

# **River and Environmental Movement: The case of *Saraswati* River in West Bengal**

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## **Abstract**

*The present paper narrates the story of a movement to resuscitate a river named Saraswati (Saraswati Nadi Bachao Andolan or SNBA) which once a vibrant water course to harbour a port in medieval Bengal, is now silted and filled with garbage. Very few anthropological accounts of river movements which could exemplify a kind of New Social Movements (NSM) exist. This account of SNBA presents a case study of a Local Grassroots Environmental Movement (LGEM). The study deals with the genesis, course of actions, and evaluation of the success and failure of the movement. The paper argues that such LGEM exhibit multiple ideological strands instead of one, and might be transformed into some other forms of environmental activism, thus subtly carrying the evidence of people's environmental consciousness at the local level as well as their vulnerability in organizing environmental activism.*

Keywords: River Movement, New Social Movement (NSM), Local Grassroots Environmental Movement (LGEM), *Saraswati Nadi Bachao Andolan*, Ideology

## **Introduction**

Environmental degradation is one of the greatest challenges to the survival, humanity is facing today. Human dependence on nature is primordial. Environmental factors had a crucial role in the evolution of human beings. Human subsistence no doubt necessitated some amount of exploitation of nature. However, it did not pose any serious threat till the natural balance was maintained before the wanton destruction set in followed by the large-scale industrialization and rapid increase of population. With the advent of the industry and motorized

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