



ISSN Print: 2394-7500  
ISSN Online: 2394-5869  
Impact Factor (RJIF): 8.4  
IJAR 2024; 10(11): 106-108  
[www.allresearchjournal.com](http://www.allresearchjournal.com)  
Received: 09-10-2024  
Accepted: 15-11-2024

**Dr. Shiv Ji Malviya**  
Deputy Secretary, U.P. Siksha  
Sewa Chayan Ayog, Prayagraj,  
Uttar Pradesh, India

## Environmental politics in world scenario

**Dr. Shiv Ji Malviya**

### Abstract

Environmental politics in the United States got off to a rough start in the 1960s. It is now hard to imagine a time when environmental issues were controversial. But denial of the seriousness of problems was the norm rather than the exception until recently. Oil was cheap in the U.S and wasteful use of energy in American industry was routine. Awareness of potential problems grew in the 1960s as smog hung over the air above major cities such as Los Angeles, radioactive fallout from nuclear weapons testing spread throughout the Midwest, and pesticides contaminated agricultural products. The publication of Rachel Carson's best-selling book *Silent Spring* in 1962 was the first turning point in the rise of environmentalism. Carson argued that humans and nature were interdependent. The arguments she presented in this famous book eventually led to the reduction of DDT use. But Carson, who died of cancer two years after the book's publication, was widely dismissed as a hysterical woman by interests hostile to environmental regulation.

**Keywords:** Growth, capitalism, natural resources and environment

### Introduction

All this political activity took place against a backdrop of intense ideological debate. Two dominant positions were advanced by leading scientific commentators on the environment. Paul Ehrlich's 1968 bestseller, *The Population Bomb*, predicted mass starvation in the coming decades. This Malthusian tendency was soon joined by advocates of limited economic growth. The Club of Rome published its famous study, *The Limits to Growth*, in 1972. It argued that industrial civilization would soon swallow up its natural base and collapse. These commentators focused on the scarcity of food and resources.

The focus was on pollution and the proposed solution was to redesign technology to make it more environmentally friendly. An influential advocate for this position is Barry Commoner, a biologist who is also an avowed socialist. His 1971 bestseller *The Closing Circle* argued that capitalist economics and ecology are incompatible. One of Commoner's famous "rules" about ecology states, "Everything must go somewhere." The struggle for more profit was being done at the expense of the earth as air and water were being contaminated to save money on waste disposal. Ultimately, he argued that an environmentally conscious government must intervene in technological matters to orient innovation and development toward concrete solutions to environmental problems.

The economic basis of Commoner's position is the familiar discrepancy between the pursuit of private profit and the preservation of public goods. Human well-being is the sum of both private and public goods, but capitalism focuses only on the private kind. In both cases the public subsidizes a private business and enables it to make money without any compensation. Converting freely available natural resources into sources of private profit reduces overall social welfare and creates a "debt to nature" that must be repaid. Commoner argues that the supply of public goods available for exploitation in this way is limited and, as it diminishes, the basic conditions of social life are undermined. Ecological balance is of far more than economic interest. It sustains life as a whole in all its aspects. Disrupting eco-systems would thus have disastrous consequences.

Another important point of convergence concerns technology. At the time, technological determinism was a widely held view and it seemed obvious to most people that the pursuit of higher productivity and efficiency conflicted with environmental values. We were told that we would be forced to choose between prosperity and survival. Commoner argued that this conflict could be avoided by redesigning technology to provide prosperity in

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Dr. Shiv Ji Malviya**  
Deputy Secretary, U.P. Siksha  
Sewa Chayan Ayog, Prayagraj,  
Uttar Pradesh, India

environmentally friendly forms. Today, technological determinism is no longer as common sense as it was when Commoner wrote *The Closing Circle*. Now his argument can be buttressed by much of the industrial experience and theoretical work in technology studies. Environmental politics has emerged as a form of technology politics. It is a result of this history from which other nations can learn much.

Natural resources are directly related to the environment. So far, environmentalism, green politics, environmental feminism have been the main concepts for environmental protection, which as a social movement for the protection of natural resources, environmental protection, and ecological systems, in which the environmental political process is influenced through social education towards the environment, environmental activism and environmental standards are determined in its concepts. Green politics is an environmental people's revolution, whereas environmental politics is related to the exploitation of resources in the name of development and ignoring the environment by considering development as the priority. Environmental politics is a new concept, in which politics is given importance and environment is deliberately ignored. Environmental politics is such a political trick (Conspiracy) in which politics is a way through which environmental resources of different nations are obtained and a way to exploit them. Environmental politics is a model of capitalist development politics in which resources are looted in the name of development.

Environmental politics is the loot of natural resources in the name of development, in which only politics is given importance; environment is sacrificed in the name of development. Today, despite the warnings of scientists, environmental conservation is not happening, which is being sacrificed in the name of development and political benefits, which are actually linked to economic benefits, all nations are competing to achieve them and this politics of profit has shied away from taking any historical responsibility for environmental conservation, from fulfilling its timely responsibility. Environmental politics is such a model in the name of development in which resources are considered capital and natural wealth is taken as a "commodity," water, forest, land and minerals are converted into market value because the character of the state determines the direction of the political economy. Environmental politics (ECP) which has become consumerist, marketist and convenience-oriented in the name of development (DEV). It wants to link every resource to global capitalism. Environmental politics is that model of development which is based on pure "utilitarianism" and it is really an irony that all this is being done in the name of modernization of the country, nation building, all-round development and increase in the gross domestic product (GDP). Industrialization has grown rapidly in the continents of Africa and Asia after Europe and America. As a result, urbanization has increased and a large number of people have become unemployed. Since earlier every person was engaged in cottage industry, handicrafts, self-reliant employment system. The invention of machines made these people unemployed due to which inequality in the society reached its peak. Today, the root cause of the disharmony seen in society in the name of religion, caste is economic inequality, which is the curse of industrial development. Development should be such that for a coherent or sustainable development, unity of nature and

man is inevitable, but today in the name of "development" only the resources are being depleted, which in today's perspective are only an empty bag and a hollow dream. Anthropocentric perspectives focus primarily on the negative effects of environmental degradation on humans and their interests, including their interests in health, recreation, and quality of life.

The defining feature of anthropocentrism is that it views humans' moral obligations toward the environment as deriving from obligations that humans have toward each other—and, less importantly, toward future generations of humans—rather than from any obligations toward other living things or the environment as a whole. Thus human obligations to the environment are indirect.

Critics of anthropocentrism have charged that it is a form of human "chauvinism". They argue that the anthropocentric view assumes the historical Western view of nature as merely a resource that should be managed or exploited for human purposes—a view which they claim has been responsible for centuries of environmental destruction. In contrast to anthropocentrism, biocentrism asserts that nature has an inherent moral value that does not depend on its utility to humans, and that it is this inherent value that directly gives rise to obligations to the environment. Humans are therefore morally obliged to protect the environment, as well as individual organisms and species, for their own sake. In this sense, biocentrists view humans and other elements of the natural environment, both living and often inanimate, as members of the same moral and ecological community.

By the 1960s and 70s, as scientific knowledge about the causes and consequences of environmental degradation became more widespread and sophisticated, there was growing concern among some scientists, intellectuals, and activists about the Earth's ability to absorb the debris of human economic activity and indeed to sustain human life. This concern contributed to the growth of grassroots environmental activism in many countries, the establishment of new environmental NGOs, and the formation of environmental ("green") political parties in several Western democracies. As political leaders gradually understood the seriousness of environmental problems, governments entered into negotiations in the early 1970s that resulted in the adoption of a growing number of international environmental agreements.

The vision of the environmental movement in the 1960s and early '70s was generally pessimistic, reflecting a widespread sense of "civilization malaise" and a belief that the Earth's long-term prospects were bleak. This so-called apocalyptic, or survivalist, literature encouraged the uncritical demands of some environmentalists to increase the powers of centralized governments over human activities deemed harmful to the environment, a viewpoint echoed in Robert Heilbroner's *An Inquiry Into the Human Prospect* (1974), which argued that human survival ultimately required the sacrifice of human freedom. Counter-arguments such as those presented in Julian Simon and Herman Kahn's book *The Resourceful Earth* (1984) emphasized humanity's ability to discover or invent substitutes for resources that were scarce and in danger of being exhausted.

Beginning in the 1970s, a number of environmentalists attempted to develop strategies to limit environmental degradation through recycling, the use of alternative energy technologies, the decentralization and democratization of

economic and social planning, and, for some, the restructuring of major industrial sectors, including the agriculture and energy industries. In contrast to apocalyptic environmentalism, so-called "libertarian" environmentalism took a more positive and pragmatic approach, one aspect of which was the attempt to promote ecological consciousness and an ethic of "guardianship" of the environment. One form of libertarian environmentalism, human-welfare ecology-which aims to enhance human life by creating a safe and clean environment-was part of a broader concern with distributive justice and reflected the tendency of citizens in advanced industrial societies, later described as "post-materialists," to place greater importance on "quality of life" issues than on traditional economic concerns.

Concern about the impact on human life of problems such as air and water pollution has existed at least since Roman times. Pollution was associated with the spread of epidemic disease in Europe between the late 14<sup>th</sup> and mid-16<sup>th</sup> centuries, and soil conservation was being practiced in China, India, and Peru as early as 2,000 years ago. Generally, however, such concerns did not lead to public activism. The contemporary environmental movement arose primarily in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century from concerns about the protection of the countryside in Europe and forests in the United States and the health consequences of pollution during the Industrial Revolution. In opposition to the dominant political philosophy of the time, liberalism-which held that all social problems, including environmental ones, could and should be solved through the free market-most early environmentalists believed that the government, rather than the market, should be held responsible for protecting the environment and ensuring the conservation of resources. An early philosophy of resource conservation was developed by Gifford Pinchot (1865–1946), the first chief of the U.S. Forest Service, for whom conservation meant the wise and efficient use of resources. Also in the United States at about the same time, a more strongly biocentrism approach to conservationist philosophy emerged under the leadership of John Muir (1838–1914), founder of the Sierra Club, and Aldo Leopold (1887–1948), a professor of wildlife management who was instrumental in having the Gila National Forest in New Mexico designated as America's first national wilderness area in 1924. For example, Sweden established nine national parks in 1909, the first in Europe, and Switzerland created a 14,000-hectare (about 34,600 acres) national park in 1914. In New Zealand the Native Bird Protection Society (later the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, or Forest and Bird) arose in 1923 in response to the devastation of Kapiti Island by livestock.

In the early 1960s, various philosophical strands of environmentalism were given political expression through the establishment of "green" political movements in the form of activist non-governmental organizations and environmentalist political parties.

Environmental justice, social movement that seeks to address the unequal distribution of environmental hazards among the poor and minorities. Environmental justice advocates hold that all people are entitled to live in a clean and safe environment free from industrial wastes and pollution that could adversely affect their well-being. From a policy perspective, practicing environmental justice involves ensuring that all citizens receive the same level of protection from environmental threats from the government

and that minority and disadvantaged populations do not face disproportionate environmental burdens. Although most environmentalists embrace environmental justice, some traditional environmentalists have criticized the movement as an attempt to shift attention away from important environmental issues toward more human-centric concerns, such as racism, classism, and regionalism.

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