

# PRESENT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN INDIA

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**Abstract:** Country's environmental problems vary with its stage of development, structure of its economy, production technologies in use and its environmental policies. Between 1995 through 2010, India has made some of the fastest progress in addressing its environmental issues and improving its environmental quality in the world. India has a long way to go to reach environmental quality similar to those enjoyed in developed economies. Pollution remains a major challenge and opportunity for India. Environmental issues are one of the primary causes of disease, health issues and long term livelihood impact for India. Air pollution in India is a serious issue with the major sources being fuel wood and biomass burning, fuel adulteration, vehicle emission and traffic congestion. India is the world's largest consumer of fuel wood, agricultural waste and biomass for energy purposes. Water pollution out of India's 3,119 towns and cities, just 209 have partial treatment facilities, and only 8 have full wastewater treatment facilities 114 cities dump untreated sewage and partially cremated bodies directly into the Ganges River. India is yet to adopt a stringent strategy to tackle rising emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG). India was the third largest emitter of carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas, in 2009 at 1.65 Gt per year, after China and the United States. Educate and inform the people about the gains of environmental protection and sustainable development. People are aware of the need to protect the natural environmental resources of air, water, soil and plant life that constitute the natural capital on which man depends.

*IndexTerms* - Environmental Issues, pollution, Biodiversity, Greenhouse effect, Environmental Protection.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The word "Environment" is most commonly used to describe "natural" environment and means the sum of all living and non-living things that surround an organism, or group of organisms. Environment includes all elements, factors, and conditions that have some impact on growth and development of certain organism. A country's environmental problems vary with its stage of development, structure of its economy, production technologies in use and its environmental policies. While some problems may be associated with the lack of economic development (e.g. inadequate sanitation and clean drinking water), others are exacerbated by the growth of economic activity (e.g. air and water pollution). Poverty presents special problems for a densely populated country with limited resources. After 54 years of independence, a number of urban and growth orientated developmental programs having been implemented, nearly 716 million rural people (72% of the total population), half of which are below the poverty line (BPL) continue to fight a hopeless and constantly losing battle for survival and health. Between 1995 through 2010, India has made some of the fastest progress in addressing its environmental issues and improving its environmental quality in the world. India has a long way to go to reach environmental quality similar to those enjoyed in developed economies. Pollution remains a major challenge and opportunity for India. Environmental issues are one of the primary causes of disease, health issues and long term livelihood impact for India. There are many environmental issues in India. Air pollution, water pollution, garbage, and pollution of the natural environment are all challenges for India.

## II. THE MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN INDIA

A list of some of the most serious environmental issues in India:

### 2.1. Pollution

#### 2.1.1. Air pollution:

Air pollution levels in the country have been rising to scary levels for the past few decades. As per a World Health Organization (WHO) survey released in June 2018, New Delhi and Kolkata are two of the most polluted cities in the country. Air pollution in India is a serious issue with the major sources being fuel wood and biomass burning, fuel adulteration, vehicle emission and traffic congestion. Air pollution is also the main cause of the Asian brown cloud, which is causing the monsoon to be delayed. India is the world's largest consumer of fuel wood, agricultural waste and biomass for energy purposes. Traditional fuel (fuel wood, crop residue and dung cake) dominates domestic energy use in rural India and accounts for about 90% of the total. In urban areas, this traditional fuel constitutes about 24% of the total. Fuel wood, agriwaste and biomass cake burning releases over 165 million tonnes of combustion products into India's indoor and outdoor air every year.

Indian cities are polluted by vehicles and industry emissions. Road dust due to vehicles also contributing up to 33% of air Pollution. In cities like Bangalore around 50% of children suffer from asthma. One of the biggest causes of air pollution in India is from the Transport system. It also appeared that the excessive pollution was having an adverse effect on the Taj Mahal.

### 2.1.2. Water Pollution

As per the statistics released by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the number of polluted rivers in the country has risen from 121 to 275 in the last five years, with Maharashtra faring the worst among states in keeping its rivers clean. India has major water pollution issues. Discharge of untreated sewage is the single most important cause for pollution of surface and ground water in India. There is a large gap between generation and treatment of domestic waste water in India. The problem is not only that India lacks sufficient treatment capacity but also that the sewage treatment plants that exist do not operate and are not maintained. Water pollution out of India's 3,119 towns and cities, just 209 have partial treatment facilities, and only 8 have full wastewater treatment facilities 114 cities dump untreated sewage and partially cremated bodies directly into the Ganges River. Downstream, the untreated water is used for drinking, bathing, and washing. This situation is typical of many rivers in India as well as other developing countries.

### 2.1.3. Noise Pollution

Sound pollution has been consistently rising in Indian cities. Currently, Hyderabad, Chennai, Lucknow and Delhi are the noisiest cities because of reasons like population growth, overcrowding and traffic. Noise pollution Noise pollution The Supreme Court of India gave a significant verdict on noise pollution in 2005. Unnecessary honking of vehicles makes for a high decibel level of noise in cities. The use of loudspeakers for political purposes and by temples and mosques make for noise pollution in residential areas. Recently Government of India has set up norms of permissible noise levels in urban and rural areas. How they will be monitored and implemented is still not sure.

### 2.1.4. Soil Pollution

One of the kinds of pollution the country is reeling under soil pollution, thanks to reasons like careless disposal of chemical and menstrual waste and excessive use of pesticides. Land pollution Land pollution in India is due to pesticides and fertilizers as well as corrosion. In March 2009, the issue of Uranium poisoning in Punjab came into light, caused by fly ash ponds of thermal power stations, which reportedly lead to severe birth defects in children in the Faridkot and Bhatinda districts of Punjab Although the British started deforestation in India, the pressures to modernize since the partition of 1947 have only increased the rates of deforestation, which causes soil erosion which leads to Land Pollution. The rapid deforestation is leading to soil erosion and land being denuded when floods ravage areas located near rivers.

## III. GREENHOUSE EFFECT

India is yet to adopt a stringent strategy to tackle rising emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG). Though it has a set of laws to bring down GHG emissions, but there is lack of effective implementation. A PBL Netherlands Environment Assessment Agency report, released in 2017, showed that in 2016 India's GHG emissions went up by 4.7%. India was the third largest emitter of carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas, in 2009 at 1.65 Gt per year, after China and the United States. With 17 percent of world population, India contributed some 5 percent of human-sourced carbon dioxide emission; compared to China's 24 percent share. On per capita basis, India emitted about 1.4 tons of carbon dioxide per person, in comparison to the United States' 17 tons per person, and a world average of 5.3 tons per person.

## IV. BIODIVERSITY

II. India lying within the Indomalaya ecozone, hosts significant biodiversity. It is home to 7.6% of all mammalian, 12.6% of avian, 6.2% of reptilian, and 6.0% of flowering plant species. In recent decades, human encroachment has posed a threat to India's wildlife in response, the system of national parks and protected areas, first established in 1935, was substantially expanded. In 1972, India enacted the Wildlife Protection Act and Project Tiger to safeguard crucial habitat; further federal protections were promulgated in the 1980s. Along with over 500 wildlife sanctuaries, India now hosts 14 biosphere reserves, four of which are part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. 25 wetlands are registered under the Ramsar Convention.

## V. ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

III. The Centre needs to revamp its environmental governance tactics which are lying in limbo due to slow pace of infrastructure development and fragmented policies.

## VI. CLIMATE CHANGE

The country is vulnerable to climate change due to combination of factors like high dependence of exhaustible energy resources, high population and rampant poverty.

## VII. OTHER ISSUES

### 7.1. Plastic use:

Despite the country's commitment to do away with single-use plastic this year, India needs to go miles ahead to curb usage of other forms of plastic like microplastic.

### 7.2. Coastal zone management:

Rapid economic development in areas near coastlines have not only led to loss of habitat for marine life but also loss of livelihood for locals who are involved in fishing.

**7.3. Smog:** Months after Delhi was covered by an unprecedented cover of smog, the Union government is yet to crack down on burning of crop residue by farmers.

### 7.4. Man-animal conflicts:

Conflicts between predators like tigers, leopards and lions with locals living nearby have been rising over the last few years, often leading to man-animal conflicts.

### 7.5. Dams:

Research shows that dams have disrupted the connectivity of rivers blocked sediment deposition and impeded breeding of fishes and other aquatic animals.

### 7.6. Encroachment in coastal areas:

Tribal groups whose primary occupation is fishing are fast losing their livelihoods due to commercial activities in coastal areas. The influx of commercial fishing and fish trawlers for export has led to a rapid rise in conflicts involving strikes and violent clashes.

### 7.7. Uncontrolled mining:

Government-backed support and easy policies led to a rapid rise in mining activities in post-Independence era in the country. Consequently, regions rich in minerals have witnessed environmental degradation and deforestation.

### 7.8. Ecological restoration:

Over the years, the efforts on the part of the government to undo the damage done to the environment have been slow and tepid. On the other hand, voluntary organizations, on many occasions with the local populace, have organized drives for ecological restoration.

### 7.9. Population:

With India's population inching closer to world's most populous nation, China, the country also needs to think about accommodating its citizens, both at present and in future. As a result, rapid urbanization has led to various environmental problems like deforestation and loss of habitat of animals.

### 7.10. Hazards of chemical abuse:

Once used to increase yield of crops, the excessive use of pesticides has over the years caused substantial damage to the environment by hampering soil quality. Research suggests that over the last three decades, the average per hectare consumption of pesticides has increased by a wide margin.

### 7.11. Lack of accountability:

India's regulatory framework for environment laws follows the 'polluter pays principle', which literally translates to strict punishment for the polluter and compensation for the one affected by the act. However, the framework is followed only on paper. As per the Environmental Performance Index—an index which ranks 180 countries based on 24 indicators—India ranked 177<sup>th</sup>.

### 7.12. Lack of public participation:

A much ignored reason behind the failure of drives to spread awareness about environmental conservation in India is the lack of public participation.

### VIII. AWARENESS ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

People are aware of the need to protect the natural environmental resources of air, water, soil and plant life that constitute the natural capital on which man depends. The environmental issues are important because the absence of their solutions is more horrible. Unless environmental issues are not solved or not taken care of the coming generations may find earth worth not living. The need of the planet and the needs of the person have become one. The protection of environment and ecological development should be focused on:

- Conservation & survey of flora, fauna, forests and wildlife
- Prevention and control of pollution
- Afforestation & regeneration of degraded areas
- Protection of environment, all within the frame work of legislations

### CONCLUSIONS

The rapid economic growth experienced by India is resulting in adverse and harmful environmental conditions that are affecting the people of India as well the wider global population. In the case of India, this is further exacerbated by the high population density and growth rates. Government must initiate the programmes to create public awareness with regard to relation between human rights and environmental protection and also related laws. Reduce fertility rates and control population, reducing pressure on natural resources. Educate and inform the people about the gains of environmental protection and sustainable development. People are aware of the need to protect the natural environmental resources of air, water, soil and plant life that constitute the natural capital on which man depends.

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