was not a question of planned organisation 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 only wanted to make the people understand that our existence is tied with the forest."

(FROM: Ramchandra Guha's book *The unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*. - p.159)

Gaura Devi died in 1991 after long years spent in service to her community.

(For more information, click - <http://uttarakhand.prayaga.org/heroes.html>)

(Gaura Devi – Photo by Anupam Misra)



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(Photo at: www.markshep.com/nonviolence)

Have a look at the picture below which shows the women of Reni protest, reassembled thirty years later

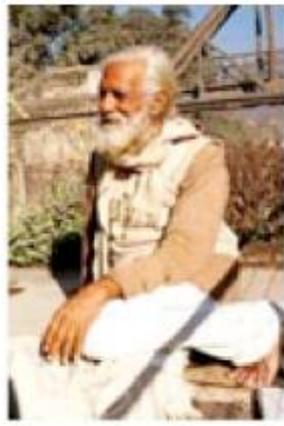


(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chipko_movement)

It was the site of this protest that the other Gandhian Sunderlal Bahuguna, the famous environmentalist connected with the Tehri dam movement visited and supported. After he returned to Uttarakhand, he wrote about the movement in *Yugvani*, the nationalist weekly of Dehradun and described Bhatt as the *mukhiya sanchalak* or the chief organizer of the Chipko andolan. He also said that this did not merely deal with the issue of money and economics but 'its main aim was fostering of love towards trees in the hearts of humans'

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Sunderlal Bahuguna

<http://www.hinduonnet.com>

The Second Phase of the Chipko Movement: Reconstruction and Replanting

Under Bhatt's leadership, the DGSS organized programmes for tree planting and re-vegetating the barren hill sides. The saplings were also nourished and cared for. Within a decade, this work began to show results. A study by the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, established that the survival rate of saplings sown by DGSS was more than **70 per cent**, while the survival rate of saplings planted by the Forest department was only between **20-50 per cent**.

The spread of the chipko movement

Starting from the heart of the Alaknanda Valley, the Chipko Movement found supporters in other parts of the country as well. Towards the east in the region of Kumaon, protests against commercial felling of trees were organized by the left-wing students of **Uttarakhand Sangarsh Vahini**.

In the western region, the movement was strengthened by Sunderlal Bahuguna and his supporters.

Ignoring the caste

Ramesh Pahari, a journalist has published a booklet *Dashauli Gram Seva Mandal* in which he describes how caste differences did not affect Chandi Prasad Bhatt. He describes Bhatt's friendship with **Murari Lal**, a dalit member of DGSM. The first tree plantation programme was organized in Murari Lal's village.

In his booklet Ramesh Pahari quotes the following words of Murari Lal:

"Bhattji has fought bigger battles for removal of social inequities, than for environmental protection."

A CHANGE OF NAME

In the early 1980s the name of **DGSS** was changed from Dashauli Gram Seva Sangh was changed to **Dashauli Gram Seva Mandal** for organisational reasons. The programmes of the group that focused on environmental protection remained the same.

Chandi Prasad Bhatt and the Wider Social Context

Ramchandra Guha ends the essay on a somewhat sad note when he says that the society today still does not seem to honour people who work quietly outside the elite social circle. He concludes this short biography by describing how he once saw both Chandi Prasad Bhatt and Anupam Mishra walking down in a street in Delhi that houses many important international institutions. The two men were wearing khadi and traveled by a ordinary city transport bus.

By mentioning this incident near the end of the essay Guha wants to drive home the point that people like Chandi Prasad Bhatt and Anupam Mishra were responsible for starting "a definitive moment in the history of environmentalism."

Guha goes on to list the lessons we can learn from Chandi Prasad Bhatt, his work and his life. Some of these are as follows:

- *"Before Chipko, it was thought that the poor were too poor to be green. After Chipko, indeed through Chipko, it was demonstrated that peasants and tribals had a greater stake in the responsible management of nature than supposedly sophisticated city-dwellers."*
- *"It was Bhatt who taught Indian environmentalists that it was not enough just to protest against destruction, they must also set about the process of reconstruction."*
- *Bhatt has tried to improve the lives of the poor.*
- *He has tried to "humanize modern science rather than reject it."*
- *He has "tried to democratize bureaucracy rather than demozine it."*

Some Slogans of the chipko Movement

The villagers protested against the felling of trees in groups. They chanted slogans and songs as they stood firm.

Some of these slogans are as follows:

"What do the forests bear?

soil, water and pure air."

("Kya hain jungle ke uphaar

Mitti, paani aur bayaar")

"Embrace the trees and Save them from being felled; The property of our hills, Save them from being looted."

"Ecology is permanent economy."

Further References

- You can find out more about the Chipko Movement by having a look at the following nooks and Reports:
- *Hugging the Trees: The Story of the Chipko Movement*, by Thomas Weber, Viking Penguin, New Delhi, 1988.
- *The Chipko Movement*, by Anupam Mishra and Satyendra Tripathi, People's Action/Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, 1978.
- *Hugging the Himalayas: The Chipko Experience*, edited by S. S. Kunwar, Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal, Gopeshwar, Uttar Pradesh, India, 1982. A collection of pieces by various writers.
- *Gandhi Today: A Report on Mahatma Gandhi's Successors*, Simple Productions, Arcata, California, 1987 (reprinted by Seven Locks Press, Washington, D.C., 1987). The source of this article.

Questions

- Do you think Ramchandra Guha is right in calling Chandi Prasad Bhatt "a living deity". Give reasons for your answer.
- Give two examples to show how the folk-beliefs of the villagers regarding nature was connected with preservation of the forest.
- Describe the impact that Jayaprakash Narayan and Vinoba Bhave had on Chandi Prasad Bhatt.
- Describe the vents that led to the protest against the cutting of the hornbeam trees.
- In what way was the protest in Reni different from the earlier protest? Describe the role that Gaura Devi played at the time.
- Write a short note on two lessons that we learn from the life and work of Chandi Prasad Bhatt.
- Do you feel that the educated and elite society largely ignores the work done by someone who does not belong to it? Discuss with special reference to the work of any one individual besides Chandi Prasad Bhatt.