The politics of the environment in India: A preliminary study

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Abstract: Environmental concerns originated as a result of the massive social changes that happened in the United States following World War II. While environmentalism has a long history, and it wasn't until after World War II that it has become a widely recognised social issue. This began with outdoor recreation in the 1950s, grew into the wider field of natural resource preservation, and then became integrated with efforts to combat air as well as water pollution, and later hazardous chemical contaminants. Just after Cold War, the environment became a major priority for scholarly analysis, not just because scholars were concerned about conservation, pollution, and resource depletion, but that's because there are intriguing technical puzzles surrounding how the international system should address them as well as the effects that occur from the implementation of novel forms of governance, organizations, and agencies. Social demonstrations and opposing organisations have sprung up in response to India's looming ecological catastrophe, often at the grassroots level. Chipko's attempts to preserve mountain forests have garnered worldwide media attention, as has widespread opposition to the Narmada Dam project. They are signs of growing grass-roots political opposition. They are, according to Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, the most visible instances of environmental political activity in India.

Keywords: Environmental, Pollution, political activity, conservation, Humanity

1. INTRODUCTION

The environment is increasingly becoming a key component of international relations, and with an increased focus on changing climate in particular, it is a topic of considerable interest in diplomatic circles. With nations at threat of being submerged by rising seas and substantial disruptions to water supply as well as agricultural systems expected in the coming decades if greenhouse gases are not drastically reduced, environmental problems have become a focal point of contemporary international politics as well as academic research. Just after Cold War, the environment became a major priority for scholarly analysis, not just because scholars were concerned about conservation, pollution, and resource depletion, but that's because there are intriguing technical puzzles surrounding how the international system should address them as well as the effects that occur from the implementation of novel forms of governance, organizations, and agencies.

Environmental politics is a term that encompasses both environmental politics (often referred to as environmental policy) and an academic field of study which comprises of three critical components:

•   Environment political theories as well as ideas are analyzed;

•   Environmental stances of mainstream parties and ecology social movements are evaluated; and

•   governmental policies and their execution affecting the environment at different geopolitical levels are evaluated.

As per Neil Carter's seminal work Politics of a Environment, environmental politics appears to be fundamentally distinct in at least two different ways: first, "it must be preoccupied with relationship between human society and the natural world"; and furthermore, "unlike most other single issues, it is also replete from its own ideology and political movement."

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Environmental concerns originated as a result of the massive social changes that happened in the United States following World War II. While environmentalism has a long history, and it wasn't until after World War II that it has become a widely recognised social issue. This began with outdoor recreation in the 1950s, grew into the wider field of natural resource preservation, and then became integrated with efforts to combat air as well as water pollution, and later hazardous chemical contaminants. Following WWII, environment politics had become a major source of worry for the public. This period saw the development of environmentalist in the United Kingdom, after the great London fog in 1952 as well as the Torrey Canyon oil disaster in 1967. This is reflected in the evolution of green politics throughout the Western world during the 1970s .

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As per William Ophuls, democratic governments are unsuited for tackling environmental issues, and overcoming these obstacles would require a shift to much more authoritarian forms of governance. Some argue against this, noting the historical effectiveness of environmental reform campaigns in liberal countries in addressing water and air quality. Indeed, through increasing democratic involvement and fostering political creativity, environmentalism has the potential to strengthen rather than undermine democracy.

The conflicts among liberal democracy as well as environmental needs express concern regarding democracy's (or, at least, democracy as we realise it) prospective limitations: through its capacity to reply back to subtle and yet significant issues, in its capacity to work holistically in society, and in its appropriateness for coping with global crises in comparison to other types of government. Democracies lack the skills essential to implement environmental improvements that are not mandated by voters, and so many people lack the motivation or desire to demand reforms that jeopardize their immediate financial security. Thus, the question becomes one of morality against practicality in politics. Environmental ethics, a framework that sees and respects the environment in a way that transcend human usefulness, may be essential for democracies to react to changing climate.

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In India, natural resource disputes do indeed have a longstanding experience. At least since before the seventeenth century, disputes with such an evident environmental component had occurred Nevertheless, at the time, conflicts over the rights to use forest products or drinkable water were seen as more social in character than ecological. Ecological problems were seen as allocation of resources issues instead of long-term survival problems .

Gadgiland Guha asserts that several ecological disputes in India remain to have a stronger social element than in developed nations. When disputes over land usage, access to water, or urban space arise, the poor people's livelihoods and existence are frequently endangered.

As per Sumi Krishna, overall focus of academics and reporters on impoverished people who participated in environmental disputes seems probably to be on preserving their present livelihood. This comprises the well-known Chipko & Narmada campaigns on a global scale. The first lawsuit concerned individuals' rights to access and utilise forest land. Farmers in the second circumstance despise flooding on their property. Ecological thinking has developed into some kind of tool in these movements' socioeconomic fight for livelihood protection. This facilitated the formation of alliances amongst different groups.

3. METHODOLOGY

The topic of research is doctrinal in nature. The researcher intends to collect the latest and valid data regarding research and so collected it from various books, articles, journals, newspapers, websites, current events, and report publish annually. The essential information's incorporate instituted laws, legal choices, reports of the boards of trustees and commissions, discussions and conversations and so on. These sources are the viewpoints of the writers, legal advisers gathered from significant books distributed by the Indian and outside writers and articles distributed in different diaries and papers and periodicals. The web has been gotten to find out applicable material in regard to similar investigation.

4. GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT & POLITICS

From outside the United States, most of this attracted considerable political attention, as well as the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was convened in Stockholm in 1972. Barbara Ward and Rene Dubos named the meeting's unauthorized introductory report 'Only One Earth.' The NASA cover picture for the British Penguin version of 'Earth Rising' captures the report's central theme. The convention was decided to boycott by Warsaw Pact countries but instead attended only by just few heads of state, but still it garnered widespread attention, particularly once Indira Gandhi proclaimed that poverty would be the worst form of pollution and also that developed nations should refrain from using environmental assertions to stymie the growing importance of poor as well as post-colonial states. Perhaps most lasting impact of this conference is that all these problems were firmly placed on the global stage, and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) was established to facilitate talks about how global community should respond.

After that, debates regarding international maritime law including ideas about humanity's common history expanded worries over environmental problems to include the oceans in addition to land, outer space, as well as atmosphere issues. During 1983, research on the possibility of a nuclear winter following a nuclear war between superpowers concluded that early deaths from nuclear explosions would've been accompanied by a substantial drop in global temperatures caused by smoke and dust in the atmosphere. The ecological implications of this fast climate change have been proposed to herald the end of civilization. These debates connected climate change to fundamental issues in international politics, even while highlighting why human activity seemed capable of altering the planet's core geophysics .

Concerns about nuclear winter became increased after the 1986 meltdown of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, and also increasing worry about ozone depletion. Simultaneously, debates over environmental sustainability raged, resulting in the 1987 publishing of Our Common Future by the World Conference on Environment and Development. The study, nicknamed the 'Brundtland Report' just after commission's Norwegian chairman, set the foundation for the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development at Rio de Janeiro, that culminated in the UNs Framework Convention on Climate Change's creation (UNFCCC). Nevertheless, critics seemed to be keen to point out here that, notwithstanding all of the rhetoric regarding protecting the planet and attempting to address development challenges, rich and privileged states as well as corporations were much more interested in maintaining business as normal than it was with poverty eradication or introducing innovative modes of economic growth which would make sure marginal peoples as well as places' long-term survivability.

Even as Cold War ended, growing environmental issues corresponded with a number of important topics in the research of Global Affairs at the time. Such beliefs continue to influence how many investigations are conducted. Although international affairs provide some impetus, they also are influenced by the way environmental problems are presented in domestic politics and by broader political trends. The emphasis on international agencies and liberal political economics had influenced much of the debate over international bodies and the importance of epistemic communities in facilitating agreement. Foreign relations had long been involved with warfare, the risks of global war, and methods to avoid it. After the Cold War, critical theorists looked at ecological conflict and the potential of using resource disputes as just a cause of warfare. Awareness about global injustices, and also the role of production and commerce in assessing how pollution, land use, as well as resource exploitation occur on a global scale, had already emphasised the significance of global inequalities as well as the importance of production and commerce in assessing how pollution, land use, as well as resource exploitation occur on a global scale.

The widespread assumption that developed civilizations are environmentally conscious while developing countries are not is false. This is especially true in South Asia. The environment, according to Anil Agarwal is an 'idea that has achieved its pinnacle in India. '

India has had a vibrant environmental discussion and a high level of legislative activity for even more than 2 decades. This inevitably increased as a result of the 1984 Bhopal gas catastrophe, which resulted in the 1986 Environment Protection Act. There is widespread agreement, however, that the effects of many reforms and legislation have been unsatisfactory. The execution was atrocious. India's economic direction would be almost certainly unsustainable at the moment. As a result, its present development plan is under fire for being environmentally irresponsible.

As per a 1996 Study by the world bank, India's overall environmental degradation cost $9.7 billion US dollars during 1992. This was equal to 4.5 percent of its GDP. China as well as Mexico each spend 2.6 & 3.3 percent of GDP, respectively. Environmental degradation is predicted to occur annually in industrialized countries at a rate of between 1% and 2%. Anil Agarwal believed that perhaps the World Bank's estimates for India were overstated as they excluded biodiversity loss, health expenses related to hazardous waste, and other deforestation-related effects other than wood shortage.

Pollution of both the water and air, and also an unsanitary, waste and industrial waste disposal, and some other critical urban facilities, all hinder India's cities' development considerably. Soil erosion, water pollution, deforestation, and a lack of safe drinking water are the main ecological problems in rural Areas of India. In cities, approximately to a third of household garbage has never been collected by municipal authorities. Slums, that account for about one-fifth of India's metropolitan population, are particularly heinous. Approximately three-quarters of city dwellers in India lack sufficient sanitation.

India's environmental condition is generally dismal. According to J. Mohan Rao, 60% of farmland has been degraded to different degrees. Semi-arid and unstable soils were ploughed. Depletion is accelerated by erosion, waterlogging, overgrazing, and salinization. Whereas the government aims to cover one-third of the nation with forest, by late 1980s, the proportion had fallen towards less than 20%. 70% of surface streams seem to be very contaminated. Around 80% of population lacks consistent access to clean drinking water.

These statistics demonstrate why India need strict environmental regulations. Nevertheless, since before the early 1970s, the topic seems to have been a part of potential contention. India's opposition and societal movements have been fueled by the inadequacy of environmental policy.

5. DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGES FOR ENVIRONMENT IN INDIA

Climate change occurs slowly in comparison to the political cycles of electoral democracy, impeding responses of politicians elected as well as re-elected on the far shorter timeframes. Even though "environmentalism" was previously thought to become a White phenomenon with in United States, researchers have found "pro-environment attitudes between many Latino, African-American, as well as non-Hispanic fair skinned respondents," with Latinos in specific demonstrating an increasing awareness of global concern. Other research indicates that Asian Americans are generally highly pro-environment, but there is considerable variance among ethnic communities.

To effectively address global warming, some form of environmental governance would be required to meet agreed-upon energy consumption and environmental management targets. Climate change challenges both political theory and practise, altering people's perceptions of future civilizations as well as economic systems equally. Technical remedies to changing climate are ineffective due of material disparities between countries. But at the other hand, political solutions might answer for the distinctive characteristics of different aspects of the environmental problem. By highlighting a community's connection with the environment, mitigating climate change measures might run counter to democratic values like wealth, development, and state sovereignty.

At the moment, the global political society is founded on liberal values which emphasize personal rights and capitalistic systems that impede swift and comprehensive climate solutions. An interest-group-led liberalism is driven by particular human goals. The political settlement eliminates individuals who lack the ability to communicate for themselves, including minorities lacking voting rights or non-humans. Resolving environmental crises might well be hampered if people of democratic societies fail to acknowledge the effect of environmental issues on everyday lives or lack the necessary knowledge to assess the problem's significance. Human advantages associated with environmental exploitation as well as preservation are in direct competition with one another. By contemplating the consequences of ecological degradation of possible human generations, environmental issues may be rooted in humanistic liberal democratic politics. Krishna draws parallels between both the Chipko as well as Narmada protests and other instances of people banding together along language or caste lines. The latter are much more peaceful and successful in garnering support from beyond their own areas. Additionally, they appear to be more effective at ensuring the livelihood of those engaged. Ecological arguments mobilize entire networks within civil society, allowing for a broader range of effective opposition to government authority. Academics have lent considerable support towards grass-roots environmental groups. These are critical problems for India's urban elites. The Centre for Science and the Environment pioneered internationally recognised non-governmental assessments of environmental degradation.

6. DISCUSSION

Social scientists and economists who seem to be critical of the current quo often argue for a different development model. They argue that current economic reform and global market integration policies contribute to the emergence of ecological catastrophes. Rural people' empowerment is supposed to result in far more environmental preservation. And besides, the rural poor, especially, are directly dependent on their community's and surroundings' biomass production. Though this has often helped rural poor people on the ground, it has also been harmed by the maze of legislative politics as well as the public culture that defines the nation's development debate. This incapacity to have a larger effect dates all the way back to the nineteenth century. Although Rachel Carson's 1962 novel Silent Spring ignited Western self-conscious environmentalism, the topic got little people's attention in India until the 1972 UNs Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm. Mostly as a result, when environmentalist made its American debut in the 1970s, it was heavily impacted by western concerns. At first, occasional attempts were made to lessen the impact of the new problems via the use of formulaic words. Indira Gandhi's 1972 Stockholm conference statement, 'Poverty is the primary polluter,' is such example. The statement convinced an entire generation young South Asians believing poverty was the major cause of environmental degradation and that India, which was largely poor at the time, would not even have to win environmental fights until its poverty reduced. Priority was given to growth. As a result, the looting and misuse of resources by the rich and powerful stayed concealed from public scrutiny, whether it's in the North or the South. Many, such as Rajni Kothari, contended at the time in which the environmental issue should be viewed as interwoven with larger development choices, but now even such views attracted increasing attention from the outside India than that from inside. They were considered to be individuals' hobby horses .

CONCLUSION

Under this research, I have discussed that since before the 1970s Chipko uprising against agreement chopping down in the western Himalayas, Indian western society had also changed from movement to movement—the tussle against Silent Valley dam, the campaign to safeguard the Taj Mahal from pollution, the PIL for Ganga cleanup, and the public outcry and condemnation following the methyl iodide leakage. Apart from the movements as well as outstanding works on them, like Vandana Shiva as well as Jayanta Bandyopadhyay's Chipko and Claude Alvars and Romesh Bollore's Narmada, the Centre for Science and Environment's two Citizens' findings on the State of the Environment served as critical key elements for environmental discussions in Indian public life . 'Yet, after a decade and a half, no truly major pan-Indian environmental campaign or political consciousness about the exploitation and misuse of environmental assets, and about the severe constraints imposed by the current development paradigm, has developed.' Furthermore, ever since 1992 Rio summit, the environmental discourse has grown even more state-centric, owing to the importance and national commitment towards the Rio-established global environmental objective, as well as the international diplomacy surrounding that objective. The relationship between the environment and politics is a very delicate one and both work hand in hand nowadays at domestic and international levels.

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