

# The Effect of Indian Environmental Policies on Climate Diplomacy

**Babuli Chandra Nayak**

*Ph.D., Research Scholar, Department for For East Languages Tibetan, Central University of Jharkhand, Ranchi. E-mail: [sumibabuli@gmail.com](mailto:sumibabuli@gmail.com)*

---

## **To Cite this Article**

Babuli Chandra Nayak (2024). The Effect of Indian Environmental Policies on Climate Diplomacy. *Indian Journal of Applied Social Science*, 1: 1-2, pp. 1-8.

---

**Abstract:** India plays a significant role in climate diplomacy due to its growing economy, high greenhouse gas emissions, and vulnerability to climate change impacts. This essay focuses on India's efforts in climate diplomacy, highlighting its: (a) negotiation tactics in global climate meetings like the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement (b) climate policies like the National Action Plan on Climate Change and the International Solar Alliance (c) partnerships with countries like the EU on climate and energy issues (d) advancements in climate technology and sharing knowledge with other nations (e) promises to cut greenhouse gas emissions and shift towards a cleaner economy. However, the rapid growth of industries all over the world is causing a lot of damage to forests and is throwing off the balance of nature. This is leading to problems like acid rain and global warming. Leaders worldwide now understand the seriousness of climate change and are trying to find ways to save the environment. However, they are struggling because they need to balance protecting nature with continuing to develop industries quickly. So, they are using climate diplomacy to look after the environment based on their own country's needs. India, with its eco-friendly policies and low pollution levels, is playing a role in this. India is working on global climate governance problems and trying to find a way to keep the environment safe while still growing economically through its climate diplomacy efforts. However, this essay looks at the good and bad points of India's climate diplomacy, as well as how working together more could help lead the fight against the world's climate crisis.

**Keywords:** India, climate diplomacy, UNFCCC, Paris Agreement, climate policy, international cooperation, sustainable development.

## Introduction

The real climate problem started during the Industrial Revolution in Europe. People at that time were more focused on using the environment for their benefit, which led to the destruction of resources and habitats. Rachel Carson, one of the earliest ecologists, brought attention to the misuse of science through her book “The Silent Spring.”<sup>1</sup> The outcomes of using natural resources carelessly were very bad. Garret Harden called it the “Tragedy of the commons.”<sup>2</sup> It would be a mistake to think that people only started caring about the environment during the Industrial Revolution. Aristotle, an ancient Greek philosopher, believed in living a good life by taking care of the natural world and helping it grow.<sup>3</sup>

Rousseau and Burke kind of supported the environment while talking badly about Locke’s view of people being selfish and separated. Rousseau warned against using nature wrongly when criticizing modern times and human thinking. He told society to watch out for being tricked and to remember that everyone can use what nature gives us, but nobody can claim the earth as their own.<sup>4</sup> Burke believes in working together across generations to think about the future and understand how our actions today can impact future generations. Ecologists like J.S. Mill have updated utilitarianism to focus on finding a balance between taking care of the environment and dealing with the serious problem of climate change. Climate change is a big issue right now, with things like desertification, loss of biodiversity, rising sea levels, and extreme weather events like wildfires and droughts happening more often.

## Environmental Indian Policies

The main reason behind this problem is the large-scale industrialization that started in the mid-1800s. Due to this, the ozone layer has been damaged and temperatures have gone up. To protect the environment and their interests, world leaders have come together to use climate diplomacy. This rule is also valid for India.

In the late 1970s, things took a turn for the worse. Policymakers had to acknowledge that natural resources were running out. This led to the Oil Crisis in 1973, accidents like the Bhopal Gas tragedy in 1984 the “Chernobyl disaster in 1986”<sup>5</sup> due to misuse of science and technology, and the rise of acid rain because of industry’s careless behavior. Keneth Boulding believed that people in a new society don’t just try to show off how rich they are. He said that Earth is like a spaceship that needs constant help from others to stay in good shape.<sup>6</sup> This new realization added a

moral aspect to ecology. James Love came up with the Gaia theory as a different way to study the environment that doesn't focus only on humans. It talks about "deep ecology," which cares more about the world's health than just one person's needs.<sup>7</sup> Climate change became a big deal in 1987 when the Brunt Land Commission Report came out, talking about "sustainable development." People started worrying about the "greenhouse effect" caused by too many chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) being let out, especially by rich countries. Groups like Friends of the Earth and Green Peace started telling everyone about global warming. Then in 1992, the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) happened in Rio for the first time. Many people called it the "Earth Summit."<sup>8</sup> It established the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to manage the yearly Conference of Parties (COP) meetings of global leaders. The 1997 Kyoto Conference was one of these important meetings. It was important because it made people realize how serious climate change is. Also, it introduced a method called Common, However, differentiated Responsibility, or CBDR, to help use carbon space effectively. Countries like the United States, Canada, and the European Union, which have a history of emitting a lot of CO<sub>2</sub>, were told to keep their emissions below 1990 levels. However, to preserve the environment, developing countries that are not members of the Annex were urged to adopt green technologies. The "carbon trading" option was created to assist developing countries in offsetting their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by acquiring credits for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by funding environmentally friendly initiatives, especially those that developed nations.<sup>9</sup> Emission trading, Joint Implementation, and the Clean Development Mechanism are three ways the Kyoto Protocol uses to help countries reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The Clean Development Mechanism helps rich countries pay for pollution-reducing projects in poorer countries, while Joint Implementation helps developed countries get credit for reducing emissions by funding projects in other developed countries. ET is recommending countries with high emission levels to buy extra emission allowances from other countries. This way, the Kyoto Resolution provides a detailed and adaptable structure.

India has always been a key player in all these changes. Its cultural vibe is famous for encouraging a strong bond between nature and people. During the early Vedic Period, the belief in worshipping nature with the phrase "Vasudeva kutumbakam"<sup>10</sup> became well-known. In his book "Arthashastra, Kautilya" said that rulers can place

a tax to protect the environment and animals. During the “Ashoka period”, people believed it was wrong to burn the leftover plant material after harvesting. Ancient Buddhists in India thought deeply about nature and believed that becoming enlightened meant going beyond oneself and feeling connected to everything in the world.<sup>11</sup>

Articles 48(A) and 51A (g) of the Indian constitution talk about how much Indians care about protecting the environment. India also signed the Stockholm Declaration, which is very important for the environment. The Indian government was formed soon after gaining independence. The “Vanamahotshava” campaign is all about making people more aware of why it’s important to protect our natural resources. Back in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plans, a program called social forestry was started to get more trees planted through volunteer efforts.

The World Bank helped with setting up the Joint Forest Management Program to keep forests sustainable. In 2008, India started the Green India Mission to tackle climate change, focusing on involving local communities and tribes in conservation efforts. The goal of the mission is to bring together forest producers and traditional communities who provide various resources like fuel, food, and wood. They also aim to enhance habitat and restore different types of ecosystems, not just plantations. The main focus is on fighting climate change by making forests and other ecosystems better at capturing carbon, helping species and ecosystems cope with changes, and helping local communities that rely on forests.<sup>12</sup> Its efforts to involve the Joint Forest Management Committee at the local level and the Forest Development Agencies at the state and district levels greatly contributed to its success. Some people criticize this approach for favouring commercial forestation, but it cannot be denied that India has made progress as a result.<sup>13</sup> No longer considered a major source of pollution in history, it is now focused on expanding industrialization by using water more efficiently and relying on renewable energy sources that do not produce carbon emissions. In 2007, the Bali Summit made a big impact by changing the REDD method into the REDP+ program. This new program included more rules like protecting forests, sustainably managing forests, and growing more carbon in forests. The United States is becoming less of an economic powerhouse, while China is now the top manufacturing country. The South Block of Nations is getting stronger in negotiations. People are starting to see that globalization isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. Ultra-nationalism is on the rise as countries focus on protecting their interests.

This shift is pushing world leaders to focus on “climate diplomacy,” which could put the environment at risk. The future doesn’t look good for the second phase of the Kyoto Plan, which started in 2012 and is supposed to finish by 2020.

### **The Stockholm Conference**

The very first meeting to talk about environmental issues was held in Sweden in 1972, known as the Stockholm Conference. It played a big role in starting the environmental movement we have today. The only leader from another country at the meeting was “Indira Gandhi”, who was the prime minister of India back then. She talked about reducing poverty, which is a key part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Her comments at the conference were seen as a big step forward in this area. In her speech, she said, “We need to show most people in the world that taking care of the environment and protecting wildlife will not only help them but also make their lives better”.<sup>14</sup> Different opinions have caused a standstill and impacted global environmental decisions. India can play a bigger role in resolving the issue. The United States and India have grown closer due to their big market, cultural influence, and shared concern about terrorism. The new “Act East” plan has been effective in limiting China’s power. India’s history of protecting the environment has also given them the courage to lead in climate diplomacy and convince others to help protect the climate. According to “Jairam Ramesh”, a past Environment Minister and Congress leader, she highlighted unfairness and inequality by mentioning that countries with a small number of people used most of the world’s natural resources. This led to a big rise in environmental harm compared to how countries like India use resources.<sup>15</sup> When wealthy nations started focusing on environmental protection, developing countries in the Global South were already prioritizing poverty reduction and development. The fourth paragraph of a declaration agreed upon at the Stockholm Conference on June 16 heavily borrowed from a speech given by “Indira Gandhi.”

### **Indira Gandhi’s Speech at the Stockholm Conference, 1972**

In under-developed countries, many environmental issues happen because of not having enough resources. Lots of people there don’t have the basic things they need to live a good life, like enough food, clothes, a safe place to live, education, healthcare, and clean water. So, these countries should focus on getting better and making sure

they take care of the environment while doing so. To achieve this goal, developed nations must work on narrowing the differences with developing countries. Environmental issues in developed countries are mostly connected to their industries and technology advancements. The fourth paragraph of the Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment comes from a speech by “Indira Gandhi” at the 1972 Stockholm Conference. You can read it in the UN Document A/RES/2994(XXVII) 1972, which is the report of the UN Conference on the Human Environment.

## Conclusion

Taking out Russia Canada, and the United States not following the plan during the Trump administration, has made it less strong. Also, China, which was not included in the Kyoto Plan, is now one of the big polluters. Because of these changes, the idea of CBDR (Common Binding Differential Responsibility) is no longer possible. The rule focuses a lot on “intergenerational fairness” by asking for more sharing of responsibilities among the past polluters. Developed countries are taking on the responsibility because China is becoming one of the biggest polluters. On the other hand, developing countries are arguing about emissions per person.

## Notes

1. Carson, R. (1962), *The Silent spring*, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
2. Hardin, G. (1968), *The Tragedy of the Commons*, Science, pp162
3. Jha, Anjana, ‘Recent Trends in Political Science’ the Indian Journal of Political Science, Meerut: Vol. LXXV, no. 1, Jan-March, pp 8.
4. Mukherjee, Subrata and Ramaswamy, Sushila, (1999), *A History of Political Thought*, New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India, pp 221
5. The Chornobyl nuclear reactor accident happened on 26 April 1986 and was the worst accident in the history of nuclear power. The reactor was destroyed, and a lot of radioactive material was let out into the environment. About 30 workers died within a few weeks, and over a hundred others got hurt from radiation. As a result, the officials moved around 115,000 people away from the reactor in 1986. They also later relocated approximately 220,000 people from Belarus, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine after 1986.
6. Boulding, Kenneth, (1966), ‘The Economics of the Coming Spaceship Earth’ in H. Jarret (ed.) *Environmental Quality in a Growing Economy*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.

7. Heywood, Andrew. (2014) *Global Politics*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan pp. 399
8. The Earth Summit, also called the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from June 3 to June 14, 1992. Representatives from more than 178 governments attended the event.
9. Mohamed Abdel Fattah Omar & Omar El-Baroudy, Climate Change Impact on Arctic Region, *International Journal of Mechanical Engineering (IJME)*, Volume 5, Issue 1, December-January 2016, pp. 123-130
10. From Jawaharlal Nehru to Narendra Modi, leaders in India have frequently used the phrase “vasudhaiva kutumbakam” (the world is one family) to explain the country’s global perspective. Although this term is commonly used in India’s diplomacy, its meaning is not always clear and is not often explained.
11. See ‘Kyoto Protocol’ URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/kyoto>
12. Heywood, Andrew. (2007) *Political Ideologies*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan pp. 282
13. See National Mission for a Green India, Draft submitted to Prime Minister’s Council on Climate Change, MoEF, Government of India, URL; [moef.nic.in/downloads/public.inofrmation/GIM-report-pmecc.pdf](http://moef.nic.in/downloads/public.inofrmation/GIM-report-pmecc.pdf).
14. Andersen, I. (2022). “India is key to the success of Stockholm+50, as it was in 1972”. Digital Bimonthly newsletter, DownToEarth, 18 May, India. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/climate-change/india-is-key-to-the-success-of-stockholm-50-as-it-was-in-1972-82900>
15. *Ibid*

### *References*

- Aamodt, S. (2018). Environmental ministries as climate policy drivers: Comparing Brazil and India. *The Journal of Environment & Development*, 27(4), 355-381.
- Belis, D., Schunz, S., Wang, T., & Jayaram, D. (2018). Climate diplomacy and the rise of ‘multiple bilateralism’ between China, India and the EU. *Carbon & Climate Law Review*, 12(2), 85-97.
- Farhan, S. A. (2016). Subnational Diplomacy in Climate Action Plans of Border States in India. *Jindal Journal of International Affairs*, 4(1), 38-59.
- Feng, R. (2020). Common but Differentiated Strategies: Revisiting the Climate Diplomacy of India and China. *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, 6(01), 143-164.



- Gupta, H., Kohli, R. K., & Ahluwalia, A. S. (2015). Mapping 'consistency in India's climate change position: Dynamics and dilemmas of science diplomacy. *Ambio*, 44, 592-599.
- Isaksen, K. A., & Stokke, K. (2014). Changing climate discourse and politics in India. Climate change is a challenge and opportunity for diplomacy and development. *Geoforum*, 57, 110-119.
- Islam, M. N., Tamanna, S., Noman, M., Siemens, A. R., Islam, S. R., & Islam, M. S. (2022). *Climate change diplomacy, adaptation, and mitigation strategies in South Asian countries: a critical review. India II: Climate Change Impacts, Mitigation and Adaptation in Developing Countries*. 1-32.
- Jayaram, D. (2021a). *Climate Diplomacy and Emerging Economies: India as a Case Study*.
- Jayaram, D. (2021b). *India's climate diplomacy towards the EU: from Copenhagen to Paris and beyond. EU-India relations: the strategic partnership in the light of the European Union global strategy*. 201-226.
- Karakir, I. A. (2018). Environmental foreign policy as a soft power instrument: Cases of China and India. *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia*, 17(1), 5-26.
- Modi, R., & Venkatachalam, M. (2021). *India, Africa and Global Climate Diplomacy. India-Africa Partnerships for Food Security and Capacity Building*. South-South Cooperation.
- Zhang, J., Zou, X., & Muhkia, A. (2023). Reconsidering India's climate diplomacy and domestic preferences with a two-level approach. *International Journal of Climate Change Strategies and Management*, 15(5), 671-689.