

Environmental movements in Sri Lanka

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Most of the environmental movements as well as grassroots environmental actions are being given wrong motives not only by natural scientists but also social scientists. This empirical Sociological study attempts to understand ecological struggles that emerged in Sri Lanka. This study chiefly examines the relation between livelihood vulnerability and collective environmental actions and religious significance of environmental movements in Sri Lanka.

This empirical study identifies the factors and forces that mobilize people at grassroots level for ecological movement on the basis of their livelihood conflicts. The economical vulnerable groups easily get themselves mobilized to protect their life supporting ecological system. As a result, it is possible to witness social integration among different ethnic and religious groups in order to safeguard their ecologically made livelihood.

It is indeed interesting to talk about the link between environmentalism and religion. Sometimes it is difficult to understand the grassroots environmentalism in the developing countries without the religious rituals and practices and their links with ecological set up. In the process of studying environmental movements in the Global South, it is extremely important to look at the ecological significance of the religion or ecological significance of religiously formed culture. I find it further important when it comes to Sri Lankan environmentalism. It is through the religion and religiously organized culture grassroots people are mobilized for most of the collective environmental actions. In this regard, the grassroots culture which is largely centered on peasants or their religious ritual and practices are significant to understand grassroots environmentalism in Sri Lanka. I do find the significance of both Buddhism and Christianity in the grassroots environmental actions of Eppawela (against the privatization of phosphate mine) and Nurochcholai respectively.

Key words: Livelihood vulnerability; Environmental movements; Sri Lanka; Collective action