

# Environment and Society: Climate Change and Sustainable Development

Ramesh K. Sharma, Surbhi Tandon\*

Vivekananda School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies-TC,  
CGS IP University, Delhi, India

The book “Environment and Society: Climate Change and Sustainable Development”, authored by Dr. Subhash Sharma, and Dr. Kshipra Sharma, offers a thorough and accessible exploration of environmental sociology. Dr. Sharma, an eminent scholar and development practitioner, and Dr. Kshipra Sharma, an Assistant Professor in a College at University of Delhi, bring together their extensive knowledge and expertise to present a comprehensive analysis of the intricate relationship between environment and society.

The book is structured to provide a systematic and step-by-step approach to understanding environmental sociology. It begins by tracing the origins of the field, offering readers a foundational understanding of how environmental sociology has evolved with time. The authors delve into the realist-constructionist debate within ecology, providing a balanced and holistic examination of these contrasting perspectives.

## ARTICLE INFO

### Correspondence

Surbhi Tandon  
surbhitandon71@  
gmail.com

### Keywords

Climate Change,  
Environmental  
Sociology, Global  
South.

### How to cite:

Sharma, R.K., &  
Tandon, S. (2024).  
Environment  
and Society:  
Climate Change  
and Sustainable  
Development.  
Vivekananda Journal  
of Research,  
14(2), 175–179

A notable feature of the book is its inclusion of case studies from various regions, including Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. This global perspective is further enriched by introducing theoretical perspectives from Asia, Africa, and South America, which challenges the often Western-centric narrative in environmental studies. These case studies and theories provide a more comprehensive and inclusive view of environmental sociology, making the book relevant to a diverse readership.

Separate chapters dedicated to sustainable development and climate change reflect the authors’ commitment to addressing contemporary global challenges. These chapters are particularly valuable for readers seeking to understand the complexities of these issues and their implications for society. Additionally, the book discusses ecological movements in India, highlighting the unique environmental challenges of **Global South**. This focus on the Global South is critical, as it brings attention to regions often underrepresented in environmental discourse.

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The book is tailored to meet the needs of undergraduates, postgraduates, and civil services aspirants. Its inclusion of indigenous approaches and its effort to go beyond Western scholarship make it an indispensable resource for students of sociology, climate change, environmental studies, and sustainable development.

The book "Environment and Society: Climate Change and Sustainable Development" is structured into nine chapters, with Chapter 1 entitled "Environmental Sociology: Its Origins and Concerns." This chapter offers a thorough examination of the origins of environmental sociology, situating the discipline within contemporary debates and its intersections with related fields, such as Gender and Nature studies. It establishes the foundation for the book by engaging in a rich discussion of the key concepts of 'Sociology' and 'Environmental Sociology.' The chapter traces the development of these terms, drawing on the seminal works of prominent thinkers and philosophers, including Aristotle, Comte, Marx, Durkheim, and George Herbert Mead. The chapter highlights the growing significance of environmental sociology, particularly in response to the challenges posed by industrialization and rapid urbanization, which necessitated a reorientation of traditional sociology to incorporate environmental perspectives. It traces the evolution of the field from the 1970s through the early 2000s, with special attention to the Indian context, where British colonial capitalism is referred to as 'Carboniferous Capitalism.' The book acknowledges the notable contribution of the great Indian sociologist, Radha Kamal Mukherjee, who pioneered the disciplines in the 1930s and 1940s, especially Social Ecology and Region Ecology while Western Environmental Sociology developed quite late in the 1970s. The chapter also incorporates global perspectives and case studies, such as the knowledge systems of the Maori Tribe of New Zealand, as outlined in Box 1.1. The text explores the complex interactions between natural resources, population growth, and development in the contemporary era, where human interventions and anthropogenic factors are central to issues such as climate change and global warming. Indian examples, such as the declining groundwater levels in Ghaziabad-Noida (Box 1.2), are used to illustrate these dynamics. The chapter further examines recent nuclear disasters,

including the Chernobyl and Fukushima accidents, within the context of environmental movements, particularly those opposing nuclear plants in India. A significant portion of the chapter is devoted to the realist-constructivist debate in Environmental Studies, offering both global and Indian perspectives. Authors have critically analysed various perspectives pointing out their positive contributions to the knowledge - production as well as their limitations. It also delves into Gender and Nature, and Feminist Environmentalism, discussing iconic environmental movements in India, such as the Chipko Movement, which underscores the crucial role of women, especially in rural areas, in environmental conservation. The chapter concludes with Table 1.4, which succinctly compares various ideological and realist perspectives in environmental studies.

Chapter 2, entitled "Approaches to Environment and Society," elucidates the intricate interconnections between environmental issues and various facets of society, including social relations, politics, scientific advancements, modernization, modes of production, and women's movements. The chapter systematically explores themes such as human ecology, the treadmill of production, ecological modernization, ecofeminism, political ecology, and ecological Marxism. The section on human ecology examines the complex interplay between natural environments, cultural practices, and societal norms. It provides a comprehensive discourse on the evolution of environmental debates, analyzing perspectives from idealists, passive materialists, active materialists, and neo-classical economists. Additionally, it delves into historical discussions in the Western context, particularly those arising during the onset of the Industrial Revolution in the UK and USA. To facilitate a nuanced understanding of environmental discourse, Table 2.1 offers foundational definitions of key terms, including organism, species, population, community, ecosystem, and biome. The chapter further engages with debates surrounding the origins of various paradigms in human ecology, such as the Human Exceptionalism Paradigm (HEP) and the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP). It also scrutinizes the concept of the Treadmill of Production, supplemented by case studies on environmental racism and classism presented in Box 2.3, which includes examples from the

Indian context like Anna Hazare's village, Ralegan Siddhi, in Maharashtra. Ecological Modernization is examined in depth, highlighting its practical implementation through green technology initiatives. The chapter provides a holistic analysis of ecofeminism, exploring its various streams and drawing upon the seminal works of Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva. This exploration is complemented by a comparative analysis of the different streams of ecofeminism, succinctly presented in Table 2.9. Further sections delve into Cultural Ecology and Ecological Marxism, offering a broad perspective on the multifaceted approaches to understanding the relationship between environment and society.

Chapter 3, entitled "Sustainable Development: Concept, Principles, and Practices," delves into the historical evolution, modern interpretations, and actionable strategies for achieving genuine sustainable transitions within the economy. The chapter opens with an exploration of the concept of sustainability as understood by ancient civilizations, including references to Greek and Roman mythology, and provides a detailed analysis of sustainability as a foundational concept in Indian mythology and cultural practices. Table 3.1 illustrates the collapse of significant civilizations, cities, and other historical events due to environmental changes, such as the decline of the Sumerian Civilization, the Indus Valley Civilization, the disappearance of the Saraswati River in India, and the Pyramids in Egypt. The chapter then traces the evolution of the concept of 'Sustainable Development' in the modern context, beginning with the first UN Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, through the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1983, to the publication of the Brundtland Commission Report in 1987, entitled "Our Common Future." Table 3.4 outlines the report's primary concerns, challenges, and recommended initiatives. The discussion extends to the Rio Declaration of 1992, the Millennium Development Goals, and the Sustainable Development Goals. The chapter thoroughly examines the core principles of Sustainable Development, presenting perspectives from Bio-environmentalists, Market Liberals, Institutionalists, and Social Greens. It includes case studies from Odisha and Mumbai, questioning whether Sustainable Development is a reality or a myth, and offers concrete ideas and strategies for

transitioning to genuine sustainability, drawing on examples from the USA and Mexico.

Chapter 4, entitled "Development, Displacement & Rehabilitation," provides an in-depth analysis of the concept of development, its associated challenges and concerns, and the resulting displacement and rehabilitation strategies. The chapter begins by outlining the fundamental principles of development, considering both the Indian perspective and modern interpretations, particularly those rooted in Western thought. It discusses various metrics for measuring development, from GDP (Gross Domestic Product) to GNHI (Gross National Happiness Index). The chapter also explores the challenges that accompany development, such as income inequalities, environmental degradation, and gender-related developmental issues. The concept of 'Development' is examined through various lenses, including Marxist, Post-Modern, Post-Colonial, Dependency Theory, Neo-Liberal, Human Development, and Social Development approaches. The chapter engages in extensive debates on the interconnections between development and migration, highlighting the complexities of both forced and voluntary migration, and the strategies for resettlement and rehabilitation. A critical appraisal of the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 and the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation, and Resettlement Act of 2013 is provided. The chapter also includes a detailed case study of displacement in Jharkhand, India.

Chapter 5, entitled "Ecological Movements in India," offers a comprehensive analysis of environmental conservation movements and popular resistance for environmental causes in India. It provides an in-depth examination of major ecological movements, including the Chipko Movement, the Silent Valley Movement, and the Narmada Bachao Andolan, detailing their origins, key participants, formation, phases, consolidation, outcomes, and overall contributions to the ecological movement in India. Table 5.4 presents a comparative analysis of these three significant environmental movements. The chapter also sheds light on other notable movements, such as the Plachimada Movement against Coca-Cola in Kerala in 2000, anti-nuclear

power movements in India, and the Ganga Mukti Andolan in Bhagalpur, Bihar.

Chapter 6, entitled “Global Environmental Politics,” explores the emergence of environmental conservation as a significant concern in the 20th century, particularly among Western nations and developed countries that had heavily exploited natural resources and the environment during the Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries. The chapter traces the rise of various non-governmental organizations, such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and Greenpeace International, which played pivotal roles in pressuring governments and citizens to take environmental action. The chapter also provides an in-depth examination of the evolution of three key ecological schools of thought, along with their subsequent revisions and perspectives. It addresses the intersections between consumerism and the proliferation of hazardous wastes, highlighting the global development of dumping grounds and their detrimental environmental consequences. A comparative analysis is presented between developed and developing countries, emphasizing the differing impacts and responses to environmental challenges. Table 6.4 catalogs significant environmental events that occurred globally, providing a timeline of key developments in environmental politics.

In addition, the chapter offers a comprehensive analysis of Indian environmentalism, both in terms of ideology and practice. It includes examples and case studies of specialized local communities in India, such as the Bishnois of Rajasthan (Box 6.2), who have long been committed to environmental conservation. This section underscores the unique contributions of these communities to the broader environmental movement in India.

Chapter 7, entitled “Climate Change and Society,” explores the conceptualization of climate change and examines its short-term and long-term implications, particularly those stemming from the extreme weather conditions it induces. The chapter highlights how climate change has emerged as a pressing real-time issue, especially since 2015, supported by reports and statistics documenting rising global temperatures, melting glaciers, and changes in oceanic conditions.

The chapter introduces the concept of the ‘New Normal’ brought about by climate change and its far-reaching consequences, such as migration in South Asia (Box 7.2) and the impacts on ocean ecosystems (Box 7.3). It elaborates on the multifaceted challenges posed by climate change on both national and global scales, and includes a carefully curated list of recent climate-related events worldwide, presented in Table 7.2. Further, the chapter discusses the interconnections between climate change and urbanization, as well as the recent global frameworks, guidelines, protocols, and treaties addressing climate change, including the UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement, and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). It also outlines policy implications and interventions necessary to combat climate change, with specific reference to initiatives undertaken by the Indian government, such as the Green India Mission (Box 7.8).

Chapter 8 entitled “Global Environmental Issues,” offers a nuanced and comprehensive overview of a wide range of environmental concerns, exploring their causes, scale, and effects. The chapter covers critical issues such as noise pollution, air pollution, soil pollution, water pollution, radiation, acid rain, ozone layer depletion, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. These topics are illustrated with case studies and examples drawn from both India and abroad, providing a global perspective on these pressing environmental challenges.

Chapter 9, entitled “Commons for the Communities: A Critique of the ‘Tragedy of the Commons,’” delves into the theoretical framework of common property resources (CPRs). It discusses how CPRs enable communities and marginalized groups to access and judiciously manage these resources, fostering the idea of sustainable livelihoods. The chapter also addresses the conflicts that arise over CPRs at various levels—individual, group, and caste—illustrated through case studies from Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat (Box 9.1). Furthermore, the chapter critically examines the institutional and governance mechanisms for managing CPRs, offering a thorough critique of the ‘Tragedy of the Commons’ hypothesis. This critique is supported by examples from Meghalaya (Box 9.2), Puducherry (Box 9.3), and Uttar Pradesh (Box 9.4). The chapter concludes with a comprehensive framework of

alternative theories related to the management of common resources, enriched by seven case studies from different parts of the world.

Each chapter of the book is followed by “Points for Discussion,” which present critical questions and topics for debate, allowing readers to engage deeply with the important and complex issues discussed throughout the text. Book is a well-researched, comprehensive, and accessible text that provides readers with a deep understanding of environmental sociology. Its global perspective, coupled with its focus on the Global South and indigenous approaches, makes it a valuable contribution to the field.

The authors have effectively bridged the theoretical and empirical knowledge gaps by including various thematic tables (89) that present both qualitative and quantitative data, along with numerous case studies (42) from both the Global North and South. The first author who has an extensive experience in the field of development, sociology and ecology has further enhanced the book from his extensive practical experiences at the grassroots level (field view of reality). Additionally, the authors have included a wealth of relevant references, ensuring the book’s academic rigor. This comprehensive work, rich in both scope and detail, is deserving of genuine appreciation.

## BOOK DETAILS:

- **Title:** Environment and Society: Climate Change and Sustainable Development
- **ISBN:** 9781032372808
- **No of Pages:** 406 Pages, B/W Illustrations
- **Published by:** Routledge India
- **Publication date & year:** March 28, 2023

- **Price:** Paperback: £37.99, Hardback: ₹1795.00 & eBook: £34.19

- **Author(s):**

Dr. Subhash Sharma, an Independent Scholar and Development Practitioner with over two dozen books published in English and Hindi. His book on human rights was awarded the first prize by National Human Rights Commission, New Delhi, in 2011.

Dr. Kshipra Sharma, an Assistant Professor at Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi, India.

- **Online Visibility:** <https://www.routledge.com/Environment-and-Society-Climate-Change-and-Sustainable-Development/Sharma-Sharma/p/book/9781032372808>

