



## Analyzing Narendra Modi's position on Environment: Reality or Rhetoric

**Nabanita Das**

Assistant Professor

Department of Political Science

BirRaghab Moran Government Model College, Doomdooma, Tinsukia, Assam

nEmail: [nabanitadas866@gmail.com](mailto:nabanitadas866@gmail.com)

Phone no- 8876653451

### **Abstract:**

*Environmental resources are increasingly coming under the pressure from various facets of development. Institutional as well as non-institutional mechanisms for ensuring that the long term sustenance of environmental resources does not get hampered therefore assume greater importance. Responding to climate change is now a global priority for all governments. In India, environmental governance under the NDA government under PM Narendra Modi has stepped up action on environmental concerns such as pollution, waste management, but retains a myopic view of natural resource management and strengthening of institutions. Moreover forest governance took on a more industry-centric approach. While forests remain a key focus of the reform initiatives of the Centre, various initiatives proposed by the government limit the scope of addressing the issue of forest management comprehensively. NDA governments stint is worse, in terms of dilution of environmental laws and procedures. The objective of the paper is to study the environmental governance under Modi's leadership and to analyse how far it have been successful in conservation and maintenance of natural resources. A critical study has also been put forwarded while analyzing its position. The study has been carried out through secondary like journals, articles, books and internet. It has been seen that measures should be proposed by the NDA government which should lead to forest conservation and management by increasing forest cover, giving equal emphasis on improving biodiversity and productivity of forests, . It also should ensure forest benefits to local communities. Any proposed reform must capture the perspective of both ecology and people's livelihoods to make environmental measures more fruitful in the years to come.*

*Keywords: Environmental Governamce, NDA Government, environmental policies*

## INTRODUCTION:

The natural environment, commonly referred to simply as the environment, encompasses all living and nonliving things occurring naturally on earth or some region thereof. The earth was bestowed with a clean and salubrious climate by the nature. The natural environment is contrasted with the built environment, which comprises the areas and components that are strongly influenced by humans. Misuse, abuse and overuse of natural resources have badly affected the environment. Consequently, the entire globe is facing a threat to climate change and global warming and all life on the earth is at the stake of survival. Environmental challenges in various bio diversity in balances has been wide spread more over the world. Improper land use planning and bio diversity in balances to the conservation of micro ecosystems is challenging all nations. In this regard the role of government as the policy maker is crucial in the context of conservation and prevention of the environment. Environment protection is national as well as international responsibility. We remember What Mahatma Gandhi said “ The earth provides enough to satisfy every mans need , but not for anybody’s greed”.

The Environmental Governance is a part of constituting a regime, or is the regime which accommodates new roles and frame new structures to assist the process of governance. Environment is a conceptual entity beyond the gruesome nature of ‘sovereignty’ or ‘sobriety of nationality’. The process of environmental governance has a nature of ‘vulnerability response’ (Webster 2009) towards environmental problems. Identification of the real environmental threats, locally as well as globally, is the primary concern of every efforts of the governance process. The pervasive nature of the environmental problems create complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity in policy initiatives, implimentation, possibilities of settlements with regard to projected environmental goals among different parties of diverse interests.

## OBJECTIVES:

The prime objectives of the study are as follows-

- a) To study the environmental governance in India
- b) To understand the environmental policies under Narendra Modi Government.
- c) To examine the role of Narendra Modi towards the environment whether it is a reality or rehtoric.

## METHODOLOGY:

For the study of this paper we use descriptive and analytical method. In this paper the data are collected through secondary sources like journals, articles, books and internet.

## DISCUSSION :

*Enironmental governance in India* -As early as the 4th century BC, Chandragupta Maurya and Kautilya (Chanakya) were concerned about wildlife conservation. They had formulated laws to deal with those inflicting

cruelty on animals and were focused on the protection of elephants as well. Over the centuries there were different constitutional provisions, laws, policies, acts which were adopted to protect environment by Indian government. Conservation strategy in line with the global approach towards conservation. The 42nd Amendment to the Indian constitution has added the provisions relating to the protection of environment, for the first time in Article 48-A in Directive Principles of State Policy. According to the Article 48-A 'the State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country'. Article 51-A in the 'Fundamental Duties', was also incorporated by the 42nd Amendment. According to the sub-clause (g) of the Art. 51-A, 'it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures'. The two provisions; 48 A and 51 A have imposed two-fold responsibilities. On the one hand, it gives directive to the State for protection and improvement of environment and on the other hand it casts/imposes a duty on every citizen to help in the preservation of natural environment. The most important environmental legislations made by the parliament under Art. 249 (power of the parliament to legislate with matter in the State List in the national interest) of the Constitution are The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974; The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974; The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981; and the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The Environment (Protection) Act was enacted in 1986 with the objective of providing for the protection and improvement of the environment. It empowers the Central Government to establish authorities [under section 3(3)] charged with the mandate of preventing environmental pollution in all its forms and to tackle the specific environmental problems that are peculiar to different parts of the country.

The fourth five year plan needs special attention in this regard that the plan (1969-1974) document has a special mention about the need for environmental protection and it is declared that- "A healthy environment is vital for good life.....It is an obligation of each generation to maintain the productive capacity of land, air, water and wild life in a manner which leaves its successors some reserve in the creation of a healthy environment. The high spirited elaboration got impetus with the integration of environmental resources management with national economic planning during the 6th five year plan (1980-85). The plan document said that 'the environment must not be considered as just another sector of national development'.

'The basic approach to the Seventh Plan (1985-90) would be a policy of sustainable development in harmony with the environment. 'Environmental Management', a term represents the environmental planning, protection, monitoring, assessment, research, education, conservation and sustainable use of resources; is now accepted as a major guiding factor for national development in India'.

### ***NARENDRA MODI GOVERNMENT AND ENVIRONMENT-***

The NDA government under prime minister Narendra Modi has taken significant measures which related to environment which are as follows-

a) Six important eco friendly steps taken by Narendra Modi Government

- 1) Swachhbharatabhiyan- it is the biggest cleanliness drive ever. The campaign covers as many as 4041 towns and aims at cleaning streets, roads, and infrastructure. It was officially launched on October 2, 2004 at Rajghat, New Delhi. Prime mInister Modi even nominated 9prominent public figures from the country to support and encourage the initiative.
- 2) Clean Ganga Mission- it is dreamed as Modis dream pet project.the ganga action plan under the direct supervisors of water resources minister Uma Bharati. Modi's clean ganga plan involves five ministersworking in close cooperation to see the dream project through.
- 3) National Air Quality Index(NAQI)-focussing on bringing down soaring pollution levels in the country, pm Modi launched India's first national air quality index(NAQI) in April 2015.the IIT Kanpur will house the main server of the NAQI which will monitor air quality levels in 10cities throughout the country. The NAQI will simplify air quality rendition will help raise awareness about the alarming levels of air quality across the country.
- 4) Toilets before the temples-Modi said that while lakhs were spent on building temples, no no real efforts was put into building toilets. Over 600mmillions people in India still defecate in the open.themodi government working to ensure that affordable sanitation reaches the people who need it. In addition to this, the government has also focussed on the spread of e-toilets in rural as well as urban india.
- 5) Mount Everest Ascent-inspired by the swachhbharatnission a team of Indian army climbers have set off on a mission to bring back atleast 4000kg of non- biodegradable waste materials left behind by climbers over decades.
- 6) Water conservation-Modi government directed the states of India to ensure that 50% of the work taken up by MNREGA should be for the improvement of water conservation.this includes the construction of check dams and de-sitting water bodies. He aasked the farmers to adopt modern ways of conserving water

b)**6 environmental laws to be amended soon**-The center is likely to amend 6 crucial laws to be tabled in the parliament after the recess endes on april 23, the union ministry of environment , forests and climate change said.The six laws related to environmental protection act 1986, the forest conservation act 1980, the wildlife protection act 1972, water prevention and control of pollution act 1974, air prevention and and control of pollution act 1981 and the Indian forest act 1927.In September 2014, a committee was formed under former cabinet secretary T S R Subramanian to suggest amendments in the existing environmental and forest regulations. The government is also planning to discuss changes in the coastal regulation zone.

c)**Industrial pollution**-The NDA government has taken significant measures to improve pollution standards and monitoring of various industrial sectors.The standards for coal-based thermal power plants have been made stringent. The standard on coal-based power sector has been revised after a decade and will have significant

improvements in the country's environment quality. A new notification has also been issued on fly ash utilisation. The Centre is also keen to reduce water pollution from industries. Pollution standards have been tightened for many polluting sectors such as coal-based power plants and sugar. For others such as iron and steel, cement, pulp and paper and fertilisers the proposal is already in the pipeline.

**d)Importance for Forests-**To incentivise states to conserve forests, the 14th Finance Commission has recommended inclusion of forest cover as one of the five parameters for determining a state's share of the Union tax revenue. Forests have been assigned a weight of 7.5 per cent.

**e)Waste management-**Management of solid waste ,Management of bio medical waste,Management of electronic waste (e-waste),Management of plastic waste,Management of hazardous waste,Management of construction and demolition waste,Management of construction and demolition waste. Waste management emerges as a priority issue for NDA.Realising the relationship between waste management and manufacturing, the Central government introduced the Construction and Demolition Waste Management Rules, 2016. It also revised existing waste management rules with a focus on ensuring compliance through incentivisation mechanisms and penalise non-compliance.

**f) Unlocking CAMPA funds-**Unlocking the Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) has been a key focus of the NDA Government. The Establishment of CAFs at the National and the State levels to credit amounts collected by State governments/ UTs towards compensatory afforestation.

**g)Participation of private sector in afforestation of degraded forests-**The MoEF&CC in 2014 had issued guidelines enabling participation of private sector entities in carrying out afforestation of degraded forest. The proposal is to make available 'degraded forests' to different private agencies including industries requiring timber and other forest produce for their end use.State forest departments have been asked to identify 5000-10,000 ha of such forest areas for industries. From the area leased to industries, the industry can use 85-90 per cent to raise plantations, and 10-15 per cent is to be used to plant mixed species of use to the local community. After the pilot phase, the guidelines will be implemented nation-wide.

## CRITICISMS –

**1)Green clearances:** The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made no significant departure in granting environmental or green clearances to key sectors from that followed by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) regime. There was no significant departure in terms of environmental clearances granted for key sectors in NDA from the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. For forest clearances, the average rate of forestland diversion has, in fact, reduced.The NDA government took measures to make green clearances faster, facilitating matters for the project proponent. But

there were no improvements in enforcement of regulatory requirements to safeguard the environment or interests of local communities. The mining sector remains the focus for green clearances. For environmental clearance certificates granted at the central level in the first two years of the NDA's term, more than 300 projects (new as well as expansion) combining coal and non-coal mining have been cleared. Environmental and forest clearances have been delinked to allow work on linear projects, such as highways, on non-forest land without waiting for approvals for the stretches that require forest land. Defence projects get priority along China borders up to 100km from the Line of Actual Control in the sensitive eco zones of the higher Himalayas. The government has decided to soften some rules in the Forest Rights Act and Forest Conservation Act to step up economic activities in Naxal-affected states which account for some of the country's best forests and the majority of our tribal population. In recent years, governmental clearance for development projects, particularly those viewed by conservationists as compromising wildlife or the environment, has invariably been a contentious issue, no matter which party is in power. Now, the Union environment ministry of the Narendra Modi government is being charged by a section of environmentalists with going over the top with clearances. Linear development projects, they say, are being flagged off at an alarming speed, particularly dams, roads, railway lines, pipelines and telecommunication networks through the country's national parks, sanctuaries and critical corridors linking wildlife reserves. Also, the attempt to provide 'ease of doing business' by tweaking environmental laws and making the process of clearances less cumbersome has infuriated environmentalists and wildlife experts, who rue the loss of key habitats, some home to endangered species. "It's disturbing to see the last tracts of land being destroyed by these project clearances," says Anish Andheria, president, Wildlife Conservation Trust.



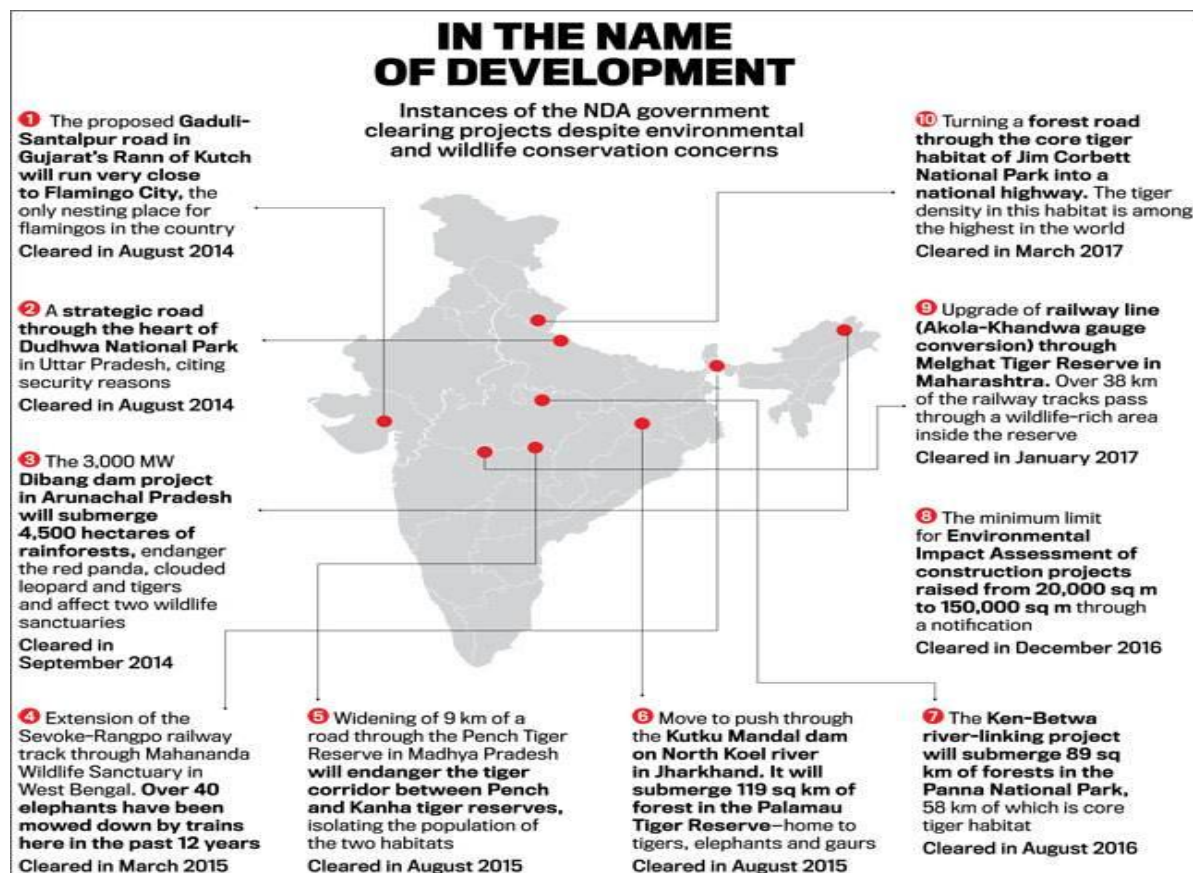


Fig depicts the instances of the NDA government clearing projects despite

2. GANGA POLLUTION—The government's "NamamiGange" programme for cleaning and rejuvenating Ganga saw little action on ground despite huge money outlay and plans. The government's NamamiGange project for cleaning and rejuvenating the river Ganga has seen little action on the ground despite huge money outlay and plans. "Despite big money for cleaning the Ganga, an outlay of Rs 20,000 crore for five years till 2019 and several promising plans, action on ground for cleaning and rejuvenating the river remains far from satisfactory," Sushmita Sengupta, the deputy programme manager of the water programme team at CSE said. The CSE analysis shows that so far the government has met only three points in its 13-point agenda for cleaning the river, which has only come through cleaning the river surface and ghats, creation of a Ganga task force and the creation of Ganga grams (model villages) along the main stem of the river. Besides, all of the 21 proposals sanctioned since July 2014 for cleaning the Ganga (according to the National Mission for Clean Ganga) are yet to be implemented. A negligible amount of money has been spent till date on actual implementation.

3. The government took some important steps to deal with urban air pollution through a mix of policy tools. But it needs a comprehensive action plan to realise their potential.

4) Waste management emerged as a priority issue, which is reflected in notification of six waste management Rules. At the same time, the success of the flagship Swachh Bharat Mission largely revolved around building toilets, which is not sufficient to make India clean.

6.Changes in the pollution classification now allow mid-sized polluting industries to operate within five km of national parks and sanctuaries (instead of the 10-km restrictive limit ordered by the Supreme Court).

7.Ban lifted on new industries in critically polluted industrial areas, such as Gujarat's Vapi. Pollution index-based moratoriums were lifted and a review of the index has been ordered. Norms for coal tar processing, sand mining, paper pulp industries, etc. were eased.

8.National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) reconstituted by slashing the number of independent members from 15 to just three. This truncated NBWL cleared most of the 140 projects before it on August 12. On August 25, the Supreme Court questioned the Centre's move, ruling that "any decision taken by it (NBWL) shall not be given effect to till further orders".

9.The process of reviewing the National Green Tribunal Act to reduce the judicial tribunal to an administrative one has been initiated. Headed by a retired Supreme Court judge or a high court chief justice, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) hears all first challenges to environmental and forest clearances. "Laws keep changing," Modi's environment minister Prakash Javadekar has famously justified.

10.The new government has also diluted the Forest Rights Act that requires the consent of the local tribal population for diverting forestland. Instead of gram sabhas (village councils) certifying that their rights had been settled and that they had consented to projects, the district administrations have now been asked to do the same. This exercise must be completed in 60 days, irrespective of the number of project-affected villages or the complication of the process. Moreover, prospecting for minerals in forests are now exempt from having to acquire the consent of local gram sabhas or settling tribal rights.

11. The new government is considering as many as 19 amendments to the new Land Acquisition Act. These include dilution of the local consent requirement for public-private-partnership projects, removal of the social impact assessment requirement, delinking compensation for land from market value, relaxing the time limit for completing acquisition, not returning unutilised lands to the original owners, giving states overriding discretionary powers, etc.

12.The Ken-Betwa river-linking project that will drown more than 40 sq km of the Panna tiger reserve has been revived.



13.The participation of private sector in afforestation-It will stand in variance with the National Forest Policy (1988) which provides for sourcing industrial wood from farmers.It will potentially violate the rights of people as recognised under the Forest Rights Act (2006). It restricts the user rights of the community (to be used to plant mixed species) to mere 10-15 per cent of the total allotted land to industries.

*Analyzing its position* – The NDA government has stepped up action on environmental concerns such as pollution, but retains a myopic view of natural resource management and strengthening of institutions.Three years of NDA government have meant a mixed bag for environmental governance in India, according to a performance review by Delhi-based non-profit Centre for Science and Environment (CSE). In an analysis of decisions and measures taken by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), CSE has concluded that while there was commendable progress on pollution control and waste management, forest governance took on a more industry-centric approach. While forests remain a key focus of the reform initiatives of the Centre, various initiatives proposed by the government limit the scope of addressing the issue of forest management comprehensively. “There is a suggestive trend of shifting from a people-centric approach towards a more industry-centric, technocratic and bureaucratic approach and the Paris Agreement was a missed opportunity.The government’s emphasis on climate change inspires mixed hopes about the issue. While the Paris deal remains a lost opportunity, negotiations in amending the Montreal Protocol to phase down hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) remain a test for the government, the success of which lies in bypassing industry interests keen on selling hydrofluoroolefin (HFO), a patented synthetic chemical..

This is not the first time that handing over of degraded forests to private entities has been proposed. But such proposals have not seen the light of the day, as they were opposed by community groups and the civil society. The current guidelines have not been implemented yet.

However, this is not the approach that should be adopted to improve productivity of our forests. Instead of handing over forest to private agencies, the Government should focus on strengthening farm and social forestry. This in turn has huge potential to strengthen the agriculture sector as well as to create jobs in the rural areas. That will be a sustainable way to manage our forests, simply handing it away to the private sector is not.In general, any proposed reform should capture the perspective of both ecology and people’s livelihood. Only by addressing this in totality we can ensure the protection of forests.

Narendra Modi became the fourth South Asian leader to be given the UN’s highest environmental award when the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) named the Indian prime minister and French President Emmanuel Macron as joint ‘Champions of the Earth’ in the policy leadership category. The other Indian awardee was Kochi International Airport, in the entrepreneurial vision category. Environmentalists in India said there was a gap between the international perception of the Modi’s commitment to the environment and the policies of his government on the ground.

Reacting to the award to Modi, environmental researcher KanchiKohli said, “There is a deep irony in India being considered a Champion of the Earth, with the prime minister as the awardee. This comes at a time when the country is dealing with an acute crisis of water and air quality, severe groundwater stress and land use conflicts, all of which impact lives and livelihoods of people. Several environmental laws have already been diluted or are in the process of being amended citing ease of doing business as official reasons. The decisions related to the ban of single use plastic or expansion of renewables should not be viewed in isolation of several other decisions that are marred with environment justice concerns.” From looking into the various criticisms with regard to MP Modi’s stand on environment it can be seen the NDA governments stint is worse, in terms of dilution of environmental laws and procedures, the pace of clearance to ‘development’ projects and the push for major infrastructure in ecologically fragile areas, home to tribal communities. “Large scale solar production implies issues of land grabbing, where the access of the poor may be as problematic as for other sources. The ban on single use plastic is welcome, but is a small part of a much bigger problem, which is the mass production of solid waste. India is reeling under a massive waste crisis and piecemeal solutions will not help much. There needs to be a move away from a development model that is only fixated on consumption-driven economic growth.

Modi’s charisma impresses global leaders. He puts his weight behind the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and makes a case for the India-proposed international solar alliance. Back home, however, environmental issues are clearly being given a short shrift at the altar of industry demands. The Ministry of Environment rubber stamps much of what big business desires. Solar energy is also promising in business terms,

#### CONCLUSION-:

Narendra Modi who became became the fourth South Asian leader to be given the UN’s highest environmental award when the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) named the Indian prime minister and French President Emmanuel Macron as joint ‘Champions of the Earth’ in the policy leadership category. Eventhough he is termed as champions of earth but his position on environment can be said to be a rhetoric one because on one hand he talk about conservation of environmental resources but in reality the picture is different. India also ranks 177 of 180 countries in the Environmental Performance Index 2018 rankings, down from 141 in 2016.

For forest clearances, the average rate of forestland diversion has, in fact, reduced. The NDA government took measures to make green clearances faster, facilitating matters for the project proponent. But there were no improvements in enforcement of regulatory requirements to safeguard the environment or interests of local communities. It can also be said that his policies is more industrial centric then people centric. Modi Government's Environment Policy Endorses Everything That Bodes Well for Business. The money accrued in the CAMPA funds has huge potential to improve the quality of our forests, as well as the livelihoods of forest

dwellers and forest dependent communities. However, as evident, the Bill needs to be improved from its current form. It must take into account the shortcomings as mentioned above, if we want to put an effective law in place for compensatory afforestation.

A major effort of the Central government remains unlocking the CAF, the corpus of which currently stands at Rs 42,000 crore. The potential of this money remains enormous for improving the state of forests as well as the livelihoods of forest dependent communities if used through proper planning and accountability. However, the draft Bill has several limitations, shows CSE analysis on the matter.

It does not have any scope for participation of local communities. Similarly, the Centre has also been contemplating the engagement of private sector in carrying out afforestation of degraded forests for industrial use. Though the proposal still remains under consideration, but the thought is in line with the industry-centric approach. It is also been asked is Narendra modi a climate sceptic? Modi used to be a supporter for climate change. but in public remarks on two occasions the leader appeared expressed doubt about whether climate change was even occurring.. “climate has not changed. We have changed.our habits have got spoiled.” He said. Modi was also vague on global warming and its causes in an interview with the Hindu .Despite the Rs. 20,000-crore fund set-up by the government under the *NamamiGange*. However, the *NamamiGange* and the ‘water for life’ bills seem to be just part of the government’s rhetoric for political mileage. From its environmental track record, one thing that emerges is the current government’s penchant for innovation, be that its earliest initiative – wanting to ‘reform’ (or dismantle) key environmental laws through the TSR recommendations – or the subsequent interventions that have, unfortunately, ended up in subverting the management of natural ecosystems, spanning forests, rivers, coasts and wetlands.

So measures should be proposed by the NDA government which should lead to forest conservation and management by increasing forest cover, giving equal emphasis on improving biodiversity and productivity of forests, which are important if quality of forest is to be considered. It also should ensure forest benefits to local communities. Any proposed reform must capture the perspective of both ecology and people’s livelihoods to make environmental measures more fruitful in the years to come.

## REFERENCES-

### Books-

- 1) Joshi.C. Sarat (2010), *Human Rights in Environmental Perspective*, Akansha publishing House. New Delhi.
- 2) Kandpal Chand Prakash(2018); *Environmental Governance in India: Issues And Challenges*, Sage Texts
- 3) R.N. Sankar Ajith (2015): *Environmental Management*, Oxford University Press

## Internet sources-

- 1) ([http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/167250/13/13\\_chapter4.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/167250/13/13_chapter4.pdf))
- 2) (<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/environment/environmental-governance-india-s-changing-scenario-59534>)
- 3) <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/coverage/governance/report-card-environmental-governance-under-nda-government-54359>)
- 4) (<https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/special-report/story/20170703-india-environment-wildlife-endangering-nda-modi-986665-2017-06-27>)
- 5) <https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/indias-prime-minister-narendra-modi-insists-his-government-setting-example-good-governance>)
- 6) (<https://qz.com/255772/the-11-environmental-disasters-narendra-modi-blessed-in-his-first-100-days/>)
- 7) <https://www.oneindia.com/feature/4-years-of-modi-govt-india-committed-to-protecting-environment-2713550.html>

