Environmental Politics

COURSE CODE: B23PS01SE

Undergraduate Programme in Political Science
Skill Enhancement Course
Self Learning Material

SREENARAYANAGURU
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The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

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Access and Quality define Equity.

Enviornmental Politics

Course Code: B23PS01SE

Semester - III

Skill Enhancement Course
Undergraduate Programme in Political Science
Self Learning Material

(With Model Question Paper Sets)

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ENVIORNMENTAL POLITICS

Course Code: B23PS01SE
Semester- III
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Undergraduate Programme in
Political Science

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

Academic Committee

Prof. Joby Varghese
Dr. K. Pradeep Kumar
Dr. G. Jayasenan
Dr. K. M. Sudhakaran
Dr. Prasanth Lal T.S.
Suja Karapath
Prathap Thevarthottam S. S.

Development of the Content

Dr. Nowfal N.
Dr. Geetha K.L.

Review

Dr. Anoop Krishnan

Edit

Dr. Anoop Krishnan

Linguistics

Dr. Aravind Sreevalsan S.G.

Scrutiny

Dr. Nowfal N.
Dr. Geetha K.L.
Hemanth V.L.
Subeesh K.V.

Design Control

Azeem Babu T.A.

Cover Design

Jobin J.

Co-ordination

Director, MDDC :
Dr. I.G. Shibi
Asst. Director, MDDC :
Dr. Sajeevkumar G.
Coordinator, Development:
Dr. Anfal M.
Coordinator, Distribution:
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Regards,
Dr. Jagathy Raj V. P.   01-09-2025

Contents

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BLOCK

Introduction to Environmental Politics

1 UNIT

Definition and Scope

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be:

- ♦ define environmental politics and explain its theoretical foundations

- ♦ analyse the scope of environmental politics at local, national, and global levels

- ♦ understand the historical development of Environmental politics

- ♦ understand the broader implications of environmental decisions by examining the linkages between environmental politics, social justice, and sustainability

Prerequisites

Environmental politics is the study of how societies confront ecological challenges through political institutions, public policies, and collective action. It addresses pressing issues such as air and water pollution, large-scale deforestation, biodiversity depletion, and the global threat of climate change. This field goes beyond technical solutions and highlights the links between environment, justice, democracy, and sustainability. Scholars like John Dryzek, Neil Carter, and Andrew Dobson remind us that ecological problems are also ethical and political in nature, requiring debates on fairness, responsibility, and long-term survival. From grassroots struggles such as the Chipko Movement in India to global agreements like the Paris Climate Accord, environmental politics operates simultaneously at local, national, and international levels. Understanding its scope helps learners see how ecological concerns have moved from the margins of policy to the centre of political debate in the twenty-first century.

SGOU - SLM - BA Political Science - Environmental Politics

Keywords

Environmental Politics, Political Ecology, Sustainable Development, Environmental Governance, Climate Justice, Environmental Movements

Discussion

Environmental politics is a subfield of political science that examines how societies address ecological issues through their political institutions and decision-making processes. It focuses on how environmental concerns are identified, debated, and acted upon within the public domain. The discipline gained significance during the latter half of the twentieth century, as rising awareness about pollution, deforestation, and climate change began to shape political agendas and influence policy-making.

At its core, this area of study examines the relationship between human activities and the natural environment. It looks at how legal frameworks, policy measures, and governance mechanisms are designed to safeguard ecological systems while fulfilling human needs. Environmental politics also engages with the ethical and moral questions surrounding humanity's responsibility towards nature, which distinguishes it from other branches of political science that are often centred on economic growth or security issues.

The field functions across multiple levels. Locally, it involves concerns such as waste disposal, provision of clean water, and protection of community forests. At the national scale, it deals with renewable energy promotion, control of environmental pollution, and wildlife conservation. On the global stage, it encompasses cooperation among nations on matters like climate change, biodiversity conservation, and the stewardship of shared natural resources such as oceans and the atmosphere.

In contemporary times, the relevance of environmental politics has grown considerably. Challenges such as climate change, depletion of resources, and ecological degradation demand more than scientific or technological solutions. They call for strong political will, active citizen participation, and collaboration among different societal groups. The study of this field equips learners to understand the distribution of power, institutional arrangements, and value systems that shape environmental decisions, and to explore pathways for building a sustainable and equitable future.

1.1.1 Meaning and Concept of Environmental Politics

Environmental politics may be broadly described as the study of how political systems respond to ecological problems, and how environmental concerns become part of public debate and institutional decision-making. John Dryzek views it as "the process through which societies organise themselves to consider environmental values and take collective action in response to ecological change." Eckersley similarly argues that environmental politics is concerned with "the contestation over the distribution of environmental goods and bads and the development of rules to guide human interactions with nature." According to Neil Carter, the core task of environmental politics is to understand how environmental ideas influence political behaviour and how political structures, in turn, shape environmental outcomes. Andrew

Dobson draws attention to the normative dimension by pointing out that environmental politics is not simply about policy, but also about "rethinking the relationship between people and nature, and redefining the moral obligations that arise from this relationship." In this sense, environmental politics is not restricted to the actions of governments; it also includes the role of citizens, civil society, social movements and international organisations in defending ecological interests. It therefore examines how laws are created, how power is exercised, and how social and ecological justice become part of the political agenda. At the same time, it highlights that environmental problems emerge from the structure of economic and social systems, and that effective solutions require democratic participation, ethical reflection and long-term planning.

1.1.2 Definition of the concept

Environmental politics has been defined in different ways by scholars, public bodies and international organisations, but all of them underline the political aspects of human–nature relations. According to Andrew Dobson, environmental politics is "the study of the political processes and institutions involved in the regulation of the relationship between human beings and the natural environment." This definition highlights that environmental problems are not simply technical or scientific issues but are located within the realm of politics and require collective decisions. Neil Carter defines environmental politics as "a field concerned with the development of ideas and movements that seek to respond to growing ecological problems." Carter's emphasis is on how ideas such as sustainability and ecological justice influence political action and how environmental movements pressure governments to act.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) offers a practical, policy-oriented definition. It explains environmental politics as "the process by which governments, international organisations and civil society attempt to promote environmental protection and integrate environmental considerations into development planning." This definition draws attention to the need for political coordination between different actors, as environmental challenges cannot be managed by governments alone. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has described environmental politics as "the democratic negotiation of priorities and interests in relation to the management of natural resources and the distribution of environmental benefits and harms." The UNDP definition reminds us that environmental politics is closely linked to issues of equity and the fair distribution of resources.

Robert Garner defines environmental politics as "the study of the way environmental questions are placed on the political agenda, debated in the public arena and acted upon by governments and citizens." Here, the focus is on agenda-setting, political contestation and the translation of ecological concerns into policy action. The World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission), in its 1987 report, also stressed the political character of environmental issues by noting that "sustainable development requires political systems that secure effective citizen participation in decision-making," and that "environmental concerns must be integrated into all levels of policy."

Collectively, these definitions indicate that environmental politics encompasses far more than the protection of natural resources in a narrow sense. It refers to the broader set of institutional arrangements, decision-making processes and power relations through which societies address ecological challenges. The field examines how environmental values are articulated,

how scientific knowledge and public opinion shape policy preferences, and how conflicts over the allocation of environmental benefits and burdens are negotiated. In this sense, environmental politics treats ecological problems as fundamentally embedded within social and economic structures and recognises that questions of authority, justice and responsibility are central to any meaningful response to contemporary environmental crises.

1.1.3 Characteristics of Environmental Politics

Environmental politics operates simultaneously at the global, national and local levels. International agreements on climate change, national legislation on pollution control and local community-based efforts to manage natural resources are all part of the same field. Decisions at one level often influence actions at other levels, which makes environmental politics a highly interconnected and multi-layered arena.

Interdisciplinary Character

Unlike many other branches of politics, environmental politics draws heavily on knowledge from ecology, economics, law, ethics and sociology. Scientific research is necessary to identify environmental problems, economic analysis helps evaluate costs and benefits, and ethical theory is needed to address questions of justice and responsibility. As a result, environmental politics requires cooperation across disciplines and cannot rely on political science alone.

Normative Orientation

Environmental politics is not limited to the technical management of natural resources. It also involves value-based questions about how humans should relate to nature and what

kind of future society should aim for. As Andrew Dobson points out, environmental politics requires a rethinking of the human–nature relationship and consideration of moral duties toward present and future generations as well as non-human species.

Participatory Dimension

Environmental politics involves a wide range of actors beyond governments. Local communities, non-governmental organisations, indigenous groups and social movements play an active role in protecting environmental interests. As noted by Neil Carter, environmental issues often generate popular mobilisation because those directly affected may feel excluded from formal decision-making processes.

Long-term and Precautionary Focus\

Environmental politics deals with issues whose effects unfold over long periods of time, such as climate change, ozone depletion and biodiversity loss. As these problems often involve uncertainty, political decisions must be based on precaution rather than short-term calculations. Governments are therefore required to adopt policies that anticipate future risks rather than waiting for full scientific proof.

Redistributional Conflicts

Environmental policies frequently lead to conflicts over who bears the costs of regulation and who gains the benefits of conservation. Measures to control pollution, restrict deforestation, or limit resource extraction may affect different groups unequally. Robert Garner points out that environmental politics is therefore also about the distribution of environmental "burdens and benefits" within society and between countries.

1.1.4 Global Scope of Environmental Politics

Environmental politics at the global level deals with ecological issues that cut across state boundaries and require collective international responses. Problems such as climate change, depletion of the ozone layer, loss of biodiversity, transboundary air pollution, marine pollution, and desertification affect multiple regions at the same time and therefore cannot be handled by individual governments in isolation. Global environmental politics studies how the international community develops shared norms, coordinates legal frameworks, creates monitoring mechanisms, and builds cooperative structures to manage these challenges. It also examines the role played by various state and non-state actors in shaping international agendas and influencing the outcomes of global negotiations.

Major Global Environmental Threats

One of the most urgent global environmental threats is climate change. Rising greenhouse gas emissions from industries, transport, agriculture and land-use change are increasing average temperatures, causing more frequent droughts, floods and heatwaves, and threatening coastal areas due to sea-level rise. Closely connected to climate change is the rapid loss of biodiversity. Many species are disappearing because of habitat destruction, over-exploitation, pollution and invasive species. This threatens the stability of entire ecosystems and undermines food security. Ocean pollution is another serious concern. Millions of tonnes of plastic waste enter the oceans every year and damage marine life, while oil spills and runoff from agriculture and industry contaminate coastal waters. Desertification and land degradation are advancing, particularly in Africa and Asia, reducing the capacity of land to support agriculture and increasing rural poverty. In addition, the depletion of the ozone layer and long-term chemical contamination of soil and water are exposing people to severe health risks. These threats are interconnected and reinforce each other, which makes coordinated global action essential.

Role of Various UN Agencies

The United Nations provides the main organisational framework for global environmental cooperation. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) coordinates environmental assessment programmes, promotes international environmental law and provides assistance to countries developing national policies. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) collects and analyses scientific data on climate change and produces regular assessment reports, which are used as the scientific basis for international negotiations. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) brings together governments in annual Conferences of Parties (COPs) to review progress, discuss new targets and monitor implementation. UNESCO works through programmes such as the Man and Biosphere Programme to encourage the conservation of natural and cultural sites and promote environmental education. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) supports the sustainable management of fisheries, forests and agricultural resources and runs capacity-building programmes for developing countries. Together, these agencies promote cooperation by offering platforms for dialogue, collecting scientific information and setting technical standards that guide national policies.

International Conventions

Several major multilateral agreements form the legal backbone of global environmental politics. The 1972 Stockholm Conference was the first significant international meeting to underline the links between development and environmental protection. The 1992 Rio

Earth Summit resulted in Agenda 21 and two landmark agreements: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UNFCCC. The Kyoto Protocol of 1997 introduced binding emission targets for industrialised countries. Its successor, the Paris Agreement of 2015, requires all countries to prepare national emissions reduction plans and aims to limit global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius. The Montreal Protocol (1987) is a successful example of global cooperation in phasing out substances that deplete the ozone layer. The Basel Convention regulates the movement of hazardous wastes across borders, while the Convention on the Law of the Sea addresses marine pollution, protection of living marine resources and jurisdiction over ocean space. Other conventions deal with wetlands (Ramsar Convention), trade in endangered species (CITES), and transboundary air pollution (CLRTAP). These agreements provide legal frameworks which guide state behaviour and facilitate cooperation in managing shared problems.

Agenda 21

Agenda 21 is an international plan of action aimed at guiding countries, global institutions, and local communities in reducing human impact on the environment. The plan was adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, where over 178 nations also supported the Rio Declaration and principles for sustainable forest use. To follow up on these commitments, the UN created the Commission on Sustainable Development the same year, with a review scheduled in 1997. A decade later, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (2002) renewed and strengthened global commitment to Agenda 21 and its goals.

Challenges Faced

Despite a large number of treaties and institutions, global environmental governance faces several serious obstacles. Developed and developing countries often differ in their views on who should bear the main responsibility for environmental protection. Developed countries have historically contributed the most to pollution, while developing countries argue that they need more time and resources to achieve economic development. This difference regularly leads to disagreements in negotiations. In addition, many international conventions do not have effective enforcement mechanisms. Countries may sign agreements but fail to meet their commitments due to economic or political pressures. Funding and access to environmentally sound technologies remain unresolved issues for many low-income countries. Geopolitical conflicts and shifts in national priorities can slow down or even reverse progress. Finally, the influence of powerful corporate interests in sectors such as fossil fuels, mining and industrial agriculture often weakens the implementation of environmentally sound policies.

Greta Thunberg and Global Youth Activism

In recent years, young people have become increasingly involved in global environmental politics and have drawn public attention to the urgency of climate change. Greta Thunberg began a school strike in front of the Swedish Parliament in 2018, holding a sign demanding stronger climate action. Her individual protest soon inspired millions of students across the world to join the Fridays for Future movement. Youth-led marches, forums and media campaigns have put pressure on political leaders to act more decisively and to base policies on scientific evidence. Greta Thunberg has addressed the United Nations Climate Action Summit and other international platforms, where she

accused governments of failing to protect future generations. The involvement of youth has changed the tone of global environmental debates by emphasising intergenerational justice, moral responsibility and public accountability. It shows that environmental politics is not confined to governments and experts but also includes the voices of ordinary citizens, particularly those who will be most affected by the long-term consequences of environmental degradation.

Environmental politics is often defined by redistributional conflicts, which arise over who bears the burdens and who reaps the benefits of environmental policy. These are starkly evident in international climate finance negotiations. A key example is the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund at COP28 in Dubai. For decades, developing nations have argued that they bear the brunt of climate change impacts-such as extreme floods, droughts, and sea-level rise-despite having contributed the least to the historical emissions that caused the crisis. The demand for this fund, therefore, was a call for climate justice and financial restitution from the Global North. While its formal operationalisation at COP28 was a historic breakthrough, the ongoing debate over the scale of contributions and the voluntary nature of funding reflects the deep-seated conflict between wealthy nations, who are reluctant to accept legal liability, and vulnerable nations, who face catastrophic and often irreversible losses. This negotiation perfectly illustrates the political nature of environmental issues, where the fair distribution of both costs and benefits is a central point of contention.

1.1.5 Scope of Environmental Politics at National Level

At the national level, environmental politics focuses on how states formulate policies and build institutions to manage ecological problems while pursuing economic and social development. Across the world, national governments face the challenge of striking a balance between rapid economic growth and long-term ecological sustainability. The manner in which states respond to these concerns depends on their historical experiences, development priorities and social pressures. In India, environmental issues emerged gradually after independence but began to draw serious attention from the mid-1970s when the negative effects of industrialisation, deforestation and large development projects became increasingly visible. Since then, Indian environmental politics has evolved through a combination of legislative initiatives, judicial interventions, social movements and participation in international environmental diplomacy.

India faces a number of serious environmental problems. Air pollution has become a critical concern in several urban centres, primarily due to industrial emissions, increased vehicular traffic, construction activities and the burning of agricultural residue. Water pollution is also widespread. Major rivers such as the Ganga and Yamuna are severely contaminated by untreated sewage, industrial

effluents and chemical run-off from farms. In many regions, the over-extraction of ground-water has led to a sharp decline in water tables, creating difficulties for both agricultural and domestic use. Deforestation and loss of biodiversity continue as a result of mining activities, infrastructure development and the diversion of forest land, which also affect the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities. Solid waste management has become a major administrative challenge, particularly in larger cities where the volume of municipal waste exceeds the processing capacity of local authorities. In addition, India regularly faces floods, droughts and cyclones, which have been made more frequent and intense by climate change and unsustainable patterns of land use.

In order to address these challenges, the Indian state has introduced a number of laws and policy measures. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1974 and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1981 created institutional frameworks for monitoring pollution at the national and state levels. The Environment (Protection) Act of 1986 gave the central government broader powers to regulate industrial activity and protect ecologically sensitive areas. Programmes such as the National River Conservation Plan and the Namami Gange Mission were implemented to reduce pollution in major rivers. The National Clean Air Programme aims to reduce particulate matter levels in polluted cities by combining monitoring, regulation and public awareness initiatives. The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act makes it mandatory to plant trees in areas equivalent to those diverted for development projects. The creation of the National Green Tribunal has provided a specialised forum for the efficient handling of environment-related disputes and has improved accountability.

Civil society organisations and people's movements have also played an important role in shaping environmental politics in India. The Chipko Movement of the 1970s drew public attention to the ecological and social importance of forests. The Narmada Bachao Andolan questioned the social and environmental consequences of large-scale dam projects and raised broader issues of distributive justice. The Save the Western Ghats campaign highlighted the ecological vulnerability of an entire mountain range, while anti-sand-mining protests in Kerala and Goa addressed the effects of unregulated resource extraction on local ecosystems. Public interest litigations filed in various high courts and the Supreme Court have helped to establish the right to a clean and healthy environment and have strengthened the accountability of both government agencies and private industries. Judicial interventions in cases such as the Vellore Leather Industry Pollution case and the Ganga Pollution case demonstrate the increasing role of courts in protecting the environment when executive action has been inadequate.

India is also an active participant in global environmental politics. It played a constructive role at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and strongly advocated the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, which argues that countries with greater historical responsibility for environmental damage should bear a larger share of the burden in dealing with it. At the Paris Climate Conference in 2015, India voluntarily pledged to reduce the emission intensity of its GDP and significantly increase the share of non-fossil fuel sources in its electricity production. India has also taken the initiative to establish the International Solar Alliance in order to promote the use of renewable energy in developing countries located in the tropical zone. In addition, it actively participates in multilateral negotiations on biodiversity protection, desertification control and climate

finance. Taken together, these measures show that environmental politics in India combines national legislation and social movements with a growing commitment to global environmental responsibility.

1.1.6 Scope of Environmental Politics at the Local Level

At the local level, environmental politics examines how communities, panchayats and municipalities respond to ecological problems that have a direct impact on everyday life. Local institutions have to deal with a wide range of issues such as polluted drinking water, destruction of wetlands, quarrying in ecologically fragile areas, improper waste disposal, declining fish stocks and the regular occurrence of floods and landslides. In many places, people begin to organise and raise their voices when these issues start affecting their health, livelihoods and immediate surroundings. Environmental movements at the local level often start when residents realise that official policies are not sufficient to protect their resources or when powerful actors threaten to exploit local ecosystems without the consent of the community.

In Kerala, local bodies were given a greater role in natural resource management through the People's Plan Campaign, which encouraged panchayats to prepare their own development plans. As a result, several community-level environmental initiatives emerged. In Wayanad and Palakkad districts, people came together to restore traditional water-harvesting systems when springs and ponds started drying up. In Alappuzha, the growing problem of solid waste led to decentralised waste management involving Kudumbashree units and residential groups, which successfully turned the town into a model "zero-waste" municipality. Local movements have also emerged in response to environmentally destructive activities. Communities in coastal villages started campaigns against

indiscriminate sand mining after they experienced sea erosion and loss of beaches. Similarly, protests were organised against granite quarrying in ecologically sensitive areas when villagers witnessed the drying up of wells and increasing landslide risks.

Several panchayats in Kerala have also taken the initiative to regenerate mangrove forests as a way of protecting their coastlines from storms and flooding. These initiatives highlight the close relationship between environmental protection and livelihood security at the local level. They also show that local environmental politics evolves not only through government programmes but also through collective action and people's resistance. In many cases, local environmental movements begin with small meetings of affected residents and gradually grow into broader campaigns that influence policy and force authorities to reconsider development plans. This demonstrates that effective environmental governance requires democratic participation and the active involvement of local communities who possess knowledge of their own ecological context.

Recap

- ♦ Environmental politics studies how ecological issues are recognised, debated, and acted upon within political systems.

- ♦ It connects environmental concerns with broader questions of justice, democracy, and sustainability.

- ♦ Scholars such as Dryzek, Carter, and Dobson emphasise the ethical and moral dimensions of this field.

- ♦ Environmental politics functions at local, national, and global levels, making it highly interconnected.

- ♦ Institutions and governance structures play a major role in shaping environmental outcomes.

- ♦ Citizens, social movements, and civil society organisations actively influence environmental decisions.

- ♦ Urgent global challenges like climate change and biodiversity loss have increased its importance.

- ♦ The discipline combines both technical solutions and value-based reflections about human–nature relations.

Objective Questions

1. Who described environmental politics as the process of organising societies to respond to ecological values?

2. Which scholar focused on the contestation over environmental goods and bads?

3. Who defined environmental politics as "the study of the political processes and institutions involved in the regulation of the relationship between human beings and the natural environment"?

4. Which international body defined environmental politics as the process of integrating ecological protection into development planning?

5. Which concept stresses fairness in sharing environmental benefits and burdens?

6. Which characteristic of environmental politics highlights its operation at global, national, and local levels?

7. Which characteristic points out the need to integrate ecology with values, ethics, and duties?

8. What is the principle that requires action even in the absence of full scientific certainty?

9. Which dimension stresses the active role of local communities and civil society in environmental decision-making?

10. Which scholar highlighted that environmental politics is about agenda-setting and public debate?

Answers

1. John Dryzek

2. Robyn Eckersley

3. Andrew Dobson

4. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

5.   Distributional conflicts

6.   Multi-level character of environmental politics

7.   Normative orientation

8.   Precautionary principle

9.   Participatory dimension

10. Robert Garner

Assignments

1.   Explain how different scholars define environmental politics.

2.   Discuss the significance of the interdisciplinary nature of environmental politics.

3.   Analyse the importance of participation in environmental decision-making.

4.   Examine the role of distributional conflicts in shaping environmental politics.

5.   Analyse how judicial activism has influenced environmental politics in India.

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4.   Guha, R., & Gadgil, M. (1995). *Ecology and equity: The use and abuse of nature in contemporary India*. Routledge

Suggested Readings

1. Carter, N. (2018). *The politics of the environment: Ideas, activism, policy* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

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2
UNIT

Historical Development

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be:

♦ trace the evolution of environmental consciousness from early conservationist ideas to contemporary debates

♦ examine the historical context in which environmental politics emerged as a recognised field

♦ understand the institutionalisation of environmental policy at the national and international levels

♦ explain India's contribution to the development of environmental politics and related policy frameworks

Prerequisites

The roots of environmental politics lie in traditional societies that valued conservation and harmony with nature. This balance was deeply disturbed by the Industrial Revolution, which triggered large-scale ecological degradation. In the twentieth century, growing scientific evidence and public movements transformed environmental concerns into political debates. Milestones such as the Stockholm Conference (1972) and the Rio Earth Summit (1992) gave global visibility to these issues and shaped international agreements. India too played an active role through legal measures, popular movements, and international negotiations. Studying this history helps us understand how ecological issues have become central to political life worldwide.

Keywords

Conservation, Industrialisation, Ecological Degradation, Environmental Movement, Sustainable Development, Global Environmental Governance

Discussion

The history of environmental politics is, in many ways, the history of how societies have understood and managed their ties with nature. For a long time, communities relied on customs, cultural beliefs, and local institutions to guide the use of land, water, and forests. These practices often helped to maintain a balance with the environment. With the rise of industrialisation, however, this balance was disrupted. Factories, cities, and new technologies placed enormous pressures on ecosystems and created problems that could no longer be managed at the local level. Gradually, environmental issues began to enter the realm of public policy and political debate.

In the twentieth century, environmental politics developed as a distinct field of thought and action. Concerns over pollution, deforestation, and species loss gained wider attention, supported by scientific studies and the rise of social movements. International milestones such as the Stockholm Conference of 1972 and the Rio Earth Summit of 1992 gave global visibility to these concerns. They encouraged governments to adopt treaties, establish new institutions, and paved the way for the rise of Green political parties.

This historical journey shows how environmental politics has grown from limited questions of conservation and pollution control to broader debates linking ecology with development, justice, and global governance. Understanding this background is essential to recognising why environmental issues have become central to contemporary political life and why earlier struggles continue to influence today's challenges.

1.2.1 Early Conservationist Ideas and Pre-Industrial Notions of Human–Nature Relations

The foundations of environmental politics can be traced back to pre-industrial societies, which developed various norms, practices and moral beliefs that sought to maintain a balance between human needs and natural processes. Although these societies did not possess formal environmental laws in the modern sense, many of them relied on collective forms of resource governance and cultural codes that placed limits on over-exploitation. In several indigenous and agrarian communities, forests, grasslands and water bodies were treated as common resources managed through shared rules and mutual obligations. These rules were not enforced by central authorities but were built into local customs, village institutions and religious beliefs.

In India, sacred groves (kavus, devarakadu, or sarna) were protected by local communities as part of their religious and ethical traditions. Cutting trees or hunting in these areas was considered a moral violation. Similar practices existed in many parts of Africa, where certain forests and water sources were considered ancestral property and placed under the protection of community elders. In medieval Europe, royal forests were regulated through strict rules that controlled the use of timber and

game (hunting wild animals for sport). Although these regulations often benefited the ruling elite rather than common people, they still represented a form of early resource management that recognised the need for conservation.

Several philosophers and religious traditions also expressed ideas that later became central to environmental thought. Classical Chinese philosophy, particularly Confucian and Daoist thought, emphasised harmony between humans and nature. In Indian thought, concepts such as *Prithvi* (earth) and *Rta* (cosmic order) reflected a belief in the interdependence of all forms of life. Likewise, Islamic and Judeo-Christian traditions contained ethical injunctions that viewed humans as stewards rather than owners of nature.

These early ideas and practices did not emerge out of a modern ecological consciousness, nor did they result in systematic environmental policies. However, they illustrate that environmental regulation has deep historical roots and has long been embedded in social institutions and cultural values. More importantly, they show that the idea of limits to human action was widely accepted and that ecological stability was often regarded as a condition for social well-being. Historical experience, therefore, prepared the ground for the later emergence of environmental politics when industrialisation fundamentally transformed the scale and intensity of human impact on the environment.

1.2.2 Industrial Revolution and the Emergence of Environmental Degradation

The Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries marked a decisive break in the relationship between human societies and the natural environment. Powered by steam engines, coal mining and mechanised production, industrialisation radically increased the scale of resource extraction and created new forms of pollution. Cities such as Manchester, Birmingham and London experienced rapid growth and became sites of intense industrial activity. The expansion of factories, iron foundries and textile mills produced unprecedented quantities of smoke, soot and chemical effluents. Rivers were used as dumping grounds for industrial waste, while coal combustion polluted the air and generated widespread respiratory diseases. The new urban populations, housed in overcrowded slums with limited sanitation, experienced severe environmental and public health crises.

This period was also marked by the systematic exploitation of natural resources in colonial territories. Large tracts of forests were cleared in Asia, Africa and Latin America to meet the timber and plantation needs of European industries. In India, colonial forestry laws were introduced primarily to secure timber for railway construction and military purposes, which disrupted traditional systems of forest use and alienated local communities from their own ecological resources. Thus, environmental degradation became directly linked to both industrial capitalism and colonial expansion.

The destructive side effects of industrialisation led to the emergence of early critiques of industrial modernity. Social critics such as John Ruskin and William Morris argued that industrial society had not only destroyed nature but also undermined human health, beauty and dignity. In Britain, the Public Health Act of 1848 and the Smoke Nuisance Abatement Act of 1853 were introduced to address pollution and protect urban populations. These measures were limited in scope, but they reflected a growing recognition that the state had a responsibility to regulate the environmental impacts of industrial activity.

The environmental consequences of the Industrial Revolution, therefore, played a crucial role in the emergence of modern environmental politics. They shifted ecological issues from the realm of local custom to the sphere of public policy and exposed the limits of unregulated economic growth. The need for political intervention in environmental matters became clearly visible for the first time, laying the foundations for later legislation, public movements and broader debates on the relationship between economy, society and nature.

1.2.3 Rise of Modern Environmental Movements (1960s–1970s)

The modern environmental movement emerged during the 1960s and 1970s as a response to the ecological impacts of post-war industrial expansion and technological development. Unlike earlier conservation initiatives, which focused mainly on protecting particular species or scenic landscapes, the new movements raised broader questions about the sustainability of industrial society and the long-term consequences of pollution, chemical use and unchecked economic growth. One of the most influential texts of this period was Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), which exposed the dangers of pesticides such as DDT and sparked widespread public concern regarding the toxic effects of industrial agriculture.

Across the United States, Europe and Japan, civic groups began mobilising around issues such as river pollution, air quality, nuclear testing and the disposal of hazardous waste. The first "Earth Day" was organised in 1970 in the United States and attracted millions of participants, making it clear that environmental deterioration had become a matter of broad public interest rather than the concern of a few specialists. In many countries, student groups, scientists, trade unions and churches joined hands with grassroots organisations to demand stricter legislation and more accountable state action.

Silent Spring, written by Rachel Carson in 1962, is remembered as a milestone in creating public awareness about the environment. The book explained in simple but powerful words how pesticides, especially when used carelessly, were poisoning birds, animals, and even human beings. Because Carson combined scientific facts with a style that ordinary readers could understand, the book reached a wide audience and soon became a bestseller. It influenced governments to place stricter controls on pesticides and encouraged people to think critically about industrial practices that harmed nature. Its message continues to inspire environmental action today and is still regarded as one of the most important works on sustainability and ecological responsibility.

Another characteristic of this period was the increasing mistrust of technological solutions to environmental problems. Movements argued that scientific progress and economic growth could no longer be accepted as inherently positive, as they often generated irreversible ecological harm. The slogan "think globally, act locally" captured the understanding that environmental issues were both local and global, and that grassroots action was essential for protecting the environment. In Japan, the Minamata disease protests (triggered by mercury pollution in the 1950s and 1960s) became a landmark example of citizen resistance against industrial negligence.

By the late 1970s, many national governments had created ministries of the environment and enacted comprehensive environmental legislation. The rise of modern environmental movements thus transformed citizen awareness into

institutional change and paved the way for the emergence of environmental politics as a recognised field within policy-making and political theory. It also introduced new ideas such as environmental justice, ecological citizenship and limits to growth, which continue to influence contemporary debates.

1.2.4 Stockholm Conference (1972) and the Institutionalisation of Global Environmental Policy

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, marked a turning point in the history of environmental politics. It was the first major international gathering where governments from both industrialised and developing countries formally acknowledged that ecological problems were global in nature and required collective action. The conference brought together representatives from 113 countries and resulted in the Stockholm Declaration, which articulated the principle that environmental protection and economic development must be pursued together.

One of the key achievements of the Stockholm Conference was the recognition that environmental issues could no longer be treated as purely national concerns. The Declaration emphasised that "the protection and improvement of the human environment is a major issue which affects the well-being of people and economic development throughout the world." This shift in perspective helped create a new normative framework within which environmental issues were discussed at the international level.

Another major outcome was the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the first global institutional mechanism devoted to coordinating international environmental action. UNEP was given the task of monitoring global environmental conditions, promoting information exchange and supporting the development of international environmental agreements. Its creation helped institutionalise environmental policy within the United Nations system and laid the groundwork for later conventions on climate change, biodiversity and hazardous wastes.

The Stockholm Conference also highlighted the North–South divide in environmental politics. Developing countries argued that environmental protection should not come at the cost of their development and insisted that developed countries, which had historically caused the majority of pollution, should bear a larger responsibility. This led to the introduction of the idea of "common but differentiated responsibilities," which later became central to international environmental negotiations.

By bringing environmental concerns onto the global political agenda and creating the first international institutions for environmental policy, the Stockholm Conference played a crucial role in transforming environmental awareness into formal international cooperation. It set the stage for future global summits and marked the beginning of *global environmental governance* as a permanent feature of world politics.

1.2.5 Evolution of Environmental Legislation in Developed and Developing Countries

Following the awareness generated by the Stockholm Conference, many countries began to adopt more systematic and legally binding approaches to environmental protection. In the industrialised world, the 1970s witnessed the creation of comprehensive regulatory frameworks designed to control pollution and conserve natural resources. In the United States, landmark legislation such as the Clean Air Act (1970), Clean Water Act (1972) and the Endangered Species Act (1973) established strict standards and created specialised agencies like the

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to enforce them. These laws introduced principles of environmental impact assessment, mandatory emission controls and penalties for environmental violations.

European countries also adopted new regulations to tackle industrial pollution and protect biodiversity. Germany introduced its Federal Nature Conservation Act (1976) and strengthened regulations on air pollution, while Sweden and the Netherlands developed advanced systems of integrated environmental planning. The European Economic Community (now European Union) adopted collective directives on water quality, waste management and industrial emissions, creating a regional framework for environmental governance.

Developing countries, meanwhile, began integrating environmental concerns into their national development plans, although often at a slower pace due to resource constraints and competing development priorities. In India, the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act was passed in 1974, followed by the Forest Conservation Act (1980) and the Environment (Protection) Act (1986), which provided a broad legal basis for regulating industrial pollution and protecting ecologically sensitive areas. Countries such as Brazil and Kenya adopted national environment policies, established protected areas and created ministries of environment responsible for coordinating environmental programmes.

Despite these developments, a significant difference remained between developed and developing countries in terms of implementation and enforcement capacity. While industrialised countries had stronger institutions and financial resources to monitor compliance, many developing countries struggled with inadequate budgets, administrative weakness and

lack of technical expertise. This often led to "paper laws" that were not fully implemented on the ground. Nevertheless, the spread of legislation indicated a growing recognition that environmental protection was a legitimate function of the state and had to be incorporated into the broader framework of national governance.

1.2.6 Emergence of Green Parties and Ecological Political Thought

The growing concern over environmental degradation during the 1970s gradually gave rise not only to social movements but also to new forms of political organisation. In several countries, citizens who were active in environmental campaigns began to feel that traditional political parties were not properly addressing ecological issues. This led to the formation of Green parties, the first of which appeared in New Zealand in 1972, followed by the Green Party in West Germany in 1980. These parties introduced environmental concerns directly into the electoral arena and linked them with wider demands for participatory democracy, social justice and non-violent forms of politics. Their programmes emphasised the idea that environmental protection could not be treated as a marginal issue and needed to be integrated into all areas of government policy.

At the same time, political theorists began to develop new approaches, which later came to be known as ecological political thought. Scholars such as Robyn Eckersley, Andrew Dobson and John Dryzek criticised the anthropocentric worldview of mainstream political theory - that is, the assumption that only human interests matter. They argued that environmental politics requires a rethinking of the relationship between humans and nature, and the recognition that non-human species, ecosystems and future generations also have legitimate claims. Green political

theory also introduced concepts such as ecological citizenship, which assigns duties to citizens not only toward other people, but also toward nature.

This development marked a shift from viewing the environment as an external object to seeing it as an interconnected system that shapes and limits political possibilities. In this sense, the emergence of Green parties and ecological political thought widened the scope of political debate and challenged the growth-centred logic of conventional politics. It also provided the intellectual foundations for later discussions on sustainable development, climate justice and planetary boundaries.

1.2.7 Rio Summit (1992), Agenda 21 and the Sustainable Development Discourse

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, marked a major milestone in the evolution of environmental politics. It expanded the scope of international cooperation by linking ecological protection with social and economic development on a global scale. Unlike the Stockholm Conference, which mainly focused on pollution and conservation, the Rio Summit introduced the concept of sustainable development as the guiding principle for balancing economic growth, environmental protection and social equity.

One of the key outcomes of the conference was Agenda 21, a comprehensive global action plan aimed at guiding national governments, international agencies and local authorities toward sustainable development. It covered a wide range of topics, from forest management and biodiversity protection to poverty eradication and public participation. Countries were encouraged to formulate national strategies that integrated environmental considerations into their development planning and to adopt participatory approaches through which communities could take part in decision-making.

The Rio Summit also produced two legally binding international conventions: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The CBD sought to conserve the diversity of plant and animal species and ensure the fair sharing of benefits arising from their use, while the UNFCCC aimed at stabilising greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. For the first time, states acknowledged climate change as an urgent international issue and agreed to develop measures to address it collectively.

The Rio Conference also strengthened the discussion around the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities". It recognised that while all countries share the duty of protecting the environment, developed countries have greater historical responsibility for environmental degradation and should therefore provide financial and technical assistance to developing nations.

With the Rio Summit, environmental politics became firmly integrated into global development policy. Sustainable development emerged as a central concept, influencing later international agreements and national strategies. The conference also encouraged the participation of non-state actors, including NGOs and indigenous groups, thereby widening the arena of international environmental politics and setting the stage for more inclusive forms of global governance.

1.2.8 Climate Change Politics and the Rise of Global Climate Governance

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, climate change became the central focus of global environmental politics. Scientific evidence presented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) showed that the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere-primarily from the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation and industrial processes-was causing global warming and triggering extreme weather events. As the scale and urgency of the problem became more widely recognised, states began to negotiate formal agreements aimed at limiting global emissions and coordinating national actions.

The first major step in this direction came with the Kyoto Protocol of 1997, which established binding emission reduction targets for industrialised countries. Although the United States later withdrew and some countries failed to meet their targets, the Kyoto Protocol marked an important shift by turning climate change from a scientific issue into a matter of international law and state responsibility. The period that followed saw the emergence of a more complex system of climate governance involving not only national governments, but also city networks, scientific communities, private corporations and civil society organisations.

A major advancement was the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015 under the framework of the UNFCCC. Unlike the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement applied to all countries and required them to submit nationally determined contributions outlining how they would reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. It also set the long-term goal of keeping global temperature rise well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C. The agreement introduced a system of transparency and review to ensure that countries update their commitments every five years.

Climate politics is characterised by strong tensions between developed and developing countries. Developing countries argue that they have contributed less to historical emissions and therefore should not bear the same burden of reduction, while developed countries contend that meaningful global action is not possible without participation from rapidly industrialising nations such as China and India. These debates have made climate negotiations highly complex and politically sensitive. At the same time, climate change politics has given rise to new forms of international cooperation, such as technology transfer mechanisms, climate finance for adaptation, and platforms for indigenous and local voices.

Global climate governance illustrates how environmental politics now extends beyond traditional diplomacy, requiring continuous negotiation between states, scientific communities, civil society and the private sector. It also shows that environmental issues are closely linked to questions of global justice, development and economic restructuring.

1.2.9 Environmental Movements and Policy Development in India

Environmental politics in India has followed a distinctive trajectory shaped by its colonial history, democratic institutions and socio-economic diversity. Since the 1970s, a series of popular environmental movements have played a crucial role in placing ecological issues on the national political agenda and in influencing state policy. These movements often emerged in response to very concrete local problems-deforestation,

displacement by dams, loss of access to common resources-but gradually developed a broader critique of state-led development strategies.

One of the earliest and most influential examples is the Chipko Movement, which began in the Garhwal Himalayas in 1973. Faced with commercial logging contracts issued by the state, villagers (led largely by women) resorted to hugging trees to prevent them from being cut down. Their protest drew national attention and led to restrictions on the felling of Himalayan forests. In the late 1970s, the Silent Valley movement in Kerala mobilised scientists, students and local communities against a proposed hydropower project that threatened one of the oldest tropical rainforests in India. The campaign succeeded in persuading the central government to cancel the project and to declare the area a national park.

The Narmada Bachao Andolan, which emerged during the 1980s and 1990s, raised fundamental questions about the social and ecological costs of large dams. Led by Medha Patkar and others, the movement brought together displaced adivasi (tribal) communities, farmers and urban supporters to challenge the construction of dams on the Narmada river, arguing that they caused displacement, loss of agricultural land and long-term ecological damage. Instead of focusing only on compensation, the movement questioned the idea that large-scale infrastructure automatically leads to development. It therefore widened the scope of environmental politics in India by linking it to questions of social justice and democratic decision-making.

At the same time, important changes were taking place at the level of policy. Following the Stockholm Conference, India established a Department of Environment in 1980, which was upgraded to a full Ministry of Environment and Forests in 1985. The Environment (Protection) Act of 1986 gave the central government extensive powers to regulate industrial activity and protect ecologically fragile areas. The policy framework was further strengthened by the Biological Diversity Act (2002), National Forest Policy (1988) and a number of rules relating to coastal regulation, waste management and wildlife protection.

Equally important has been the role of the Indian judiciary, particularly through public interest litigation. The Supreme Court has delivered several landmark judgments, such as the Vellore Leather Industry pollution case and the Ganga pollution case, which recognised the right to a clean and healthy environment as part of the fundamental right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution. These rulings played a major role in compelling both state authorities and private companies to comply with environmental standards.

Together, these movements and policies illustrate that environmental politics in India has evolved through a combination of grassroots activism, judicial intervention and policy reforms. They also show that environmental issues in India cannot be separated from questions of livelihood, equity and democratic participation.

1.2.10 Recent Trends – Youth Activism, Environmental Justice and Climate Resilience

In recent years, environmental politics has entered a new phase marked by the rise of youth-led initiatives, increasing attention to environmental justice, and a strong focus on climate resilience. One of the most visible developments has been the mobilisation of young people around climate change. Inspired by Greta Thunberg's school strike in 2018, students across the world, including in India, have organised marches and campaigns under the banner of 'Fridays for Future'. These

initiatives emphasise that climate change is not only an environmental issue but a matter of intergenerational justice, because its consequences will be felt most severely by future generations. Youth activism has increased public pressure on governments to adopt stronger mitigation and adaptation policies and introduced a moral language into political debates on climate change.

At the same time, the concept of environmental justice has gained prominence both in academic discussions and within social movements. Environmental justice draws attention to the unequal distribution of environmental harms and benefits among different social groups. Marginalised communities-such as indigenous peoples, Dalits or residents of informal urban settlements-often bear a disproportionate share of pollution, displacement and resource loss. In India, for example, tribal populations have been repeatedly displaced by mining and dam projects, while urban poor communities live in areas that are most vulnerable to floods, heat waves and industrial pollution. Environmental justice movements, therefore, argue that environmental protection must go hand in hand with social equity and participatory decision-making.

Another important trend has been the growing emphasis on climate resilience, which refers to the capacity of communities and ecosystems to cope with and recover from climate-related shocks such as floods, droughts, cyclones and sea-level rise. This has become especially important for countries like India, where climate impacts are already visible and are expected to intensify in the coming decades. Policies are now being designed to strengthen local adaptive capacity, build climate-resilient infrastructure and develop early warning systems. Community-based disaster management and ecosystem restoration (such as mangrove regeneration in coastal areas) are increasingly being recognised as key components of resilience-building.

These recent developments indicate that environmental politics is moving beyond traditional concerns with pollution control and conservation. It now includes questions of social justice, ethical responsibility, intergenerational equity and community-based adaptation. The growing involvement of youth, the articulation of environmental justice, and the emphasis on resilience reflect a more inclusive and multidimensional understanding of environmental governance.

Environmental politics has evolved through a long and dynamic historical process. From early conservationist ideas and local customs regulating common resources, it gradually emerged as a response to the large-scale ecological disruption caused by the Industrial Revolution. The rise of modern environmental movements in the 1960s and 1970s translated public concern into organised action and helped institution alise environmental policy at national and international levels.

Global conferences such as Stockholm a nd Rio broadened the scope of environmental politics and linked ecological protection with social and economic development. Over time, environmental legislation developed across both developed and developing countries, while the emergence of Green parties and ecological thought challenged the dominant growth-centred model of politics. Climate change transformed environmental politics into a complex field of global governance, requiring long-term cooperation and democratic participation across borders. In the Indian context, people's movements, judicial activism and state–society engagement made environmental issues an integral part of development debates. More recently, youth activism, environmental justice and the concept of climate resilience have added new dimensions to the field.

Taken together, these developments show that environmental politics is an evolving and multifaceted arena that continues to respond to new challenges and ideas.

Recap

1. Early societies maintained conservationist practices through customs and traditions.

2. Industrialisation disrupted this balance and created serious ecological problems.

3. By the twentieth century, environmental issues became a matter of political concern.

4. The Stockholm Conference of 1972 marked the global recognition of environmental issues.

5. The Rio Earth Summit of 1992 institutionalised sustainable development.

6. Green parties emerged as political platforms for ecological concerns.

7. India created institutions like the Department and Ministry of Environment to address ecological challenges.

8. Today, environmental politics connects ecology with justice, democracy, and governance at all levels.

Objective Questions

1. Which global event in 1972 marked the beginning of modern environmental politics?

2. Which 1992 conference institutionalised sustainable development?

3. Which report warned of ecological collapse due to unchecked growth?

4. Which Indian movement used tree-hugging as a form of protest?

5. Which law empowered the Indian government to regulate pollution and protect sensitive areas?

6. Which Indian campaign successfully opposed the Silent Valley hydropower project?

7. Which international organisation prepares scientific assessment reports on climate change?

8. Which movement opposed large dams on the Narmada River?

9. In which year was India's Department of Environment set up?

10. Which principle means unequal but fair division of climate responsibilities between nations?

Answers

1. Stockholm Conference

2. Rio Earth Summit

3. Limits to Growth (1972, Club of Rome)

4. Chipko Movement

5. Environment (Protection) Act, 1986

6. Silent Valley Movement

7. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

8. Narmada Bachao Andolan

9. 1980

10. Common but Differentiated Responsibilities

Assignments

1. Trace the evolution of environmental politics from pre-industrial societies to the present.

2. Analyse the impact of the Industrial Revolution on environmental governance.

3. Discuss the importance of the 1972 Stockholm Conference for global environmental politics.

4. Evaluate the role of the 1992 Rio Summit in shaping sustainable development.

5. Compare the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement.

6. Examine the role of Green political parties in the evolution of environmental politics.

7. Assess the contributions of Indian environmental movements to global debates.

8. Analyse the role of youth activism in shaping contemporary environmental politics.

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Suggested Readings

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3 UNIT

Key Concepts and Theories

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be:

- ◆ explain the major conceptual foundations of environmental politics

- ◆ differentiate between theoretical perspectives such as ecologism, deep ecology, and ecological modernisation.

- ◆ analyse how political theory has responded to the environmental crisis

- ◆ examine the normative assumptions that shape the key concepts in environmental debates.

- ◆ evaluate the relevance of these theories to current environmental issues

Prerequisites

Environmental politics has developed a range of concepts and theories to explain how human beings relate to nature. Ecologism challenges conventional politics by making ecological limits central to decision-making. Deep ecology stresses the intrinsic worth of all forms of life, beyond their utility to humans. Political ecology examines how power and inequality shape environmental change and access to resources. Theories like ecological modernisation and sustainable development argue for reforms through technology, policy, and balanced growth. Understanding these approaches helps students see how environmental debates are grounded in values as well as practical solutions.

Keywords

Ecologism, Sustainable Development, Deep Ecology, Political Ecology, Ecological Modernisation, Environmental Justice

Discussion

Environmental politics has emerged as one of the most dynamic fields of political inquiry in recent decades. As societies confront the realities of ecological degradation, climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource scarcity, political theory has been compelled to respond with new concepts and frameworks. Traditional approaches-focused primarily on state power, economic growth, and security-have often treated the environment as an external issue. In contrast, environmental politics insists that ecological concerns are inseparable from questions of justice, democracy, and governance.

Within this field, a range of key concepts and theories has developed to make sense of the relationship between humans, nature, and political institutions. Ideas such as sustainable development, ecological limits, climate justice, global governance, and ecologism provide the conceptual foundation for debates on how societies should organise themselves within planetary boundaries. Theoretical approaches- ranging from liberal environmentalism and green political theory to critical perspectives like eco-socialism and eco-feminism-offer diverse ways of linking ecological concerns with values such as equality, freedom, and responsibility. Studying these concepts and theories allows us to see how environmental politics is not only about policy reforms but also about reimagining the ethical and institutional foundations of political life in the Anthropocene.

1.3.1 Environmentalism as a Political Ideology

Environmentalism began as a loose collection of public concerns about pollution, resource depletion and the destruction of ecosystems, but over time it developed into a distinct political ideology with its own principles, values and goals. What distinguishes environmentalism from other ideologies is its central claim that the relationship between human societies and the natural environment must become a core concern of political life. Rather than treating environmental degradation as a secondary or technical issue, environmentalism argues that political institutions, economic systems and development policies should be fundamentally reshaped in accordance with ecological limits.

Scholars generally distinguish between classical environmentalism and new environmentalism. Classical environmentalism emerged in the post-war period and was focused mainly on the conservation of specific habitats, the control of pollution and the introduction of environmental regulations by the state. It often relied on expert knowledge and assumed that environmental problems could be solved through better planning and legislation without challenging the basic structure of industrial society.

By contrast, new environmentalism, especially since the 1970s, has questioned the social and economic foundations of

modern development. It views environmental problems as rooted in consumerism, the pursuit of unlimited economic growth and the unequal distribution of resources. New environmentalism argues that environmental issues are inseparable from social justice, democratic participation and the rights of communities over natural resources. In this sense, it goes beyond conservation and calls for a reorientation of political priorities.

Several core ideas run through environmentalist thought. One is the principle of limits-the belief that there are biophysical boundaries that human activity must not exceed. Another is interdependence, which emphasises that environmental and social systems are deeply interconnected and that degradation in one sphere will ultimately affect the other. Environmentalism also stresses responsibility - particularly the responsibility of present generations toward future generations and non-human life. These ideas have led to the demand for new forms of politics that are participatory, locally rooted and ecologically sensitive.

As a political ideology, environmentalism has influenced the formation of Green parties across the world and has helped reshape development discourse at both the national and international levels. It challenges the traditional separation between "nature" and "politics" and proposes that the environment should be seen as a central and legitimate sphere of political decision-making.

1.3.2 Environmental Governance and the Role of the State

Environmental governance refers to the processes and institutions through which societies manage natural resources and resolve environmental problems. At the centre of these processes is the role of the state, which has the authority to make and enforce laws, develop policies and coordinate collective action. Environmental politics recognises that ecological issues cannot be left to the market or to individual behaviour alone, but require public intervention and regulation. The state becomes a key actor in setting environmental standards, monitoring compliance and balancing competing interests in the use of natural resources.

In most countries, national governments establish environmental ministries or agencies that are responsible for pollution control, conservation, land use planning and environmental impact assessments. These institutions are expected to create rules that restrict destructive practices and encourage more sustainable forms of production and consumption. For example, the introduction of emission standards for vehicles, strict norms for industrial discharge and protected areas for wildlife are all the result of state-based environmental governance. The state also plays an important role in coordinating the activities of various departments, such as agriculture, industry and energy, to ensure that environmental considerations are integrated across policy areas.

Over time, the understanding of environmental governance has expanded. It no longer refers only to top-down state regulations, but also includes the participation of non-state actors such as local communities, civil society organisations and the private sector. This broader approach emphasises that effective environmental governance requires cooperation between different levels of government (national, regional and local) and the meaningful involvement of citizens in decision-making. Many countries have introduced forms of participatory planning, public hearings and community-based resource management as part of their environmental policies.

Nevertheless, the state remains the central authority with legal powers to implement and enforce environmental laws.

Its role becomes even more important in the context of environmental conflicts, where different actors have competing interests. In such situations, the state is expected to act as a mediator and to ensure that environmental decisions are taken in the broader public interest. Environmental governance, therefore, involves not only the technical management of resources but also the exercise of power, the negotiation of interests and the application of legal authority.

1.3.3 Environmental Policy and Regulatory Frameworks

Environmental policy refers to the set of principles, rules and instruments used by governments to manage environmental issues and guide the behaviour of individuals, businesses and public institutions. Regulatory frameworks represent the legal and administrative mechanisms through which these policies are implemented. In environmental politics, policy-making is seen as a key arena where political will, scientific knowledge and social interests come together to produce decisions on how natural resources should be used and protected.

Most environmental policies begin with the identification of a specific problem, such as water pollution, deforestation or the loss of biodiversity and the recognition that collective action is required to address it. Governments then design regulations that set standards and limits for acceptable behaviour. For example, limits on industrial emissions into rivers, restrictions on the use of certain pesticides, or rules for the disposal of solid waste. These regulations are backed by monitoring systems, licensing procedures and penalties for non-compliance. In many countries, environmental impact assessments are also mandatory for large development projects in order to evaluate potential ecological damage before approval is granted.

Over time, environmental policy has expanded from traditional "command-and-control" regulation to include a wider range of instruments such as economic incentives, public information campaigns and voluntary agreements. Economic tools may include taxes on pollution, subsidies for renewable energy or market-based mechanisms such as carbon trading. Public participation has also become an important element in policy design, not only to ensure transparency but also to improve the legitimacy and effectiveness of environmental decisions.

Regulatory frameworks vary significantly between countries, depending on their political systems, administrative capacity and socio-economic priorities. In many developing countries, the challenge is not the absence of environmental laws, but the lack of effective enforcement. Weak institutions, limited funding and conflicting policy goals often make implementation difficult. This gap between legislation and practice is an important theme in environmental politics and demonstrates that policy-making is not simply a technical exercise, but a deeply political process involving negotiation, compromise and the exercise of power.

Ecologism and environmentalism

Ecologism and environmentalism are two key terms in environmental politics, but they represent different levels of political and philosophical commitment to environmental issues.

Environmentalism can be described as a reformist approach. It generally accepts the existing political, economic, and social systems but seeks to integrate environmental concerns into them. Environmentalists work to mitigate environmental problems, such as pollution, deforestation, or climate change, by advocating for new laws, better technology,

and more efficient management of resources. The goal is to make the current system more sustainable without fundamentally changing its core values, such as economic growth and consumerism. An example of environmentalism would be a campaign to reduce plastic waste through recycling programs or a push for a carbon tax.

Ecologism, in contrast, is a more radical ideology. It argues that the environmental crisis is not just a problem to be fixed with new policies but is a symptom of a deeper crisis in human values and social structures. Ecologists believe that a fundamental transformation of society is necessary. They often challenge the core tenets of modern industrial society, such as anthropocentrism (the belief that humans are the most important entity), unlimited economic growth, and materialism. The goal is to create a society that is in harmony with nature, often involving a shift towards smaller, decentralised communities, a focus on local economies, and a change in individual lifestyles. Think of movements that advocate for degrowth or the promotion of a completely different way of life, not just for a different kind of policy.

In short, while both are concerned with the environment, environmentalism works within the system, while ecologism seeks to transform it completely.

1.3.4 Ecological Modernisation Theory

Ecological modernisation is a theoretical perspective that emerged in the 1980s, mainly in Europe, as a response to growing concerns about industrial pollution and environmental degradation. Unlike more radical environmental views that call for a fundamental restructuring of industrial society, ecological modernisation argues that environmental protection and economic development can be made compatible through technological innovation, market reforms and effective regulation. It is a reform-oriented approach that seeks to "modernise" the economy in ways that reduce its ecological impact.

According to this theory, environmental problems are not inevitable consequences of industrialisation, but the result of outdated technologies and inefficient production practices. With the right incentives and policy frameworks, businesses can adopt cleaner technologies and improve resource efficiency in ways that also make economic sense. Examples include renewable energy systems, energy-efficient manufacturing processes and closed-loop production systems that recycle waste materials. In this view, environmental policy should not be seen as a constraint on economic growth but as an opportunity for innovation and long-term competitiveness.

Ecological modernisation also emphasises the role of the state in creating the conditions for sustainable development. Governments are expected to establish clear regulations and standards, provide incentives for environmental research and innovation, and facilitate cooperation between industry, civil society and research institutions. A key assumption of this theory is that environmental goals are most effectively achieved when state regulation is combined with market-based instruments and voluntary agreements. In practice, this has led to the use of environmental taxes, tradable emission permits and corporate environmental reporting as part of environmental policy.

Critics argue that ecological modernisation underestimates the structural nature of environmental problems and places too much faith in technology and markets. They point out that not all environmental impacts can be addressed through efficiency improvements, and that continuous economic growth may ultimately exceed the planet's carrying capacity. Nonetheless, ecologic

al modernisation remains an influential perspective in environmental politics, especially within policy-making circles, because it offers a pragmatic strategy that promises environmental improvement without requiring a radical transformation of society.

1.3.5 Political Ecology

Political ecology is a critical approach that examines the relationship between environmental change and power. It emerged as an interdisciplinary field combining insights from political science, geography, anthropology and sociology. Unlike theories that treat environmental problems mainly as technical or managerial issues, political ecology emphasises that ecological degradation is closely linked to social inequality, economic exploitation and political conflict. It argues that environmental issues cannot be understood without analysing who controls natural resources, who benefits from their use and who bears the costs of environmental damage.

Political ecologists point out that many forms of environmental degradation are not accidental but are produced by unequal power relations at local, national and global levels. For example, large-scale mining projects may generate profits for private companies and the state, while displacing local communities and destroying their livelihoods. Similarly, decisions about land use often reflect the interests of politically influential actors rather than the needs of ordinary citizens. In this way, environmental problems become deeply intertwined with questions of class, caste, gender and ethnicity.

A key contribution of political ecology is its focus on the role of the state and global economic structures in shaping local environmental outcomes. It shows how policies imposed by central governments or international institutions can undermine traditional systems of resource management and increase the vulnerability of marginalised groups. Political ecology also highlights the importance of resistance and agency, examining how local communities mobilise to defend their rights and challenge environmentally harmful projects.

By drawing attention to the political roots of ecological problems, political ecology calls for a more democratic and just form of environmental governance. It suggests that effective solutions must include the participation of affected communities, the recognition of their knowledge and rights, and a fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. In this way, political ecology broadens the scope of environmental politics by placing issues of power, inequality and justice at the centre of ecological debates.

1.3.6 Environmental Justice and Distributional Politics

Environmental justice has emerged as one of the most significant conceptual and political developments within environmental thought. Unlike earlier conservationist approaches, which tended to treat the environment as a space to be preserved or managed in isolation from questions of social equality, environmental justice insists that the environment is inseparably tied to issues of power, fairness, and distribution. It argues that the benefits of a healthy environment and the burdens of ecological harm are not shared equally but instead follow existing lines of class, caste, race, and global inequality.

The idea gained prominence during the 1980s in the United States, when African American communities mobilised against toxic waste dumping in their neighbourhoods, framing their struggle not only as environmental but also as civil rights issues. In the Global South, especially in India, movements such as the Narmada Bachao

Andolan and resistance against industrial pollution highlighted how large-scale development projects disproportionately displaced and harmed poor and marginalised groups. Environmental justice thus challenges the dominant growth-oriented paradigm by exposing how ecological degradation often translates into social injustice.

At the core of environmental justice lies the recognition that environmental questions cannot be addressed without simultaneously addressing political and economic inequalities. This means that policies framed in purely technical terms- such as emission standards or conservation schemes-often fail if they ignore who bears the cost and who reaps the benefits. For example, relocating industries away from wealthy urban centres often results in their concentration in poorer peri-urban areas, transferring risks rather than eliminating them. Environmental justice, therefore, calls for a rethinking of governance structures to ensure inclusiveness and fairness in ecological decision-making.

Three central principles define environmental justice debates. The first is equity in distribution, which highlights that environmental goods such as clean air, water, and green spaces must be shared fairly, and environmental burdens such as waste disposal, toxic industries, or displacement should not be disproportionately imposed on weaker communities. The second is recognition of social differences, which stresses that the needs and vulnerabilities of groups such as women, indigenous peoples, or the urban poor must be acknowledged in policy frameworks. The third is participation in decision-making, which argues that affected communities must have a voice in shaping environmental outcomes rather than being treated as passive recipients of state or corporate decisions.

At the international level, environmental justice intersects with distributional politics in debates over climate change and sustainable development. Developing countries argue that they should not be forced to follow the same emission reduction paths as developed nations, given their lower historical contribution to greenhouse gases and greater development needs. This is captured in the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" in climate treaties. Within nations, too, questions of justice arise in relation to land acquisition, industrial siting, and resource use, where marginalised groups often pay the heaviest price for projects that primarily benefit elites.

The normative foundation of environmental justice lies in its insistence that ecological well-being cannot be detached from social justice. By challenging growth-first models and privileging fairness in ecological distribution, it redefines the meaning of both development and democracy. Rather than treating environmental degradation as a side-effect of progress, it positions it as a matter of justice, rights, and political responsibility. In this way, environmental justice is not simply a descriptive account of inequality but a political project aimed at creating more equitable and sustainable societies.

Environmental justice is thus the principle that no community, regardless of race, class, or socioeconomic status, should be disproportionately burdened by environmental hazards. It highlights how marginalised groups are often exposed to greater risks from pollution, waste, and toxic industries.

Case Study: The Bhopal Gas Tragedy

The Bhopal Gas Tragedy of 1984 is a devastating example of environmental injustice. The Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) pesticide plant was located in a densely populated, low-income area of Bhopal. On the

night of December 2-3, 1984, a massive leak of methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas from the plant killed thousands of people and caused long-term health problems for hundreds of thousands more. The disaster highlighted how poor communities, lacking political and economic power, are often made to live in close proximity to dangerous industrial facilities. The victims, primarily from marginalised communities, faced an unequal burden of the environmental disaster, while the company and legal systems were slow to provide adequate compensation or justice. This event remains a powerful symbol of the need for environmental justice in India and globally.

Ecological Modernization

Ecological modernisation is a theory that suggests capitalism and economic growth can be reconciled with environmental protection. It argues that environmental problems can be solved through technological innovation, market-based mechanisms, and more efficient management, often with the help of corporations and the state.

Case Study: The Critique of "Greenwashing"

The concept of greenwashing serves as a powerful critique of ecological modernisation. Greenwashing is the practice by some companies of presenting a misleadingly "green" public image to appear environmentally friendly, while their core business practices remain environmentally destructive.

A classic example is the fast-fashion industry. Many major brands, while claiming to be "sustainable" or launching "conscious collections" with a few recycled materials, continue to rely on a business model of rapid production, high consumption, and frequent disposal. This model has a massive environmental footprint, contributing to water pollution, textile waste, and high carbon emissions. Critics argue that these greenwashing campaigns are not a genuine commitment to ecological modernisation. Instead, they are a way for corporations to capture the market of environmentally conscious consumers without making the fundamental changes needed to address their negative environmental impacts. This practice illustrates the critique that ecological modernisation can be co-opted by corporate interests, leading to symbolic environmental improvements rather than a deep, systemic transformation.

1.3.7 Green Political Theory and Its Normative Foundations

Green Political Theory (GPT) is a distinctive stream of political thought that places ecological concerns at the very centre of political analysis. While traditional ideologies such as liberalism, socialism, or conservatism have generally treated the natural environment as an external backdrop to human activity, GPT insists that political life must be re-imagined in light of ecological interdependence and environmental limits. It is not simply a call for environmental policy reforms but a theoretical framework that challenges the basic assumptions of modern politics, including notions of progress, justice, and democracy.

The rise of green political thought can be traced to the ecological crises of the 1960s and 1970s, when the logic of unrestrained economic growth came under scrutiny. Books such as Rachel Carson's Silent Spring (1962) and the Club of Rome's report Limits to Growth (1972) exposed the unsustainable trajectory of industrial societies. At the same time, grassroots environmental movements began to articulate a politics that was not confined to technical fixes or pollution control but demanded deeper transformations in values and institutions. These intellectual and political developments together provided the foundations for Green Political Theory as a normative project.

At the heart of GPT is the conviction that human beings are embedded in, rather than separate from, ecological systems. This view stands in contrast to anthropocentric traditions that see nature as a mere instrument for human progress. GPT argues that a viable political community must acknowledge ecological limits and build systems that respect the interdependence of life. This means questioning some of the most basic premises of modernity, including the pursuit of endless economic growth, the domination of nature through technology, and the idea that human needs alone define the value of the environment.

Scholars generally identify several normative foundations of Green Political Theory. The first is the principle of ecocentrism, which challenges the human-centred orientation of most political thought. Ecocentrism stresses that non-human species and ecosystems have intrinsic worth independent of their utility to humans. Thinkers such as Arne Naess, through the philosophy of deep ecology, have argued that recognising this intrinsic value requires radical changes in both personal ethics and public policy.

The second foundation is the principle of justice extended across time and space. GPT emphasises that justice is not limited to current citizens within a nation but must include future generations as well as people in other parts of the globe who are disproportionately affected by ecological degradation. The concept of intergenerational justice insists that present societies have a moral obligation not to compromise the ecological prospects of those yet to be born. Similarly, principles of global environmental justice argue that wealthy industrialised countries bear greater responsibilities due to their historical emissions and consumption patterns.

A third foundation is the emphasis on participatory and ecological democracy. GPT challenges top-down, technocratic solutions to environmental problems and instead calls for more inclusive, decentralised, and participatory forms of governance. Thinkers like John Dryzek highlight the importance of deliberative democracy, where diverse voices, including those of marginalised communities and even "non-human" perspectives, are taken seriously in political decision-making. In practice, this can mean community-based resource management, local control over

environmental decisions, and empowerment of civil society.

Another key normative commitment within GPT is the idea of limits to growth. Unlike liberalism and socialism, which often assume that economic growth is both desirable and possible without end, GPT questions the sustainability of such assumptions. Theorists like Herman Daly have promoted the idea of a steady-state economy, while others argue for post-growth or degrowth pathways that prioritise ecological stability and human well-being over GDP expansion. This shift requires a fundamental rethinking of development, consumption, and the relationship between human societies and the natural world.

Finally, GPT incorporates a strong ethical orientation that links ecology with morality. Robyn Eckersley, for example, has argued for the concept of ecological democracy, in which the rights of nature are embedded within political institutions. This perspective calls for constitutions and laws that recognise not only human rights but also the rights of rivers, forests, and ecosystems to exist and flourish. Such normative commitments extend politics beyond anthropocentric frameworks and open up new ways of thinking about citizenship, rights, and justice.

In conclusion, Green Political Theory is both an analytical framework and a normative project. It analyses the ecological crises of modern industrial societies while also prescribing a vision of politics rooted in ecological responsibility, justice, and participatory democracy. By challenging the dominance of anthropocentrism, growth-oriented development, and hierarchical governance, GPT invites us to imagine new political and ethical horizons where human life is integrated into the broader ecological community. In doing so, it not only deepens our understanding of politics but also points towards more sustainable and equitable futures.

1.3.8 Sustainable Development as a Political Project

The concept of sustainable development (SD) has become one of the most widely used and contested ideas in contemporary politics. At its simplest, it was defined in the Brundtland Report of 1987 as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This formulation gave the term immense appeal: it appeared to reconcile the need for economic growth with the equally urgent need to protect the environment. However, once we move beyond its seemingly consensual language, it becomes clear that sustainable development is not merely a technical or managerial issue but a deeply political project. It reflects struggles over power, justice, and the very meaning of development itself.

The rise of sustainable development must be understood in the context of the ecological crises and debates of the late twentieth century. The 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm had already highlighted the growing tension between industrialisation and ecological limits. The Club of Rome's Limits to Growth report in the same year warned that unchecked economic expansion would lead to ecological collapse. Against this backdrop, the Brundtland Report sought to provide a middle ground by affirming the legitimacy of development while insisting that it must be ecologically viable. The idea gained further momentum with the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, which institutionalised SD as a central principle of international environmental governance.

At its core, sustainable development is about balancing economic, social, and environmental objectives. Yet, these objectives are often in conflict. For instance, rapid industrialisation may generate jobs and income but simultaneously degrade air

and water quality, threatening public health and ecological stability. Political choices must therefore be made about trade-offs, priorities, and distribution of costs and benefits. This is why sustainable development is not a neutral policy tool but a contested terrain of politics.

One of the key principles underpinning sustainable development is the idea of inter-generational justice. This principle extends the boundaries of ethics and politics beyond the present generation, insisting that future generations have a right to a livable planet. It challenges short-term economic rationality and electoral cycles that privilege immediate gains over long-term sustainability. Closely linked to this is the idea of intragenerational justice, which stresses that sustainability must address existing inequalities within and between societies. Developing countries, indigenous communities, and marginalised groups cannot be asked to bear the costs of environmental protection while wealthier groups continue unsustainable consumption.

Another crucial dimension of SD as a political project is the North–South divide in global governance. Developing countries have consistently argued that the historical responsibility for ecological degradation lies with industrialised nations that have emitted the bulk of greenhouse gases and consumed disproportionate resources. Consequently, demands for climate finance, technology transfer, and differentiated responsibilities have become central in international negotiations. Sustainable development, in this sense, is inseparable from questions of global justice and equity.

At the national and local levels, the politics of sustainable development manifests in debates over land, water, energy, and forests. Large-scale projects such as dams, mines, and industrial corridors are often justified in the name of development, but they displace communities, erode biodiversity, and exhaust resources. Civil society movements in India and elsewhere have pointed out that unless development pathways are democratically negotiated and environmentally sensitive, the rhetoric of sustainability can serve as a cover for "business-as-usual" growth. Critics argue that the term has been co-opted by governments and corporations, turning it into a buzzword that legitimises rather than transforms unsustainable practices.

At the same time, sustainable development has also inspired innovative frameworks and policies. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, represent a global agenda that integrates poverty reduction, gender equality, climate action, and ecological protection. Concepts such as renewable energy transitions, circular economies, and green cities illustrate attempts to embed sustainability in concrete strategies. While the effectiveness of these measures is debated, they reveal the transformative potential of sustainable development when pursued with genuine political will.

Normatively, sustainable development requires a redefinition of development itself. Instead of equating progress with GDP growth, it encourages a multidimensional view of well-being that includes ecological integrity, social justice, and quality of life. It demands a shift from extractive and consumption-driven economies to ones that respect ecological boundaries and value community resilience. The project of sustainable development, therefore, extends beyond technical fixes to involve profound cultural, institutional, and ethical changes.

Sustainable development is best understood not as a stable formula but as an ongoing political struggle. Competing visions between growth-oriented models and ecological restraint, between global North and South, between elites and marginalised groups-shape its meaning and practice. As

a political project, it opens up vital debates about justice, responsibility, and the future of human-nature relations. Its promise lies not in offering an easy consensus but in pushing societies to confront hard questions about how to live well within planetary limits.

Key concepts and theories in environmental politics highlight the profound ways in which ecological concerns reshape the terrain of political thought. They move us beyond narrow, technocratic solutions to a recognition that environmental issues are deeply tied to power, justice, and cultural values. By interrogating ideas such as sustainability, ecological citizenship, justice, and governance, we can see that the environment is not a separate policy sector but a constitutive element of how societies function.

Ultimately, environmental politics challenges us to rethink our assumptions about progress, growth, and human–nature relations. Theories in this field provide both critical insights into the limitations of existing systems and normative guidance for creating more just, democratic, and ecologically sustainable futures. In this sense, the study of key concepts and theories in environmental politics is not only academic but also profoundly practical: it equips us with the intellectual tools to address one of the greatest challenges of our time.

Recap

- ♦ Environmental politics has generated new concepts and theories to address human–nature relations.

- ♦ Ecologism treats ecological limits as the foundation of political decision-making.

- ♦ Deep ecology emphasises the intrinsic value of non-human life and ecosystems.

- ♦ Political ecology highlights how environmental problems are shaped by inequality and power.

- ♦ Ecological modernisation argues that technology and reforms can align development with ecology.

- ♦ Environmental justice insists on fair distribution of environmental goods and burdens.

- ♦ Green political theory questions endless economic growth and advocates ecological democracy.

- ♦ Sustainable development seeks to balance economic needs with ecological protection and social equity.

Objective Questions

1. Who developed the philosophy of deep ecology?

2. Which theory attempts to reconcile capitalism with ecological concerns?

3. Which concept is often criticised for leading to "greenwashing"?

4. Which 1987 report gave the most widely accepted definition of sustainable development?

5. Which principle stresses fairness and justice across generations?

6. Which Indian disaster is widely cited as a case study of environmental injustice?

7. Which theory focuses on how unequal power relations shape control over resources?

8. Who is associated with the idea of ecological democracy and the rights of nature?

9. Which concept emphasises balancing economic growth, social needs, and environmental protection?

10. Which movement helped inspire debates on global ecological citizenship?

Answers

1. Arne Naess

2. Ecological Modernisation

3. Ecological Modernisation (in critiques of corporate practices)

4. Brundtland Report (*Our Common Future*, 1987)

5. Intergenerational justice

6. Bhopal Gas Tragedy (1984)

7. Political Ecology

8. Robyn Eckersley

9. Sustainable Development

10. Environmental Justice Movements

Assignments

1. Define ecologism and explain its significance in environmental politics.

2. Discuss the core principles of deep ecology.

3. Explain the concept of political ecology with suitable examples.

4. Analyse the idea of ecological modernisation as a response to environmental crises.

5. Examine how sustainable development integrates ecological and social concerns.

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Suggested Readings

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2

BLOCK

Environmental Politics in India

SGOU - SLM - BA Political Science - Environmental Politics

1 UNIT

History of environmental politics in India

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be:

♦ explain the ecological practices of pre-colonial India and their role in sustainable resource management

♦ analyse the impact of British colonial policies on forests, land, and water systems

♦ evaluate post-independence development strategies and their environmental consequences

♦ understand contemporary environmental politics to global climate change

Prerequisites

Before beginning Unit 1, learners should have a foundational understanding of Indian history, covering the broad timelines of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence periods. Knowledge of how ancient Indian societies were organised, including their social structures, religious traditions, and local governance systems such as village councils, will provide context for understanding traditional ecological practices. A basic familiarity with India's geography—its diverse climate zones, natural resources, river systems, forests, and biodiversity hotspots—will help in grasping the environmental significance of these regions.

It will be valuable for learners studying environmental politics in India to have a foundational understanding of Indian history, including the broad timelines of the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence periods. They should also understand the economic and political motivations behind colonial expansion, particularly the

exploitation of natural resources and the resulting disruption of traditional livelihoods. Additionally, some background in concepts such as sustainability, conservation, natural resource management, and environmental ethics will help them engage more deeply with the unit's themes

Familiarity with global environmental challenges- especially climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainable development, will help learners connect historical trends in India with contemporary environmental debates. Learners should also be comfortable analysing how governance, economic policies, and social movements interact in shaping environmental outcomes.

Keywords

Sacred Groves, Indian Forest Acts, Green Revolution, Displacement, Climate Justice, Panchayats, Ecological Practices, Grassroots Activism, Sustainable Development, Colonial Resource Extraction.

Discussion

2.1.1 Ecological Practices in Pre-Colonial India

The Chola Dynasty (9th-13th Century CE): This South Indian empire was famous for its sophisticated water management. They built a vast network of tanks (reservoirs), canals, and check dams to collect monsoon rainwater for irrigation. A prime example is the Cholagangam tank built by King Rajendra Chola I, which was a massive artificial lake that provided water for a large area. They also had a decentralised system where village assemblies managed and maintained these water bodies. Likewise, the Tughlaq dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate (13th-16th Century CE), in particular, was known for its public works. Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq is often credited with building the most extensive network of canals in pre-colonial India. He renovated older canals and constructed new ones, such as the canal from the Yamuna River to Hisar, which significantly boosted agricultural production in the region. His focus on irrigation was a state-sponsored environmental policy to ensure food security.

In pre-colonial India, ecological practices were a big part of daily life, woven into the culture, religion, and how people lived together. The connection between humans and nature was mostly about working together, with a strong focus on using resources wisely and showing respect for the environment. These practices weren't set by government rules, but were part of the traditions, beliefs, and ways people managed their communities, which helped protect and manage the land carefully. Forests were very important to people's lives, both in terms of what they provided and their spiritual meaning. Sacred groves, known by names like devrai, kavu, or sarna in different parts of the country, were kept safe by religious beliefs and customs. These areas were protected from being used up by people, which helped keep nature healthy and diverse. People practised careful

logging and planting trees in line with the seasons to help forests grow back. They passed on knowledge about different tree kinds, how they were used, and the effects of cutting down trees, all through stories and teachings from one generation to the next.

Agriculture in pre-colonial India was done in a way that worked with nature. People used methods like planting different crops together, changing what they grew each year, and using natural fertilisers like cow dung and compost. Water systems like tanks in South India, step wells in Gujarat and Rajasthan, and small canals in the Himalayas showed a deep understanding of how to save water efficiently. These systems helped manage water in a way that helped the land without causing long-term problems.

Water sources such as rivers, lakes, and ponds were considered sacred. The Ganga and Yamuna, for example, were not just important for water but were also central to religious beliefs. People performed rituals to honour these water bodies, which helped protect them. Local groups like panchayats and village councils took charge of water issues, making sure everyone had fair access and helping to manage resources. These local systems gave people control over decisions, which encouraged them to take care of their environment.

Nomadic and pastoral communities, such as the Gujjars, Bakarwals, and Gaddis, helped keep the environment balanced. They moved with their animals according to the seasons, which helped prevent overuse of the land and kept the grasslands and mountains healthy. Their movements were planned carefully with the environment in mind, and they shared rules to manage grazing areas so that no part of the land was used too much. Artisan communities also showed care for the environment in how they worked. Potters, weavers, and metalworkers used natural materials like clay, cotton, bamboo, and

minerals. These materials were often taken from nearby places and used carefully, so that resources were not used up. They also tried to reuse leftover materials or return them to nature, so there was very little waste. Religious and philosophical traditions in India, like Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, also helped shape how people saw nature. Concepts like non-violence, duty, and the natural order encouraged people to act in ways that respected the environment. Animals, trees, and rivers were often treated as living beings, which helped build a strong sense of ecological awareness.

In pre-colonial India, ecological practices were deeply rooted in local knowledge, religious beliefs, and community values. These traditions supported sustainability, biodiversity, and a balanced relationship with the environment long before modern environmental science began.

Other examples are as follows:

2.1.2 The Vijayanagara Empire (14th-17th Century CE)

Located in the semi-arid Deccan region, this empire placed great emphasis on water conservation. They built an intricate system of dams, reservoirs, and canals to harness the waters of the Tungabhadra River. The Hiriya Canal, built during the Sangama dynasty, is a notable example that irrigated the agricultural fields separating the urban and sacred centres of the capital, Hampi. They also used large step wells and tanks to store water for both public and royal use.

2.1.3 The Mughal Empire (16th-18th Century CE)

While known for their formal gardens (charbagh), the Mughals also developed advanced hydraulic systems. They used Persian wheels and constructed complex canal networks to supply water to their cities, forts, and pleasure gardens. An example

is the system that channelled water from the Ravi River to the Shalimar Bagh in Lahore. Additionally, they were adept at using gravity to create impressive water cascades and fountains, demonstrating an advanced understanding of hydraulics.

While there were some challenges and misuse , the main approach was about living in harmony with nature. This historical way of life still influences environmental efforts in India today.

2.1.4 Environmental Transformation During Colonial Rule

Environmental governance in India changed a lot during the colonial period, which had a big impact on how people dealt with nature. Before the British came, local communities and their traditions shaped how natural resources were used. But the British wanted to use these resources for their own economic and political interests. They changed the laws and institutions that controlled access to forests, land, and water, which disrupted the long-standing relationships between people and their environment, especially in poorer areas.

One major change introduced by the British was turning forests into commodities. Forests were once managed by local people for their daily needs and culture, but the British made them government property through laws like the Indian Forest Acts of 1865, 1878, and 1927. These laws gave control of forests to colonial officials and created the Indian Forest Department in 1864.

The Indian Forest Act of 1865 was the first step toward asserting state control over forests and was applied across British-controlled territories. The subsequent and more restrictive Indian Forest Act of 1878 and the later 1927 Act had a profound impact, particularly in regions with valuable timber resources. The economic focus was on key forest regions that supplied timber for colonial infrastructure and commercial purposes, such as:

- The Himalayas: Timber from these forests was crucial for the expanding railway network in northern India, which was a primary economic engine of the colonial state.

- Central India: The teak forests of Central Provinces (modern-day Madhya Pradesh) were highly sought after for shipbuilding and railway sleepers.

- The Western Ghats: The forests in this region, particularly in present-day Kerala and Karnataka, were exploited for their high-quality timber.

The economic value was immense, with timber becoming a major export commodity that fueled British industrial growth. The Acts facilitated this by declaring forests as state property, thereby granting the colonial government a monopoly over their most valuable resources.

The new laws directly threatened the traditional livelihoods of forest-dwelling communities who depended on forest produce for sustenance, farming, and grazing. This led to widespread resistance, which took various forms:

- The Bastar Rebellion (1910): A major uprising against the forest laws in the princely state of Bastar (present-day Chhattisgarh). Led by figures like Gunda Dhur, the rebellion was a direct response to the colonial forest department's policies that restricted shifting cultivation and access to forest resources.

- The Alluri Sitarama Raju Rebellion (1922-1924): In the hill tracts of the Madras Presidency (Andhra Pradesh), Alluri Sitarama Raju led a revolt against the British. The forest laws

were a key grievance for the tribal communities, as they restricted their traditional rights, forcing them into forced labour and poverty.

- Everyday Resistance: Beyond large-scale rebellions, there was constant, low-level resistance, including clandestine acts of defiance like poaching, illegal timber felling, and setting fire to plantations, which were ways for local communities to reclaim their traditional rights.

The British promoted a scientific method of managing forests, focusing on cutting down trees for things like building railways and ships instead of caring for the environment or supporting local communities. This led to many traditional activities like grazing, farming, and gathering firewood being banned, which forced people out of their homes and left them without support.

The British also changed how land was used and who owned it. Systems like the Permanent Settlement in Bengal (1793) and the Ryotwari and Mahalwari systems elsewhere changed how land was owned and taxed. These systems encouraged farming for sale, like growing indigo, cotton, and opium, which hurt local food production and led to poor soil and less food security. This caused people in rural areas to take on more debt and lose access to shared resources such as grazing lands, village ponds, and forests. These changes led to environmental issues like deforestation, soil erosion, and the loss of many plant and animal species.

Water management under British rule was also driven by economic goals. Large irrigation projects, like canal systems in Punjab and the United Provinces, were built to increase crop production. While some areas saw better harvests, these projects also brought problems like waterlogging and salt buildup in the soil. Traditional water systems, like small tanks and wells, were ignored or broken. The main goal was to get more revenue, not to manage water sustainably or make sure it was shared fairly.

When natural disasters, like the Great Famine of 1876–78, struck, the British policies made things worse. They focused on exporting crops and getting money instead of helping people who were starving. The government ignored local knowledge and solutions, leading to suffering and showing how disconnected the British were from the real needs of people on the ground. The British also believed that Indian ways of understanding and using the environment were not as good as Western methods. They promoted the idea that nature should be controlled and that traditional knowledge was wrong. This made local knowledge less valued and excluded it from decisions affecting the environment. This shift in thinking created a power imbalance, giving more control to British officials and experts.

In summary, the British didn't just change how India managed its environment—they used it as a tool to maintain control and enrich themselves. Their policies were meant to extract resources and serve administrative needs, which hurt local communities and damaged the environment. The results, like loss of forests and water shortages, were closely linked to issues of power, fairness, and justice. To conclude, British colonialism changed India's environment by taking away people's rights, punishing traditional practices, and pushing for extractive policies. These actions created lasting environmental and social problems that still affect India today.

2.1.5 Post-Independence Development and Environmental Challenges

Following India's independence in 1947, the country's leaders focused on a development plan that centred on modernisation, quick economic growth,

and government-led industrialisation. This approach, influenced by Nehru's vision and socialist planning models, placed a strong emphasis on building infrastructure, boosting agriculture, and achieving self-reliance.

Big projects like steel plants, highways, industrial zones, and massive dams were seen as symbols of progress. While these projects helped the economy grow, they also caused serious environmental issues and changed the natural landscape of the country in major ways. Large dam projects such as Bhakra-Nangal, Hirakud, and Nagarjuna Sagar were built to improve irrigation, provide electricity, and control floods. These dams came to represent a modern, developing India. But they also flooded large areas of fertile land and forests, disrupted river ecosystems, and displaced millions, especially from tribal and rural communities. Efforts to help these people settle elsewhere were often not enough, leading to the exclusion of these communities. The environmental costs of such large projects were largely ignored in the decision-making process, showing a development model that focused more on growth than on sustainability.

In agriculture, the Green Revolution of the 1960s was a big change that helped India become more food secure. However, this revolution depended heavily on chemical fertilisers and groundwater, which had major environmental effects. In areas like Punjab, Haryana, and Western Uttar Pradesh, heavy farming led to soil problems, overuse of water, and the loss of local crop varieties. While food production went up, this came with increased inequality and environmental damage.

Industrialisation and mining grew quickly after independence, often without strong rules in place. Factories located near rivers and populated areas led to serious water and air pollution. Mining in states like Odisha, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh caused massive deforestation, soil destruction, and the displacement of local communities, especially tribal people. Urban areas also faced environmental pressures, including uncontrolled construction, traffic pollution, poor waste handling, and overloaded public services. As more people moved to cities, these problems got worse. Cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, and Bangalore struggled with demands for housing, energy, and water. This led to unplanned city expansion, loss of green spaces, and rising pollution. Urban rivers became sewers, and health issues increased due to poor environmental conditions. Climate-related problems like floods, heatwaves, and water shortages became more common, showing how unsustainable city growth had become. In response to these issues, environmental governance started to change. The 42nd Amendment to the Constitution in 1976 included Articles 48A and 51A(g), which added environmental protection to the guiding principles and citizen duties. In the following years, important laws like the Forest Conservation Act (1980), the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act (1981), and the Environment Protection Act (1986) were passed. These laws were supported by institutions like the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Central and State Pollution Control Boards, laying the foundation for environmental regulation in India.

However, putting these laws into action was a big challenge. Often, environmental concerns were pushed aside for political and economic goals. Tools like Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), meant to ensure responsible development, were used more as formalities than real checks. To attract investment and speed up industrial growth, environmental rules were often weakened, further harming the environment and the rights of vulnerable communities. This led to the rise of environmental movements and grassroots activism focused on ecological

justice. Campaigns like the Narmada Bachao Andolan, the Appiko Movement, and the Save the Western Ghats effort raised national awareness about issues like deforestation, displacement, and access to water. These movements not only fought against harmful development projects but also challenged the state's vision of progress, calling for more inclusive decisions and the recognition of environmental rights.

In conclusion, while India has made important socio-economic progress since independence, it has come at a great cost to the environment and people. Problems such as environmental damage, loss of biodiversity, resource scarcity, and forced displacement show the urgent need for a new way of development. Looking ahead, integrating environmental justice, participatory governance, and sustainable practices will be essential for building a fair and resilient future for India.

2.1.6 Emergence of Environmental Movements in India

The growth of environmental activism in India is connected to a mix of ecological problems, social and economic differences, and increased political awareness. These movements started as organised efforts to deal with the real effects of cutting down forests, pollution, people being forced to move, and the unfair use of natural resources—especially in rural and tribal communities. While there was some resistance against environmental damage before India gained independence, it was after independence that these concerns turned into structured, collective actions fighting for environmental fairness.

In the 1960s and 1970s, India saw the negative results of development projects led by the government, such as building dams, mining, and clearing forests. These projects were meant to help the economy and the country grow, but they often hurt the environment and the fairness for people. Marginalised groups, especially tribal people, small farmers, and those living in forests, began to fight for their rights to land, water, and forests. Environmental issues became tied to livelihoods, culture, and survival, leading to local resistance against unfair treatment of the environment and society. A key aspect of India's environmental movements is their connection to larger social and political fights. Environmental damage wasn't seen as just a separate issue but as part of bigger problems like unequal development and marginalisation. Because of this, Indian environmental politics became unique, based on real-life experiences and moral claims about natural resources. These movements often criticised the top-down, centralised way of development and pushed for more inclusive, democratic decision-making in managing the environment.

Over time, the movement gained support from a wider group of people, including thinkers, scientists, students, and parts of the middle class in cities. As environmental issues like polluted air, lack of water, and waste management affected urban areas, the conversation about the environment grew to include city concerns. This expanded the discussion across media, education, and politics. Public legal actions, investigative journalism on the environment, and court decisions also helped move the movement forward. These movements also changed how environmental knowledge is created and used. Local practices, traditional understanding of the environment, and personal experiences became recognised as important sources of environmental insight, along with scientific knowledge. This mix of local action and intellectual input redefined Indian environmentalism as a movement focused on justice and people, rather than only on protecting nature.

In short, the rise of environmental movements in India shows a big change in how the country deals with environmental issues. These efforts set the stage for a more inclusive and democratic way of thinking about the environment, giving a voice to those most impacted by ecological harm. Their influence continues to shape today's environmental discussions, even as new groups and challenges change the face of environmental activism.

2.1.7 Contemporary Environmental Politics and Climate Change

In the 21st century, environmental politics in India have become more urgent and connected to the world, influenced by the growing effects of climate change, environmental challenges, and the need for more development. Unlike in the past, today's environmental issues involve more people, more complex ways of governing, and a greater awareness among the public about sustainability. Climate change is now a major topic that affects policies, international talks, and everyday life across the country. A key part of modern environmental politics is how global and local environmental problems are linked.

Climate change is no longer seen as something that will happen far in the future— it's already affecting people through extreme weather, like unpredictable monsoons, intense heat, rising sea levels, droughts, and floods. These changes are causing serious problems for farming, access to water, food supply, city planning, and public health. Because of its large population and reliance on climate-sensitive areas, India is especially at risk. So today's environmental discussions often focus on fairness, adapting to these changes, and making sure development is fair for all.

Current talks also deal with how to balance economic growth with protecting the environment. Quick industrial growth, the need for more energy, and expanding cities are putting pressure on natural environments. Big construction projects, mining, and real estate development are causing deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and the displacement of people from their homes. Governments, political parties, and planning groups are being pushed to include environmental issues in their development plans. But there are often conflicts between the need to develop and the need to protect the environment, making environmental policy a hot topic. India's role in international environmental rules has also grown. As part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, India has made important promises under the Paris Agreement, like increasing the use of clean energy, cutting down emissions, and building resilience against climate effects. These international commitments are now affecting national policies, funding, and infrastructure projects.

However, how well these are implemented varies by region, depending on local capacity, political choices, and how involved the public is. Urban environmental issues have become more important as cities deal with worse air quality, poor waste management, and water shortages. These problems have led to public anger, media attention, and legal actions. People are getting more involved in environmental issues through protests, online campaigns, legal cases, and local efforts. Environmental concerns are also shaping political races, with city voters demanding cleaner, safer, and more sustainable living conditions.

Another important aspect of today's environmental politics is the strong focus on climate justice and fairness for future generations. There is a growing understanding that the worst environmental effects hit poorer communities, vulnerable groups, and future generations. This view has influenced academic work, laws, and policy discussions,

showing that ecological problems are not just technical but are also linked to social and political inequality. Solving these issues needs a political approach that includes fairness, participation, and long-term thinking.

Technology has also changed how people engage with environmental issues. Tools like satellite images, pollution monitors, climate models, and online platforms have made environmental data more available and clear. While this helps for informed discussions, it also creates different views as governments, companies, scientists, and communities may interpret data in different ways. In this situation, information can be both a way to push for change and a source of political conflict.

In short, India's current environmental politics is greatly shaped by the urgency of climate change, the tension between development and protection, and the need for ecological and social fairness. Environmental issues are no longer just for experts or activists. They are part of the political conversation at every level—from local to national to global. The challenge is to create inclusive, fair, and strong systems that deal with environmental threats without harming the rights and dignity of those most affected.

Recap

- Pre-colonial India practised sustainable, community-based resource management rooted in religious beliefs, local governance, and traditional ecological knowledge.

- The colonial period transformed natural resources into commodities, introducing laws like the Indian Forest Acts, which disrupted traditional livelihoods and caused large-scale environmental degradation.

- Post-independence development projects such as large dams, industrial expansion, and the Green Revolution boosted growth but caused deforestation, displacement, and ecological imbalance.

- Environmental movements like the Chipko Movement, Narmada Bachao Andolan, and Silent Valley Movement emerged to resist harmful development and promote environmental justice.

- Contemporary environmental politics in India is shaped by global climate change, urban environmental challenges, and the growing role of grassroots activism, NGOs, and climate justice movements.

Objective Questions

1. Which traditional practice in pre-colonial India involved protecting forests due to religious beliefs?

2. The Indian Forest Acts were introduced during which period?

3. Name one major environmental impact of the Green Revolution.

4. Which movement involved villagers hugging trees to prevent deforestation?

5. Who was a key leader of the Narmada Bachao Andolan?

6. The Silent Valley Movement took place in which Indian state?

7. Which constitutional amendment added Articles 48A and 51A(g) related to the environment?

8. Name one major post-independence development project that caused large-scale displacement.

9. What is the term for fairness in environmental policies, ensuring that vulnerable groups are not disproportionately affected?

10. Which youth-led global climate movement inspired Indian student activism?

Answers

1. Sacred groves.

2. Colonial period under British rule.

3. Soil degradation and overuse of groundwater.

4. Chipko Movement.

5. Medha Patkar.

6. Kerala.

7. 42nd Constitutional Amendment.

8. Bhakra-Nangal Dam (or other large dams).

9. Climate justice.

10. Fridays for Future.

Assignments

1. Discuss the role of sacred groves in the ecological practices of pre-colonial India.

2. Explain how British colonial forest policies transformed the relationship between local communities and natural resources.

3. Evaluate the environmental and social impacts of large dam projects in post-independence India.

4. Analyse the significance of the Chipko Movement in shaping India's environmental politics.

5. Compare the objectives and outcomes of the Silent Valley Movement and the Narmada Bachao Andolan.

6. Examine the role of grassroots activism in resisting environmentally harmful development projects.

7. How has the concept of climate justice influenced contemporary environmental politics in India?

8. Discuss the environmental consequences of the Green Revolution in India.

9. Describe the role of women in India's environmental movements with suitable examples.

10. Critically assess the impact of globalisation on India's environmental challenges and movements.

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2 UNIT

Key Policies and Legislation

Learning Outcomes

- ♦ After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be:

- ♦ explain the constitutional provisions related to environmental protection in India.

- ♦ describe the objectives and scope of major environmental laws such as the Environmental Protection Act, Forest Conservation Act, and Wildlife Protection Act.

- ♦ Analyse the role of the judiciary and Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in environmental governance.

- ♦ evaluate the functions and effectiveness of Pollution Control Boards and other environmental institutions.

- ♦ assess recent legislative and policy developments in India and their implications for sustainable developmentdiscuss the emergence and significance of environmental movements in India

- ♦ Relate contemporary environmental politics to global climate change and issues of social and ecological justice.

Prerequisites

Before studying Unit 2, learners should have a basic understanding of the Indian legal system, including the structure and functioning of the Constitution, the division of powers between the central and state governments, and the process of law-making . Knowledge of fundamental rights and directive principles will be useful to understand constitutional provisions related to environmental protection. A learner should also

be familiar with key environmental challenges in India, such as deforestation, air and water pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change. A preliminary awareness of the role of governance in regulating industries, managing natural resources, and enforcing environmental standards will help in grasping the functioning of institutions like Pollution Control Boards. Additionally, familiarity with the concept of sustainable development, environmental ethics, and international environmental agreements will enable learners to link domestic policies with global environmental goals.

Keywords

Article 48A, Article 51A(g), Environmental Protection Act, Forest Conservation Act, Wildlife Protection Act, Pollution Control Boards, Public Interest Litigation, Precautionary Principle, Polluter Pays Principle, National Environmental Policy.

Discussion

Initially, the Indian Constitution didn't have clear rules about protecting the environment. But as people became more aware of environmental issues worldwide and in India, especially after the 1972 Stockholm Conference, big changes happened in the Constitution. A big change was the 42nd Constitutional Amendment, which officially included environmental concerns in the Constitution. This amendment added Article 48A under the Directive Principles of State Policy. It made the government responsible for protecting and improving the environment, including forests and wildlife. Though these principles aren't enforceable in court, they guide how the government runs the country.

Article 48A is now a key part of how policies and court decisions are made about the environment. At the same time, Article 51A(g) was added to the Fundamental Duties section. It asks every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, rivers, lakes, and wildlife, and to show kindness to all living beings. While this duty isn't enforceable by law, it encourages people to take part in environmental efforts and reminds them of their moral responsibility to care for the environment. Besides these specific articles, the Indian judiciary has played a big role in shaping how environmental rights are understood.

Over time, Article 21, which guarantees the right to life and personal freedom, has been interpreted by courts to include the right to live in a clean, safe, and healthy environment. Because of this, environmental damage is now seen as a possible violation of fundamental rights, allowing people to take legal action when their environment is harmed.

Another important point is Article 47, which mainly talks about the government's responsibility to improve public health and nutrition. Since a healthy environment is closely linked to public health, this article supports environmental protection as part of wider social development.

The way power is divided between the central government and state governments, as outlined in the Seventh Schedule, also affects how environmental policies are made. Environmental issues are listed in the Union, State, and Concurrent Lists, allowing both levels of government to create laws. However, this shared responsibility means that there needs to be good coordination to ensure that environmental laws and policies are properly carried out.

The judiciary has also been very active in environmental governance. The Supreme Court and High Courts have used important environmental principles like the Polluter Pays Principle, the Precautionary Principle, and the Public Trust Doctrine. Even though these principles aren't written in the Constitution, courts have included them in legal decisions, making them part of the legal system for protecting the environment.

In short, India's Constitution, along with the way courts have interpreted it, forms a strong base for environmental governance. It sets responsibilities for both the government and citizens and has helped create many environmental laws and policies aimed at achieving long-term ecological sustainability.

2.2.1 Environmental Protection Act, 1986

The Environmental Protection Act of 1986 is a key part of India's environmental laws. It was created after the Bhopal Gas Tragedy in 1984, which showed how weak the existing environmental rules were. The Act also showed India's commitment to its promises made at the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the human environment. This law gives a complete legal structure to help protect and improve the environment across the country. It gives the Central government a lot of power to stop, control, and reduce pollution. It also acts as a main law that supports and adds

to older environmental laws like the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.

Under this Act , the government can set standards for environmental quality, control how hazardous materials are used and thrown away, and mark areas where certain industrial activities are not allowed or must be closely watched. It also lets the government set safety rules to avoid accidents and protect ecologically important areas. The government can also close or control industries that are harmful to the environment. One important part of this law is that it defines "environment" broadly, including water, air, and land, and how they affect living things like humans, animals, plants, and microorganisms. This helps in protecting the environment in a complete way. The Act also gives people the right to go to court if environmental laws are broken, which makes the public more involved in environmental issues. If someone breaks the rules in this Act, they can face jail time, fines, or both, showing how serious the law is about non-compliance.

It also lets the government pass on some responsibilities to state governments and local bodies, making environmental enforcement more flexible and suited to local needs. Since it was introduced, the Act has helped create many rules and orders, like those for dealing with hazardous waste, electronic waste, coastal areas, and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA). It has also played a big role in court cases, especially in public interest litigation, making it easier to enforce environmental rules. Overall, the Environmental Protection Act is an important tool in India's efforts to deal with environmental problems. It helps to balance economic growth with the need to protect the environment.

2.2.2 Forest Conservation Act, 1980

The Forest Conservation Act of 1980 was introduced by the Indian government to address the growing issue of deforestation and the misuse of forest land for non-forest activities. Before this law, state governments had the power to decide how forest land was used, which often led to unchecked exploitation and a big drop in forest areas. This Act changed things by giving control of forest land to the central government and putting strict rules on how it can be used.

Under this law, state governments or any other authorities cannot use forest areas for non-forest purposes like farming, mining, industrial growth, or building projects without getting approval from the central government first. The main goal is to protect forests and control any changes in land use that may harm the environment. The Act sets up a legal system to safeguard forest ecosystems and keep the environment in balance across the country. By requiring the central government's approval for major changes to forest land, it stops state governments from making hasty or unfair decisions and ensures a uniform national plan for forest protection. It also aims to reduce deforestation and make sure that new developments are carefully checked for their impact on the environment. To help carry out the law, the central government can form advisory committees. These groups of experts look at proposals that involve forest land and suggest ways to protect the environment, such as planting new trees to replace those that are lost. Their recommendations are important in ensuring that development projects are needed and environmentally friendly.

The Act is closely linked to constitutional principles, especially Article 48A, which asks the government to protect and improve the environment, and Article 51A(g), which says citizens have a duty to conserve natural resources. It shows India's long-term commitment to sustainable development and taking care of the environment. Over time, the Forest Conservation Act has been supported by various rules and changes. These include ways to monitor forests, get environmental clearances, and require compensatory afforestation when forest land is used for other purposes. Even though challenges remain due to the pressure for development and land use, the Act is still a key legal instrument for protecting India's forests. In short, the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 plays an important role in maintaining ecological balance, managing land use wisely, and ensuring that forests are protected for both current and future generations.

2.2.3 Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

The **Wildlife Protection Act of 1972** was introduced as a robust legislative framework aimed at conserving wild animals, birds, and plants across India. It was enacted in response to increasing concerns about habitat destruction, illegal hunting, and the rapid decline of various species. This Act was the first comprehensive effort to recognise wildlife conservation as a distinct legal priority, moving away from fragmented policies to a well-structured and enforceable system. It reflects the nation's dedication to preserving biodiversity and maintaining ecological harmony by protecting its unique flora and fauna.

Under the Act, several categories of protected areas are established, including national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation reserves, and community reserves—each offering specific protections and allowing certain regulated activities. The law strictly limits the hunting, capturing, and trading of wild species, with exceptions only in carefully defined circumstances. A system of schedules classifies species based

on their conservation status, with those in the highest category receiving absolute protection against hunting and commercial use.

To ensure effective implementation, the Act sets up a multi-tiered administrative structure, empowering the central government to frame policies and enabling state authorities to enforce them at the local level. Dedicated agencies such as the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau and wildlife wardens are responsible for overseeing compliance, conducting investigations, and prosecuting offenders. The law also permits the establishment of advisory boards and management authorities to develop conservation plans and facilitate coordination among different administrative bodies.

In addition, the Act includes detailed provisions to regulate the trade and possession of wildlife and their derivatives, aligning national laws with international conservation treaties. It authorises the government to declare species as endangered, manage captive breeding programs, and control any activity that could disrupt vital habitats. Violations of the Act are punishable with strict penalties, including imprisonment and monetary fines, reinforcing its role as a deterrent against environmental crime.

Over time, the Act has been amended and updated to address emerging threats like wildlife trafficking, habitat encroachment, and human-animal conflict. New provisions have been introduced to improve enforcement mechanisms, streamline the process for designating protected zones, and encourage community involvement in conservation through initiatives like community reserves.

2.2.3.1 The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, is firmly rooted in India's constitutional framework—particularly Article 48A, which mandates the state to protect the environment, and **Article 51A(g)**, which entrusts citizens with the responsibility to safeguard natural ecosystems. By creating a detailed and evolving regulatory mechanism, the Act aims to harmonise developmental needs with the urgent necessity of **preserving India's diverse and fragile wildlife** for future generations.

2.3.3.2 Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974

The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1974 was India's first major law aimed at dealing with the growing problem of water pollution. Its main goal is to stop, control, and reduce water pollution in rivers, lakes, streams, and other water sources. It also ensures that water remains clean or is made clean again for different uses. This law helped set up a system that manages how pollution is handled and makes sure people are held responsible for harming the environment. To make sure the law is followed, it created both the Central and State Pollution Control Boards. These boards are responsible for making and carrying out plans to control pollution, checking the health of water sources, inspecting factories and waste treatment plants, and setting rules for how much waste can be released into water. They also have the power to approve or reject permission for releasing industrial or city waste into water bodies.

Under this law, anyone or any group must get permission from the State Pollution Control Board before releasing pollutants into streams, wells, or public sewers. The boards can check for violations, take water samples to test, and take legal action if needed. If companies or organisations break the pollution rules, the boards can ask courts to stop or limit their operations. The law also includes punishments like fines and imprisonment for not following its rules. The courts support the law by helping interpret and enforce it. While the Act has helped

improve water management, there are still problems with how it's being implemented and with the lack of proper infrastructure. This law also supports constitutional principles, especially the Right to Life under Article 21, which courts have said includes the right to safe and clean water. The Act shows the Indian government's effort to protect water resources, control industrial activity, and ensure public health and environmental sustainability.

The judiciary's crucial role in environmental governance is demonstrated by its proactive interpretation of Article 21, which guarantees the "Right to Life". This fundamental right has been expanded to include the right to a healthy environment. A perfect illustration of this judicial activism is found in the landmark M.C. Mehta v. Union of India cases.

These were a series of landmark cases brought by lawyer and environmental activist M.C. Mehta that transformed environmental jurisprudence in India. For example, in the Oleum Gas Leak case (1986), the Supreme Court interpreted Article 21 to include the right to live in a clean and safe environment, a crucial step in holding industries accountable for pollution. This ruling established the principle of "absolute liability", which holds that a company engaged in a hazardous activity is strictly liable for any harm caused, regardless of negligence. These legal challenges helped establish the principle that a clean and safe environment is an inseparable component of the right to life, thereby giving the judiciary a powerful tool to hold both the state and polluting industries accountable for environmental degradation.

Similarly, in another M.C. Mehta case concerning the pollution of the Ganga River (1987), the court issued directives to close down polluting tanneries, thereby reinforcing the state's duty to protect citizens'

right to a clean environment. This series of judgments set a precedent, affirming that environmental degradation directly infringes upon a citizen's fundamental right to life, thus empowering the judiciary to play a proactive role in environmental protection.

2.2.4 Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981

The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, was created to deal with increasing air pollution in India, which was caused by industrial development, growing cities, and more vehicles on the road. It came into effect as part of India's commitment to the 1972 Stockholm Conference. The act sets up a clear legal system to help keep and improve the quality of air across the country.

Under this law, the Central and State Pollution Control Boards are given the power to control air pollution. These boards are responsible for setting standards for air quality, checking the air quality regularly, and making sure that industries and local governments follow the rules. The act allows these boards to mark certain areas as "air pollution control zones", where industry emissions and the use of specific fuels or methods are controlled. Any industry operating in these zones must get approval from the relevant State Pollution Control Board before starting or changing its operations. The act makes it illegal to release pollutants beyond allowed levels and gives the boards the right to inspect, test emissions, and take actions to enforce the rules. They can also order polluting industries to stop or limit their activities temporarily.

The Act sees air as an important public good and encourages taking steps to prevent pollution rather than just dealing with it after it happens. It helps industries use cleaner and more eco-friendly methods. Through changes and court decisions over

time, the Act has become more effective, especially in areas with high pollution in big cities. The Act aligns with the principles in India's constitution, including the Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 48A) and the Fundamental Duties of citizens (Article 51A(g)), highlighting the shared duty to protect the environment. Also, the courts have interpreted Article 21 (Right to Life) to include the right to clean air, which supports the Act's role in ensuring public health and the environment remains healthy.

2.2.5 National Environmental Policy, 2006

The National Environmental Policy (NEP), 2006, was created by the Government of India to provide a unified and strategic plan for protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development. Unlike previous methods that dealt with environmental issues in separate sectors, the NEP takes a broader approach that covers various areas. It was designed to fill in the gaps in how environmental issues are managed, regulated, and coordinated across different levels.

The policy emphasises the importance of protecting important natural resources such as forests, wetlands, coastal areas, and regions rich in biodiversity. It identifies major environmental challenges in India, like pollution, land degradation, water shortages, and loss of habitats. To tackle these issues, it suggests using a variety of strategies such as changing policies, supporting scientific studies, involving different groups in decision-making, and encouraging cooperation between government and private organisations.

A major part of the NEP is making sure that environmental concerns are considered in the planning and development of sectors like agriculture, energy, industry, and infrastructure. One of the key ideas of the NEP is that those who cause pollution should bear the cost, based on the "polluter pays" principle. It also encourages taking care to prevent harm before it happens. The policy seeks to improve how environmental rules are enforced by promoting better compliance, supporting voluntary actions, and introducing financial incentives for sustainable practices. It also highlights the importance of clear decision-making, involving local communities, and managing resources at the local level, recognising that people living in these areas play a vital role in protecting the environment.

The NEP gives special attention to preserving fragile ecosystems and supporting communities that are especially vulnerable, particularly indigenous groups and people who live in forests. It promotes conservation methods that respect traditional knowledge and practices, ensuring that environmental decisions are made in a way that respects cultural values. Although the NEP is not a law that must be followed, it serves as a guiding document for both national and state governments. It influences the creation of laws, programs, and initiatives aimed at protecting the environment. It also sets the stage for future actions to achieve a balance between economic progress, social well-being, and environmental health.

2.2.6 Role of Judiciary and Public Interest Litigation (PIL)

The Indian judiciary has played a major role in promoting environmental protection, especially through the widespread use of Public Interest Litigation (PIL). In situations where laws or government actions were missing or delayed, the courts have stepped in to make sure that the constitutional right to a clean and healthy environment is protected— interpreting Article 21 (Right to Life) to include environmental health.

PILs have allowed individuals and organisations, whether directly affected or

not, to raise environmental issues in court. This has helped increase public engagement and made authorities more accountable for environmental issues. The Supreme Court and various High Courts have used PILs effectively to order actions that prevent or fix environmental harm, such as pollution, illegal cutting of trees, uncontrolled mining, and other ecological problems.

Indian courts have also created and strengthened several important environmental principles through their decisions. These include the Polluter Pays Principle, which says the ones causing pollution should pay for the damage they cause; the Precautionary Principle, which encourages taking steps to avoid harm when there is an environmental risk; and the Public Trust Doctrine, which considers natural resources as belonging to the public and must be protected by the government. The judiciary has actively taken part in enforcing environmental rules. They have ordered the closure of polluting industries, required the use of pollution control systems, monitored vehicle emissions, and improved waste management in cities. In some cases, courts have created special groups or expert panels to watch over specific environmental concerns or protected areas.

Courts have consistently stressed the need for sustainable development, balancing environmental protection with economic growth. They have also underlined the importance of transparency, scientific review, and involving local communities in environmental decisions. In many important rulings, the courts have asked authorities to recheck environmental clearances, use stricter rules, and consult affected people before starting big projects. By interpreting the constitution in a forward-thinking way and being proactive, the Indian judiciary has become a key player in environmental governance. Its decisions have influenced environmental law, guided policy-making, and reinforced the belief that protecting the environment is an essential part of good governance and public duty.

2.2.7 Role of Pollution Control Boards and Environmental Institutions

Pollution Control Boards and other environmental organisations play a critical role in implementing and enforcing environmental laws in India. These bodies form the basis of the country's system for handling pollution, making sure that rules are followed, and keeping the environment healthy.

The two main groups in this system are the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs). Both were first set up under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1974, and later took on more responsibilities under the Air Act of 1981 and the Environment (Protection) Act of 1986. The CPCB operates under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and is responsible for managing pollution control programs nationwide. It advises the central government on environmental issues, creates national standards for water and air quality, and gives technical support to the state boards. The CPCB also does environmental research, collects data, and promotes awareness and best practices for managing the environment sustainably. At the state level, SPCBs are in charge of enforcing environmental rules within their regions. Their duties include giving permission for industries to set up and operate, checking pollution levels, making sure industries follow environmental laws, inspecting factories, and taking legal action against those who break the rules. They also manage environmental clearance for smaller

projects and do impact studies to ensure development is good for the environment.

Alongside the Pollution Control Boards, there are other organisations that help shape India's environmental management. The MoEFCC acts as the main body for making environmental policies, overseeing the implementation of environmental laws, working with other countries, and developing plans for major issues like climate change and biodiversity. Agencies like the National Biodiversity Authority, Wildlife Institute of India, Forest Survey of India, and the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education support these efforts through conservation, research, and mapping resources. In terms of technical support, autonomous bodies like the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) are important. They help with pollution control, waste management, and promoting green technologies. NEERI and similar organisations work closely with Pollution Control Boards to ensure that scientific progress is used effectively in laws and actions. To improve the handling of environmental disputes, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) was created under the NGT Act of 2010. This court specialises in dealing with environmental cases quickly and efficiently, providing legal support and ensuring that regulatory bodies like the CPCB and SPCBs can act effectively. Together, these groups create a strong and layered system that helps enforce environmental laws, spread awareness about environmental issues, and guide India towards sustainable growth. They are essential not only for regulating industries but also for maintaining environmental quality as a key part of government work.

2.2.8 Recent Legislative and Policy Developments

In recent years, India has made several important changes to its laws and policies to improve environmental protection, improve how regulations work, and match national strategies with international environmental promises. These efforts show that the government is becoming more aware of the need to balance keeping the environment safe with promoting economic growth—especially with growing challenges like climate change, fast urban development, industrial expansion, and loss of biodiversity.

One key policy change is the update to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) system, especially through the draft EIA Notification of 2020. This draft aimed to make the approval process for industries and infrastructure projects easier, while also introducing rules for getting environmental approval after projects start and changing how public consultations work. However, these changes caused a lot of debate. People like lawyers and environmental activists worried that the new rules would make things less transparent and weaken environmental protections. Even though the draft is still being considered, it shows the ongoing discussion between economic growth and environmental responsibility. Another important law is the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act (CAMPA), passed in 2016. This law sets up a system where money is collected from companies that use forest land for non-forest purposes, and that money is used to fund reforestation and ecological restoration projects. It created both national and state-level funds to help address the loss of forest areas.

India has significantly strengthened its framework for waste management through a series of rules introduced or revised under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. These rules reflect a shift towards holding producers and handlers accountable for the entire lifecycle of their products, a concept known as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). For instance, the Plastic Waste

Management Rules, 2016 (updated in 2022), aim to tackle the problem of single-use plastic by mandating that producers, importers, and brand owners manage their plastic waste. A practical application is seen in the efforts of many companies to establish collection systems for plastic packaging.

Similarly, the E-Waste Management Rules, 2022, place responsibility on manufacturers to collect and safely dismantle electronic waste, preventing hazardous materials from contaminating the environment. A well-known case study illustrating the importance of such rules is the environmental and health crisis caused by unregulated e-waste dumping at sites like Delhi's Seelampur market before the new regulations came into force. The Biomedical Waste Management Rules, 2016, ensure that hospitals and other healthcare facilities safely dispose of infectious waste, a critical measure for public health. Finally, the Construction and Demolition Waste Management Rules, 2016, focus on the proper handling and recycling of waste from construction activities, promoting a circular economy and reducing the burden on landfills. These updated rules collectively represent a move towards a more sustainable and legally enforceable system of waste governance in India.

These rules encourage people to separate waste at the source, support Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), and promote local waste processing, especially in cities. To improve air quality, the government launched the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) in 2019. This program targets cities that don't meet air quality standards and aims to reduce pollution through better monitoring, controlling emissions, involving the public, and working together between different agencies.

In tackling climate change, India has updated its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, promising to lower emissions per unit of economic output and increase the use of non-fossil fuels. The Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2022, supports these goals by introducing a carbon credit trading system and giving the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) more power. This shows a move toward using market-based solutions in environmental governance. Judicial and institutional efforts have also increased, with the National Green Tribunal (NGT) playing a more active role in making sure environmental rules are followed. The NGT has handled cases involving pollution from industries, illegal clearing of forests, and unauthorised mining, holding both government and private companies accountable. Overall, these laws and policies show that India is making a serious effort to deal with its environmental challenges. While there's been progress, there are still problems with how well these policies are being carried out. There's also a need to balance development with sustainability and involve the public more in making environmental decisions.

Recap

♦ The 42nd Constitutional Amendment introduced Articles 48A and 51A(g), emphasising environmental protection as both a state responsibility and a citizen's duty.

- The Environmental Protection Act, 1986, provides a comprehensive legal framework to prevent and control pollution and protect natural resources.

- The Forest Conservation Act, 1980 and the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, safeguard forests, wildlife habitats, and biodiversity.

- The judiciary, through PILs, has played a proactive role in expanding environmental rights under Article 21 and enforcing environmental laws.

- Pollution Control Boards and other environmental institutions monitor, regulate, and enforce environmental standards at the national and state levels.

- Recent developments include updated EIA rules, waste management regulations, and programs like the National Clean Air Programme.

Objective Questions

1. Which constitutional amendment introduced Articles 48A and 51A(g)?

2. Under which act is the term "environment" broadly defined to include water, air, and land?

3. The Forest Conservation Act came into force in which year?

4. What is the main objective of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972?

5. Which body advises the central government on environmental matters and sets pollution standards?

6. Name one principle frequently applied by Indian courts in environmental cases.

7. The National Environmental Policy was introduced in which year?

8. Under which act were the Central and State Pollution Control Boards first established?

9. Which program launched in 2019 aims to reduce air pollution in non-attainment cities?

10. What is the legal mechanism allowing any person to approach the court for environmental protection?

Answers

1. 42nd Constitutional Amendment.

2. Environmental Protection Act, 1986.

3. 1980.

4. To protect wildlife species and their habitats.

5. Central Pollution Control Board.

6. Polluter Pays Principle (or Precautionary Principle).

7. 2006.

8. Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.

9. National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

10. Public Interest Litigation (PIL).

Assignments

1. Explain the significance of Articles 48A and 51A(g) in environmental governance.

2. Discuss the key provisions and objectives of the Environmental Protection Act, 1986.

3. Analyse the role of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, in preventing deforestation.

4. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, in conserving biodiversity.

5. Explain the role of the judiciary in strengthening environmental rights through PILs.

6. Discuss the functions and powers of the Central Pollution Control Board.

7. Assess the importance of the National Environmental Policy, 2006, in shaping environmental governance.

8. Examine the challenges in implementing environmental laws in India.

9. Describe the recent legislative measures for waste management and their effectiveness.

10. Analyse the balance between development and environmental protection in recent policy changes.

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3 UNIT

Major Environmental Movements

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be:

♦ explain the causes and outcomes of major environmental movements in India, such as the Chipko Movement, Narmada Bachao Andolan, and Silent Valley Movement

♦ Analyse the role of grassroots activism, NGOs, and local communities in environmental conservation

♦ evaluate the contributions of women to environmental movements and ecological justice.

♦ Discuss the relationship between environmental struggles and social justice issues.

♦ assess the significance of contemporary youth-led climate activism in shaping India's environmental politics.

Prerequisites

Before studying Unit 3, learners should have a basic understanding of India's environmental history, including major ecological challenges faced during pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence periods. Familiarity with the concepts of sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, and environmental justice will help in understanding the motivations behind grassroots environmental movements. Students should also be aware of India's socio-political structure, especially rural governance, tribal rights, and women's roles in community life, as these often influence the nature of environmental struggles. Knowledge of civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the functioning of protest movements

will provide important context. Additionally, awareness of global environmental activism, including climate change movements and international environmental agreements, will enable learners to connect local Indian movements with global trends in ecological advocacy.

Keywords

Chipko Movement, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Silent Valley Movement, Appiko Movement, Tehri Dam Protest, Environmental Justice, Grassroots Activism, NGOs, Women's Leadership, Youth Climate Activism.

Discussion

The Chipko Movement is one of India's most significant environmental campaigns and a major example of grassroots environmental activism. It started in the 1970s in the Himalayan region of Uttarakhand, which was then part of Uttar Pradesh. The movement began when the government allowed a company to cut down trees in forests near Mandal village in Chamoli district for commercial use. This decision ignored the local people's deep connection to the forests, which provided them with fuel, food, and water. The name "Chipko" means "to hug" or "to cling" in Hindi, and it describes the method used by villagers, especially women, who hugged trees to stop loggers from cutting them down. This peaceful form of protest quickly became famous both in India and around the world. It showed how people could stand up against environmental harm caused by big companies.

The movement was closely tied to the daily lives of the people living in the area. Women were at the heart of it because deforestation affected them the most — it caused problems like soil loss and less water. Their actions made the Chipko Movement not only about protecting trees but also about challenging unfair development policies that ignored local communities and the environment. Important figures like Sunderlal Bahuguna and Chandi Prasad Bhatt played a big role. They were inspired by Gandhi's ideas and helped connect environmental protection with social justice and sustainable development. Their efforts helped turn the movement from a local effort into a national one, calling for better forest conservation and environmental reforms.

Politically, the Chipko Movement questioned the top-down colonial model of forest management that excluded local communities It pushed for changes in India's forest policies, supporting local rights and community-based conservation. The movement also inspired similar efforts in other parts of the country, such as the Appiko Movement in Karnataka. Even today, the Chipko Movement is remembered for stopping deforestation in some areas and for changing how people think about development, fairness, and community rights. It showed that when people work together peacefully, they can influence big policies and remain a strong symbol of environmental action from the bottom up.

2.3.1 Narmada Bachao Andolan

The Narmada Bachao Andolan, or "Save the Narmada Movement", is one of India's most powerful campaigns focused on protecting the environment and defending human rights. It started in the middle of the 1980s as a big movement against building huge dams on the Narmada River, especially the Sardar Sarovar Dam in Gujarat. The protest made a lot of noise both inside India and around the world, showing how big development projects can have big effects on people, nature, and the economy. At the heart of the movement was a strong opposition to the forced relocation of people and the harm to the environment caused by building these dams. Many communities, including tribal groups, farmers, and other poor and overlooked people living in the Narmada Valley, lost their homes, jobs, and land.

The movement highlighted the failures of government plans for resettling and supporting displaced communities, noting that they neither involved people adequately, nor provided fair compensation or better living options. . Key leaders such as Medha Patkar and Baba Amte led the movement through peaceful actions. They used methods such as hunger strikes, peaceful meetings, long walks to show their cause, and legal actions. The NBA challenged the main way development has been handled in India since independence, which focused on big construction projects without considering their long-term effects on people and nature. One big achievement of the mov ement was changing how people think about development that is both sustainable and fair. It made leaders and organisations look again at the consequences of such projects and brought the concerns of those affected into the national discussion.

The movement also used legal tools like Public Interest Litigations to take its case to the Supreme Court of India. In 2000, the court made a major decision. While the dam's construction was allowed, important rules were set for protecting the environment and helping affected communities, highlighting the importance of including everyone in decision-making. The movement also made a mark internationally. The World Bank, which had previously supported the Sardar Sarovar Project, faced pressure from the protests and an independent review that criticised the project's environmental and social problems. As a result, the World Bank stopped its support in 1993, which was a rare victory for a local movement fighting against a global financial institution. More than just a protest against one dam, the Narmada Bachao Andolan criticised the common ideas about development that ignore environmental care and human rights. It continues today as a symbol of community action, pushing for fair governance, justice, and the rights of indigenous and rural people in development decisions.

2.3.2 Silent Valley Movement

The Silent Valley Movement is seen as a key moment in India's environmental history. It started in Kerala in the late 1970s when the Kerala State Electricity Board planned to build a hydroelectric dam across the Kunthi River, which flows through Silent Valley—a dense, untouched tropical rainforest in the Palakkad district. This area, part of the Western Ghats, is one of the world's most important regions for biodiversity and home to many rare and endangered animals, including the lion-tailed macaque.

The proposed dam was a major threat to this unique and sensitive ecosystem. People opposed the project, including environmentalists, scientists, writers, students, and locals who were worried about losing the area's natural beauty and wildlife. Their fight began with scientific research showing how important the region was, followed by campaigns to raise awareness through

petitions, protests, and education. Writers like Sugathakumari and groups such as the Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad helped bring more people into the movement. One of the special things about the Silent Valley Movement was that it was backed by strong science, had a lot of media attention, and involved many people from the community. Because of growing public concern and active campaigning, the issue reached the national government. A detailed study was done on the project's effects, and in 1983, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi decided to stop the dam. The next year, in 1984, Silent Valley was made a national park to protect its rich wildlife and natural resources.

This was one of the first times in India where a major construction project was stopped just because of environmental reasons. It showed how important it is to think about the environment when planning development. The Silent Valley Movement is often considered India's first modern environmental campaign. It brought together local efforts, scientific knowledge, and government action. It changed how environmental issues were discussed in the country, proving that protecting nature could influence important policies. The movement also helped set the stage for future environmental efforts and helped grow a stronger sense of environmental awareness in India.

2.3.3 Appiko Movement

The Appiko Movement was a key forest conservation effort that started in the Uttara Kannada region of Karnataka in the early 1980s. It was inspired by the Chipko Movement in Uttarakhand and used similar non-violent methods to resist harm to the environment. The word "Appiko" means "to hug" in Kannada, and it represented villagers hugging trees to stop them from being cut down by loggers and government officials. This movement began as a response to the loss of forests in the Western Ghats, which was happening due to activities like logging, planting only one type of tree, and building industries.

The movement officially started in 1983, led by Panduranga Hegde, a young environmentalist who was influenced by Sunderlal Bahuguna's ideas. People in local communities, many of whom depended on forests for their daily lives, took part by stopping loggers from cutting trees. Over time, the movement's goals grew to include raising awareness about nature, using resources in a sustainable way, and supporting jobs that depend on forests.

The Appiko Movement used creative and easy-to-understand ways to spread its message, such as folk songs, performances, walking campaigns, and meetings in villages. It respected and used the traditional knowledge of indigenous people, helping them stand up against harmful policies that hurt the environment. Women were especially important because deforestation directly affected their access to things like wood for fires, animal feed, and clean water. By involving the community in protecting the forests and giving people more control over their own resources, the Appiko Movement had a big impact on environmental thought in southern India. It led to new ways of managing forests that were more inclusive and sustainable. It also brought local environmental issues into national policy conversations, helping to push for greater environmental fairness. Today, the movement is still seen as a strong example of how community action and traditional knowledge can lead to real change for the environment.

2.3.4 Tehri Dam Protest

The Tehri Dam Protest stands out as one of the most important and long-lasting environmental and social movements in India since independence. It began as a response

to the building of the Tehri Dam on the Bhagirathi River in the Garhwal area, which is now part of Uttarakhand (formerly in Uttar Pradesh). The dam was planned to be one of the tallest in Asia and was meant to generate electricity and supply water for farming and drinking. However, it faced strong opposition because it was thought to cause major environmental harm, pose seismic risks, displace people, and destroy cultural landmarks.

Many people, including environmentalists, scientists, activists, and local citizens, joined the protest. The movement was led by Sunderlal Bahuguna, a famous environmentalist who had been a key figure in the Chipko Movement. He used non-violent methods, like hunger strikes, to draw attention to the issue. A big concern was the dam's location in an area prone to earthquakes, which made it risky and potentially dangerous if there was seismic activity. Another big issue was the displacement of thousands of people from Tehri town and the surrounding villages. The families who were affected were unhappy with the government's poor efforts to relocate them and offer fair compensation.

Environmental groups also raised concerns about the possible long-term damage to the Himalayan environment and the Ganga River, which has great spiritual importance. The protest gained wide media attention and support from many groups across the country. Even though the dam was finished in 2006, the movement had a big impact on how people talk about large infrastructure projects. It showed the importance of considering ecological safety, human rights, and sustainability, rather than just focusing on economic or technical benefits. The Tehri Dam Protest is still remembered as a powerful example of how environmental, social, and ethical issues can come together in resistance against development that ignores long-term effects.

2.3.5 Environmental Justice Movements

Environmental justice movements in India have come to light because people are realising that environmental problems are closely tied to fairness, human rights, and justice. These movements focus on the unfair way that environmental damage affects poorer and more vulnerable groups. Large projects like dams, mines, power plants, and industrial zones often lead to the forced relocation and unfair treatment of tribal people, Dalits, landless workers, and women, usually without proper compensation, discussion, or their input. At the core of environmental justice is the idea that all people have the right to live in a clean, safe, and healthy environment, no matter their wealth, background, or culture.

These movements show how environmental policies often favour city elites and big companies, while the bad effects, like pollution, environmental damage, and forced displacement, are mostly faced by poor rural areas and indigenous communities. Grassroots efforts have been key in pushing these movements forward, often backed by NGOs, legal experts, and community groups. One major change from these movements has been how environmentalism is understood in India. Instead of just focusing on protecting nature, environmental justice now stresses the importance of people's involvement, fairness, and control over natural resources.

Environmental justice movements in India have emerged from the realisation that environmental problems are deeply intertwined with issues of fairness and human rights. These movements highlight how large-scale industrial projects often disproportionately affect the most vulnerable populations, such as tribal communities and landless labourers.

A powerful case study of this is the resistance by the Dongria Kondh tribe against bauxite mining in the Niyamgiri Hills of Odisha. This struggle involved the tribe standing against Vedanta Resources, a major mining corporation, to protect their sacred and ecologically vital hills. The resistance was successful, and in a landmark decision, the Supreme Court of India ruled that local communities had the right to veto development projects on their ancestral lands. This case provided a powerful precedent, showcasing how grassroots movements, by connecting environmental preservation with social justice and tribal rights, can successfully influence national policy and legal outcomes.

Similarly, other notable examples of these struggles include the fight against coal mining in Chhattisgarh and protests against nuclear projects in Tamil Nadu, which demonstrate the wide range and seriousness of these conflicts. These movements show how environmental policies often favour city elites and big companies, while the negative effects, like pollution and forced displacement, are mostly faced by poor rural areas and indigenous communities.

The legal system has also become more involved in supporting environmental justice, especially through Public Interest Litigations (PILs). Communities and environmental groups are turning to courts to hold officials responsible and ensure environmental laws are followed. Though the results have been mixed, Indian courts have sometimes made important decisions that support community rights and set new environmental standards. In the end, environmental justice movements in India have greatly shaped the country's discussions about development and the environment. By connecting environmental protection with social fairness, these movements argue that real development must be inclusive, involve everyone, and protect the environment.

2.3.6 Role of NGOs and Grassroots Organisations

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and local community groups have played a major role in shaping environmental efforts in India and influencing how environmental decisions are made. They act as a link between local communities and government officials, helping to bring attention to the concerns of groups that are often overlooked. These organisations also create ways for people to come together and take action on shared issues. While local movements usually start from within a specific region and focus on local problems, NGOs bring in expertise in areas like legal support, scientific research, media outreach, and connections to bigger networks at the national and global levels. Together, they have become a strong presence in the environmental field of India. Examples of such movements include the Chipko Movement and the Narmada Bachao Andolan, which are led by local communities.

These movements are based on the real-life experiences of indigenous people, farmers, and those who depend on forests for their living. They use methods like spreading awareness, organising community meetings, and peaceful protests to protect their environment. For these groups, nature is not just something to use—it is essential to their way of life, culture, and social relationships.NGOs have also supported these movements by pointing out environmental dangers, conducting studies on ecological impacts, taking legal action, and working with government policies.

Organisations like the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), Kalpavriksh, and Greenpeace India have led efforts on issues such as air and water pollution, climate change, and environmental justice. They often act as watchdogs to ensure that industries and authorities follow environmental standards. The collaboration between

NGOs and community movements has greatly improved how people participate in environmental decision-making. By promoting openness, empowering local communities, and involving citizens in the process, these groups help shape policies that affect their environment.

Many NGOs have also expanded their role to influence environmental policies, taking part in international events and helping create fairer and inclusive rules. In general, the work of NGOs and grassroots groups highlights the inclusive and diverse nature of Indian democracy. These organisations serve as important checks on both government and corporate power. Their actions have helped shift the environmental discussion in India towards a more balanced, sustainable, and rights-centred approach to development.

2.3.7 Role of Women in Environmental Movements

Women have played a crucial role in India's environmental movements, often stepping up as leaders, organisers, and powerful symbols of change. Their daily lives, which involve tasks like collecting water, firewood, and food, have given them a strong connection to nature, making them key protectors of the environment. Their involvement brings important ethical, social, and ecological perspectives to environmental action, focusing on care, sustainability, and the well-being of communities. One notable example is the Chipko Movement in the 1970s, where women from the Garhwal region in Uttarakhand united to stop tree cutting by logging companies. By hugging trees, they peacefully resisted deforestation, protecting both their source of income and their natural environment. Women like Gaura Devi led these efforts, inspiring their communities and showing the strength of local female leadership. Their bravery helped the movement become a powerful symbol of environmental awareness and women's empowerment.

Beyond the Chipko Movement, women have led important environmental campaigns like the Silent Valley Movement in Kerala and the Narmada Bachao Andolan. In the Narmada region, women have raised their voices against displacement caused by dam projects, speaking out about the loss of farmland, cultural heritage, and human rights. Their presence has added moral strength and emotional depth to these struggles, making the real human and social costs of development hard to ignore. Women's participation in these movements shows how environmental issues are closely linked to gender, justice, and fairness.

Rural and indigenous women have connected ecological activism with demands for land rights, access to natural resources, and respect for traditional knowledge. Their leadership has challenged traditional development models that prioritise economic growth and infrastructure over people and the planet. In addition, women-led organisations and community efforts continue to promote sustainable practices such as tree planting, organic farming, waste management, and water conservation. These activities not only protect the environment but also support local livelihoods, promote gender equality, and help communities become more resilient. Overall, the active role of women has helped change the direction of development in India, pushing for a future that is ecologically balanced, just, and inclusive.

2.3.8 Regional and Local Environmental Struggles

Across India, various regional and local environmental movements have started as a response to ecological harm, resource misuse, and unsustainable development. Although these grassroots efforts might not get as

much attention as national campaigns, they show the urgent worries of communities whose survival is deeply tied to their natural surroundings. These movements often begin when government plans or industrial projects threaten forests, rivers, farmlands, or traditional ways of using resources. They are usually led by tribal groups, farmers, women, and fishermen. For example, in Odisha, the Dongria Kondh tribe fought against bauxite mining in the Niyamgiri Hills, which are sacred and ecologically important.

Their resistance not only protected their rights but also made the state and companies rethink their actions, showing that local struggles can influence national decisions. Along the coasts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, fishing communities have strongly opposed sea sand mining, coastal erosion, and port expansion. They stress the need to protect marine ecosystems and keep their traditional lifestyle alive. These movements often connect environmental issues with larger topics like social justice, democratic involvement, and cultural heritage.

In the forested areas of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, local communities have resisted deforestation caused by mining and infrastructure projects. They support their claim to community forest rights under the Forest Rights Act and highlight the importance of indigenous ecological knowledge. In Maharashtra, farmers have organised against big dams and thermal power plants, pushing for more sustainable water use and the protection of fertile land. These initiatives bring awareness to the environmental and human impacts of developmental strategies that ignore ecological balance and fairness.

What makes these local and regional movements special is their direct link to the real-life situations of those affected. Even though they might not get much

media coverage, they play a vital role in resistance and community-driven solutions within India's environmental scene. Through panchayats, local networks, and grassroots campaigns, these communities assert their right to take part in environmental decisions. Over time, these movements have helped shape state policies, influence court decisions, and enhance the national conversation on the environment.

2.3.9 Contemporary Youth-led Climate Activism in India

In recent times, India has seen a growing movement of climate activism led by its youth, which is part of a larger trend worldwide where young people are taking the lead in pushing for urgent climate action and environmental protection. This movement stands out for its strong online presence, inclusive approach, and focus on major changes in systems. Young activists in Indian cities, smaller towns, and schools have organised climate strikes, awareness events, online campaigns, and even legal efforts to push governments and companies to take responsibility for environmental damage and climate issues.

Inspired by the global "Fridays for Future" movement started by Greta Thunberg, Indian youth have formed local groups in major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, and Pune. These groups have held peaceful protests, school walkouts, and climate marches to demand stronger environmental policies and support for international climate agreements like the Paris Accord. People like Disha Ravi, who co-founded Fridays for Future India, have become key figures in this movement, despite facing political challenges and criticism. Their actions show the courage and determination of India's young climate activists.

In addition to global concerns, Indian youth are also addressing local environmental

problems such as urban pollution, defor- estation, excessive plastic use, and poorly planned infrastructure. A notable example is the "Save Aarey" movement in Mumbai, where students and young citizens came together to protect trees that were threat- ened by a metro construction project. This shows how young people in cities are actively working to preserve their local environment. Furthermore, young activists are increasingly pointing out how climate change affects social inequality, highlighting that the most vulnerable communities often suffer the most from environmental harm.

Digital platforms have become an import- ant tool for youth activism, helping them gather support, spread information, and create a sense of global urgency. Through social media campaigns, online petitions, and virtual protests, these movements have crossed physical boundaries and connected with international networks. Creative meth- ods like art-based campaigns, educational programs, and collaborations with scientists and legal experts have also helped expand their influence and visibility. This growing climate advocacy led by young people in India shows a shift in how environmental issues are being handled by a new generation. By promoting inclusivity, openness, and accountability, young individuals are not only fighting for a better future but also changing the conversation about development, fair- ness, and sustainability. Their increasing leadership is reshaping India's environmental movement, making it more forward-thinking, participatory, and aligned with the needs of current and future generations.

Recap

- The Chipko Movement in Uttarakhand used non-violent methods to prevent deforestation and promote community forest rights.

- The Narmada Bachao Andolan opposed large dam projects due to displacement and environmental damage.

- The Silent Valley Movement in Kerala stopped a hydroelectric project to protect biodiversity-rich forests.

- Other regional efforts like the Appiko Movement and Tehri Dam Protest highlighted the link between the environment and local livelihoods.

- Environmental justice movements in India focus on fairness, inclusion, and protecting vulnerable communities from ecological harm.

- NGOs and grassroots organisations have been vital in providing legal, scientific, and advocacy support to local struggles.

- Women have played a central role in many environmental movements, linking ecological conservation with gender justice.

- Youth-led climate activism is reshaping India's environmental politics with a focus on global solidarity and systemic change.

Objective Questions

1. In which state did the Chipko Movement originate?

2. Who was a key leader of the Chipko Movement?

3. Which movement stopped the construction of a hydroelectric project in Kerala?

4. The Narmada Bachao Andolan opposed the construction of which major dam?

5. Who is a prominent leader of the Narmada Bachao Andolan?

6. The Appiko Movement was inspired by which earlier movement?

7. What was the main concern of the Tehri Dam Protest?

8. Which concept emphasises fairness in environmental decision-making, especially for vulnerable groups?

9. Name one youth-led global climate movement active in India.

10. Which tribe in Odisha resisted bauxite mining in the Niyamgiri Hills?

Answers

1. Uttarakhand (then part of Uttar Pradesh).

2. Sunderlal Bahuguna (also Chandi Prasad Bhatt).

3. Silent Valley Movement.

4. Sardar Sarovar Dam.

5. Medha Patkar.

6. Chipko Movement.

7. Environmental risks and displacement due to dam construction in a seismic zone.

8. Environmental justice.

9. Fridays for Future.

10. Dongria Kondh tribe.

Assignments

1. Explain the main causes and outcomes of the Chipko Movement.

2. Analyse the environmental and social concerns raised by the Narmada Bachao Andolan.

3. Discuss the role of scientific research and public pressure in the Silent Valley Movement.

4. Compare the objectives and strategies of the Chipko and Appiko Movements.

5. Evaluate the environmental and human concerns associated with the Tehri Dam Protest.

6. Discuss how environmental justice movements address the needs of marginalised communities.

7. Examine the role of NGOs in supporting grassroots environmental struggles in India.

8. Analyse the importance of women's participation in India's environmental movements.

9. Explain the strategies and impact of youth-led climate activism in India.

10. Describe the link between local environmental struggles in India and global environmental movements.

Reference

1. Agarwal, Anil, and Sunita Narain (1991). *Global Warming in an Unequal World: A Case of Environmental Colonialism*. Centre for Science and Environment.

2. Bahuguna, Sunderlal (2009). *The Chipko Message*. Friends of the Earth.

3. Hardiman, David (2006). *Histories for the Subordinated*. Permanent Black.

4. Martinez-Alier, Joan (2002). *The Environmentalism of the Poor*. Edward Elgar.

5. Shiva, Vandana (2005). *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*. South End Press.

Suggested Readings

1. Baviskar, Amita (1995). *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley*. Oxford University Press.

2. Guha, Ramachandra (1989). *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*. Oxford University Press.

3. Mishra, Anupam (1993). *Aaj Bhi Khare Hain Talab*. Gandhi Peace Foundation.

4. Rangarajan, Mahesh (2015). *Nature and Nation: Essays on Environmental History*. Permanent Black.

5. Shiva, Vandana (1988). *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*. Zed Books.

QP CODE: ………

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THIRD SEMESTER BA POLITICAL SCIENCE EXAMINATION
SKILL ENHANCEMENT COURSE - **B23PS01SE** (CBCS - UG)
2024-25 - Admission Onwards
(SET A)

Time: 3 Hours   Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Objective Types Questions: Answer **any Ten**   (1x 10=10)

1. What is meant by environmental politics?

2. Name one major global environmental threat.

3. Which UN conference produced Agenda 21?

4. Who is Greta Thunberg known for inspiring?

5. What is the key idea of sustainable development?

6. Which event marked the institutionalisation of global environmental policy in 1972?

7. What is meant by ecological modernisation?

8. Name the Indian movement that protested against the construction of the Tehri Dam.

9. In which year was the Environment (Protection) Act passed in India?

10. What is the main goal of the Forest Conservation Act 1980?

11. Who regulates water pollution under Indian environmental law?

12. Which case is often used to study environmental justice in India?

13. What is meant by greenwashing?

14. Name one major youth-led climate movement in India.

15. What is the role of NGOs in environmental politics?

SECTION B

Very Short Answer Questions: answer **any five**   **(**2x5=10)

16. State two characteristics of environmental politics.

17. Briefly explain the global scope of environmental politics.

18. What were the major outcomes of the Rio Summit 1992?

19. How did the Industrial Revolution influence environmental degradation?

20. Define the concept of political ecology.

21. Write two features of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972.

22. What is the significance of public interest litigation (PIL) in environmental protection?

23. Mention any two contributions of women in Indian environmental movements.

24. What is meant by climate resilience?

25. Write a short note on the role of the judiciary in India's environmental governance.

SECTION C

Short Answer Questions: answer **any five**   **(**4x5=20)

26. Discuss the meaning and definition of environmental politics and its major characteristics.

27. Analyse the impact of the Industrial Revolution and the rise of modern environmental movements.

28. Explain the concepts of ecological modernisation and environmental justice.

29. Examine the role of the state in environmental governance and policy implementation.

30. Describe the major environmental laws in India and their objectives.

31. Evaluate the role of NGOs and grassroots organisations in Indian environmental politics.

32. Discuss the features and outcomes of the Narmada Bachao Andolan.

33. Explain the idea of environmentalism as a political ideology.

SECTION D

Long answer Question: Answer **any three**   (10x3=30)

34. Trace the historical development of environmental politics from early conservationist ideas to global climate governance.

35. Critically examine the evolution of environmental policies and legal frameworks in India since 1972.

36. Evaluate the role of international agencies and conventions in shaping global environmental politics.

37. Analyse the key theoretical perspectives – ecologism, political ecology, and ecological modernisation – in understanding environmental politics.

38. Discuss the major environmental movements in India and their contributions to sustainable development.

39. Assess the significance of youth activism in addressing the challenges of climate change.

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

THIRD SEMESTER BA POLITICAL SCIENCE EXAMINATION
SKILL ENHANCEMENT COURSE - B23PS01SE (CBCS - UG)
2024-25 - Admission Onwards
(SET B)

Time: 3 Hours   Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Objective Types Questions: Answer **any Ten**   (1x 10=10)

1. Define environmentalism as a political ideology.

2. Name one key global environmental convention.

3. What is the role of the UNEP?

4. State one challenge faced by global environmental politics.

5. What does Agenda 21 promote?

6. What is the main idea behind deep ecology?

7. Who inspired the Fridays for Future movement?

8. Name one ecological practice from pre-colonial India.

9. Which Act regulates air pollution in India?

10. What is the objective of the National Green Tribunal (NGT)?

11. Name any one contemporary youth-led environmental movement in India.

12. What does the concept of environmental justice emphasise?

13. Which Indian movement aimed to protect forests in the Western Ghats?

14. What is meant by environmental governance?

15. Which year saw the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment?

SECTION B

Very Short Answer Questions: answer **any five**   (2x5=10)

16. Describe two major global environmental threats discussed in the course.

17. Explain the national-level scope of environmental politics.

18. Write a short note on the role of the UN in global environmental protection.

19. What are the basic principles of the Environmental Protection Act 1986?

20. Mention any two features of the post-Independence environmental scenario in India.

21. What was the main contribution of the Chipko Movement?

22. Define the concept of sustainable development as a political project.

23. Write a note on the role of pollution-control boards in India.

24. What do you understand by distributional politics in environmental issues?

25. What is the major focus of the National Environmental Policy 2006?

SECTION C

Short Answer Questions: answer **any five**   (4x5=20)

26. Discuss the global, national, and local dimensions of environmental politics with examples.

27. Analyse the rise of modern environmental movements and their influence on policy.

28. Explain the main tenets of Green Political Theory and its normative foundations.

29. Evaluate the importance of environmental legislation such as the Water and Air Acts.

30. Examine the role of the judiciary and PIL in enforcing environmental rights.

31. Describe the major trends in contemporary Indian environmental politics and climate activism.

32. Explain the Bhopal Gas Tragedy as a case study of environmental justice.

33. Discuss the relationship between environmental governance and sustainable development.

SECTION D

Long answer Question: Answer **any three**   (10x3=30)

34. Critically analyse the historical phases of environmental politics – from early conservation to global climate governance.

35. Evaluate the evolution of environmental politics in India, highlighting colonial and post-independence transformations.

36. Examine how global environmental conventions, such as the Rio Summit and Paris Agreement, shaped international policy.

37. Assess the effectiveness of India's key environmental legislations in protecting the environment.

38. Discuss the contribution of major environmental movements (Chipko, Silent Valley, Appiko, Narmada) to India's environmental consciousness.

39. Analyse the role of women and youth in shaping contemporary environmental movements in India.

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യയാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കൂരിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ
ജ്ഞാനകേന്ദ്രമേ ജ്വലിക്കണേ

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Regional Centres

Kozhikode
Govt. Arts and Science College
Meenchantha, Kozhikode,
Kerala, Pin: 673002
Ph: 04952920228
email: rckdirector@sgou.ac.in

Thalassery
Govt. Brennen College
Dharmadam, Thalassery,
Kannur, Pin: 670106
Ph: 04902990494
email: rctdirector@sgou.ac.in

Tripunithura
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Tripunithura, Ernakulam,
Kerala, Pin: 682301
Ph: 04842927436
email: rcedirector@sgou.ac.in

Pattambi
Sree Neelakanta Govt. Sanskrit College
Pattambi, Palakkad,
Kerala, Pin: 679303
Ph: 04662912009
email: rcpdirector@sgou.ac.in

DON'T LET IT
BE TOO LATE

SAY
NO
TO
DRUGS

LOVE YOURSELF
AND ALWAYS BE
HEALTHY

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

Environmental Politics

COURSE CODE: B23PS01SE