



# Exploring Novel Paradigms: A Critical Analysis of Environmental Anthropology Symposium Discourses

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**Abstract.** The NDIEAS-2024 symposium, organized by KIIT School of Law in collaboration with Atlantis Press-a part of Springer Nature, provided a platform for insightful discussions on the complex interplay between human anthropology and environmental sustainability. Emphasizing the significance of understanding political and sociopolitical constructs shaping environmental perceptions, the symposium explored the influence of neoliberalism, legal frameworks, and political dynamics on environmental consciousness. Participants scrutinized the deceptive sense of invulnerability fostered by globalization and technological advancements, highlighting the adverse impacts of industries and consumerism on the environment. Indigenous perspectives and practices were celebrated for their contributions to sustainable living, advocating for their legal protection and recognition. The symposium underscored the urgent need for holistic strategies to combat environmental crises, emphasizing the vital role of interdisciplinary collaboration and policy development.

**Keywords:** Neoliberalism, Environmental Consciousness, Indigenous Perspectives, Sustainable Practices, Interdisciplinary Collaboration.

## 1 Introduction

The NDIEAS-2024, organized by KIIT School of Law, with press partner as Atlantis Press-a part of Springer Nature, has been an enlightening platform that delved into the intricate relationship between human anthropology and environmental sustainability. The symposium underscored the necessity of comprehending the political and socio-political constructs that mould our perceptions of the environment. In-depth discussions scrutinized the sway of neoliberalism, both at the international and national levels, alongside legal and political frameworks, elucidating their impact on our environmental consciousness. Insights gleaned from environmental anthropology were instrumental in evaluating the efficacy of sustainable measures in tackling environmental challenges.

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Moreover, the symposium underscored how globalization and technological advancements can foster a misleading sense of invulnerability, impeding our capacity to address environmental issues. It shed light on the adverse repercussions of industries, heightened manufacturing, and rampant consumerism—often propelled by neoliberal socio-economic transformations—on the environment and our responsiveness to environmental crises. The rapporteur's report synthesizes these discussions, offering a comprehensive analysis of the intersections between human behaviour, societal structures, and environmental sustainability. Through this lens, it elucidates pathways for crafting holistic and effective strategies to address pressing environmental concerns.

## **2 In-person sessions**

### **2.1 Theme 1: Ecological Resilience and Human Adaptation**

The Symposium was a two-day program with presenters engaging in discussion both online and offline. The presenters present onsite were provided with a campus tour of KIIT and KISS (Deemed to be University). The tour comprised a visit to the Central Library, KIIT, followed by the remarkable Millet Café where all the participants enjoyed organic and gluten-free delicacies made of millet along with Koraput Coffee. Then followed the tour to the renowned KISS campus, known for its charitable, academic and financial help to students belonging to low-income families.

After lunch, the first session, chaired by Dr Amitabh Pande, Director, IGRMS Bhopal, Ministry of Culture, Govt of India and moderated by Dr Pratiti Nayak, Assistant Professor, KIIT School of Law and Dr Mrinalini Banerjee, Assistant Professor, NLU Odisha, with a welcome speech by respected Director ma'am of KIIT School of Law, Prof. Rose Varghese, her thoughts on neo-liberalism approach to environmental problems, marked the perfect opening of the discussion on sustainable environmental planning, followed by the gifting of samplings to our esteemed chair—Dr. Amitabh Pandey, Dr. Amareswar Galla, Prof. Deepak Kumar Behera, Dr. Saranjit Singh and Prof. Jyana Ranjan Mohanty.

With his erudite speech, Prof. Deepak Kumar Behera stated his thoughts on indigenous practices and knowledge; the way of living of Urang Tribes, which teaches us a way of living aligned to nature's way rather than going against it. Then, Dr. Amareswar Galla in his speech emphasized the absence of International Heritage Law in the curriculum of Indian Universities and ended with a note of hope that KIIT and KISS may be the ones to take the initiative. Dr Amitabh Pande remarked on the modern way of restoring, which often falls short of reaching its goal, that is creating "miniature and individualistic" roof gardens instead of the vast forest deforested and our foolishness of rejoicing by installing "market solutions" like an air purifier.

The keynote address of the first session was addressed by Dr Amareswar Galla, his elaborate details on Eco museology and International Heritage Law, the 6 conventions of UNESCO for environment protection and colonial binaries hindering the path to successful environment protection threw light on the major shortcomings of the current environmental protection plan.

Following Dr. Galla's speech, was Mr. Akshat Gautam's presentation on "*The Green Transition: Balancing Carbon Emissions and Other Environmental Harms*", weighing the cost of Green Transition with the benefits of switching from non-renewable to renewable energy. The presentation revealed the environmental harms that are caused while extracting lithium and cobalt, the quintessential materials required for the batteries in our plan to shift to electronic vehicles. Next on the agenda was "*Climate-Induced Displacement and Sustainable Development*", showcasing the effect of climate change and related disasters on immigrants, especially of Nauru and Pakistanis, which initiated a lively discussion between the chair and moderators on whether it would be right to consider climate refugee and internal migrants as one and same, and frameworks, amendments and solution to deal with climate immigrant issues. Next was Dr. Sujata Arya's presentation on "*Climate Change and Farming Millets in India: The Need to Change Cropping Patterns and Curb Methane Emission*" discussed the benefits of cultivating and consuming millets, along with the challenges that are being faced by millet cultivators.

Dr Manoj Kumar Behera's presentation "*An eco-critical analysis of the Poems in the Poetry Anthology of K. Satchidanandan's Greening the Earth*" was an ecocriticism of the present solutions to environmental concerns, and an applaud of the lifestyle of indigenous people. Mr. Mahaprasad Rath's "*Green Crimes: Cultural Ramifications and Ecoconscious Narratives*" created awareness by explaining the vicious cycle of green crimes and the consequences, to which Dr. Pande pondered the question of whether green criminology forms a part of a law course. Dr. Geetanjali Patra in her presentation "*Effective Role of Indigenous People Towards Environmental Sustainability*" presented facts on how indigenous people are reversing the climate harm caused by industries in small measures. The question which formed in the mind of the chair was whether there was any law protecting these indigenous tribes. Following this, was Miss Lipsa Dash's presentation on "*Artificial Intelligence as an Aid: Regulating Plastic and Microplastic*" discussing how AI can help in the segregation of plastics, biodegradable, non-biodegradable, moist and dry waste for better waste management. Unfortunately, India doesn't have that AI technology yet, as was answered by Miss Dash to Dr. Pande's question.

The last presentation of the first session was given by Mr. Abdulkarem Daoun on "*Biodiversity of Mangaljodi Wetland and Socio-economic Status of People Living Around: Challenges and Opportunities*" revealing the effect of fertilizers flowing from nearby agricultural lands on wetlands and wildlife and the need for wetland laws and solutions.

## 2.2 Theme 2: Environmental Justice and Indigenous Perspectives

Session 2, mainly focused on environmental justice for the humans who have less or nil contribution to global warming but are affected the most by the adverse consequences: the indigenous people and their responses. The session was chaired by Prof. (Dr.) Dilip Ukey, Vice-Chancellor, MNLU-Mumbai and Dr Sanjeet Kumar, IFS, Conservator of Forest, Govt of India were moderated by Dr. Itishri Sarangi, Assistant Professor, Rama Devi Women's University, Bhubaneswar and Dr. Chinmayee Nanda, Assistant Professor, KIIT School of Law.

The session started with knowledgeable words from Dr. Sarangi in her presentation: "*Exploring Sustainable Skills in Teaching and Learning: Introducing EcoPedagogy in English Classroom Teaching and Research*". She expressed the relationship between literature and Earth's environment, a few waves of ecocriticism expressed in literature like abandoning the urban setting, followed by the inclusion of urban within the environment and then building environment in the urban setting phase. She also discussed the National Education Plan, 2020 as a step forward to incorporating environmental education into the curriculum, and gave a few recommendations such as designing a curriculum that merges environmental conservation, developing ecological interest among learners and bringing critical thinking and learning. The next presentation was from Dr. Chinmayee Nanda on "*Expounding Sustainable Development Goals Through World Literature: An Appraisal*". Dr Nanda's presentation was focused on International Literature like, William Rueckert's *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*. She gave a walk-through of various literature written on environmental context and problems, depicting the shift in focus from local to global concerns and ideas, from ego-consciousness to eco-consciousness. Indian Literature too was also incorporated in Dr Nanda's presentations in the expression of Rakza Karabi, Muktheadhara, Fire on Mountains, Paraja and Dadi Buddha.

The next presenter was Dr Raj Kumar Khosla on "*Importance of Minor Forest Produces in Tribal Livelihood: A Study of Koraput District in Odisha*", explaining the contributions of minor forest produce and indigenous tribes engaged in the business of minor forest produce and sale (as much as 60% of the revenue of India). Prof. Pradip Kumar Sarkar who was also a part of the panel of the session remarked on the question of whether there are any patents for these forest products and if there are, then are they sufficient? Dr Itishri Sarangi remarked on the problem of middlemen driving up the cost of forest produce while keeping the profit from themselves rather than benefiting the collectors and gatherers. Dr. Sanjeet Kumar expressed his concerns about the gap between the tribe's indigenous methods and modern tools. Dr. Sampriiti Panda's "*An Ecological Ethnography of Tribal Interactions with Nature in Odisha, India*" focused on the Juanga Tribe of Upara Champei village, their beliefs and practices and their challenges. Prof. P K Sarkar asked a very pertinent question about the use of traditional medicines in government hospitals and Jan Ausadhya Kendras. Dr Sanjeet Kumar remarked on the Juanga people being the best protectors

of forests with their occasional protests against deforestation in the name of development.

Prof. Deepak Kumar Sahu's "*A Review of Multi Geographical Governance Policies for Supporting Circular Economy Practices*" was an elaborate discussion on circular economy and its practice in Industries with an ending note on the lack of research on how policies can help in economic practices. Following this, Ms Prassanna Tulasi discussed "*External and Internal Corporate Social Responsibility and its Impact on Environment and Welfare: Emerging Theories and Practices by Corporations*", discussing the negative consequences of external CSR like luxury brands losing their customer loyalty on suspicion of conflict of interests and effect on the employees and firm. The last presentation of the session was by Prof. Partha Sarathy Adhya on "*Sustainable Agriculture in India: Scope of Agri-Financing*".

### **2.3 Theme 3: Cultural Dimensions of Conservation Practices**

The third and final session was chaired by Shri Jitasatru Mohanty, IFS [Retd.], Govt. of Odisha, Trustee Member, Save Elephant Foundation Trust and moderated by Prof. (Dr.) Damodar Jena, Dean, KIIT School of Rural Management and Dr. Soumya Mohapatra, Assistant Professor, KIIT School of Law.

The keynote address was delivered by Shri Jitasatru Mohanty. The first presenter of the session, Mr. Parthasarathi Dehury on "*Exploring the Landscape of Green Crime in India: A Theoretical Understanding with References to Rapid Industrialization*" revealed some startling facts based on NCRP data on death and crimes related to green crimes. Prof. Nirmal Kumar Mandal's "*Strategic Altruism: A Comprehensive Analysis of CSR Practices of India's Leading Companies*" was a walkthrough of various famous companies' CSR programs, their channel of implementation and sectoral spending and how the 2% CSR mandate is working well. Still, the major drawback is the companies are focusing on development locally rather than in a national manner. Prof. Sarkar inquired about the CSR activities of mining companies in the Angul district. Dr Jitasatru Mohanty inquired about the CSR activities in the Koraput district and responded to the difference between CSR and CER (Corporate Environment Responsibility). Mr. Saptarshi Das presented "*The Regulatory Challenges of ESG in India*" discussing the shift from CSR to ESG (Environment Social Governance). Prof. Jena remarked on the lack of field and practical work in the research. Next on the agenda was Dr Mrinalini Banerjee's "*India on Track to Plastic Waste Management – A Diversity of Challenges and Regulatory Innovations*" about how the recent bans of the Government of India have brought a good change in market practices of use of single-use plastics by the street vendors. Prof. Damodar Jena remarked on the benefits of incentivising over penalising in such policies and also commented on the use of 100 samples as the base of presentation and research as an appropriate representation of Gujrat market practices. The next presentation was from Dr. Tulishree Pradhan on "*Harmonizing Technology, Socio-Economic Legal Measures for Sustainable Human-Elephant Coexistence*" discussing the heartfelt

affairs and incidents of human and elephant conflicts and how humans have interfered in the living and territory of elephants for such a long time that the mighty elephants are left with no option but to wander into human civilizations. Dr Pradhan also remarked on the lack of provisions in the Constitution of India concerning the environment. The last presentation of the session was by Prof. Sushant Kumar Tarai on “*Unmasking the dimensions of Green Crime-A comprehensive analysis*”. The presenters were awarded with their certificates in the valedictory ceremony.

### 3 Virtual sessions

#### 3.1 Theme 1: Ecological Resilience and Human Adaptation

The 2-day symposium (online mode) was chaired by Prof. (Dr.) Maria Stoicheva, Prof. (Dr.) Bharti Kumar and Prof. (Dr.) Pallavi Sharma. The moderators were Dr Archana Pattnaik, Dr Parimita Dash and Dr Ramesh Chandra Sethi. The session started with the first topic “*Analysis of Policies On Urbanization and Urban Sprawl in Maharastra and Its Impact On Environment: With Specific Reference to Underground Water*” presented by Dr. Smita Pandey. The presentation focused on Maharashtra's urbanization and land use policies which include master plans, zoning regulations, and sustainable development guidelines. Infrastructure development, including water supply and sewage systems, should incorporate sustainable practices to mitigate environmental impacts. And how policies should promote environmental conservation, public participation, and climate change adaptation, with mechanisms for monitoring and enforcing regulations. This was then followed by the next topic “*Protection of BioResources and Associated Knowledge Against Biological Theft: A Critical Appraisal of Role of Access-Control Mechanism in Biodiversity Management*” presented by Dr. Parimita Dash and Dr. Debmita Mondal. The presentation focused on how Biodiversity management is crucial for protecting bio-resources and traditional knowledge from theft. Access-control mechanisms set rules and regulations for biological resource use, preventing unauthorized exploitation and biopiracy. Legal frameworks, benefit-sharing agreements, and global cooperation are essential for effective control. Strengthening global collaboration and compliance is crucial for addressing cross-border biodiversity issues. The next topic was “*Unlocking Surplus Lands of Public Sector Undertaking a Neo Economic Reform in India in India and Its New Challenges Ahead*” presented by Ms. Lakshmi Haritha Nakka, Prof. S. Sumitra and Dr. D. Ganesh Kumar. The presentation focused on unlocking surplus lands that can improve economic efficiency, revenue generation, infrastructure development, job creation, fiscal consolidation, and governance. The process involves identifying surplus lands, establishing transparent criteria, resolving legal issues, and enacting legislation. Challenges include land title issues, regulatory changes, local community resistance, and environmental concerns. This was followed by the next topic, “*Tracing The Footprints of Ecofeminism in The Development of Environmental Jurisprudence in India*” presented by Dr. Manika Kamthan, Dr. Shanshikala Gurple and Dr. Sujata Arya. The presentation focused on Ecofeminism in India which emphasizes the interconnectedness of ecological and social systems,

focusing on women's well-being and critiquing exploitative systems. It advocates for equitable resource distribution, women's rights, environmental impact assessments, decision-making, biodiversity protection, climate justice, corporate accountability, and education to promote sustainable practices and protect marginalized groups. The next topic was "*Environmental Management and Corporate Social Responsibility in India: The Missing Block in Sustainability*" presented by Dr. Soma Dye Sarkar. The presentation focused on India facing challenges in environmental management, including limited enforcement of regulations, lack of transparency, and insufficient incentives for sustainable practices. Strengthening regulations, promoting circular economy practices, and fostering partnerships between businesses, NGOs, and local communities can help address these issues and promote a more proactive approach to environmental stewardship.

#### **4 Theme 2: Environmental Justice and Indigenous Perspectives**

The session was chaired by Prof. (Dr.) Maria Stoicheva, Prof. (Dr.) Bharti Kumar and Prof. (Dr.) Pallavi Sharma. The moderators were Dr Diptimayee Jena and Ms Shreyashi Bhattacharya. The enlightening session started with Dr Mittul Dutta's presentation on "*Climate-Induced Impoverishment: Reviewing the SDG Goals Through the Lens of Global Justice*". Where she pointed out that it is vital to implement efficient risk management strategies to manage human vulnerability and the growing range of adaptive challenges that people face, even in areas without climate hazards. These challenges include having access to clean drinking water, sanitary facilities, and a host of other necessities. Following this were Dr Swati and Mr Mani Pratap's presentation on "*Air Pollution: Health & Livelihood Challenges of Women in India*". Air pollution has drawn a lot of attention since it is a contributing factor to climate change. However, little attention is still paid to the effects of air pollution, which disproportionately harms women. Air pollution affects women and girls differently than men and boys, due to which, different mitigation techniques are required for men and women. Air pollution affects women's health at every stage of life, including the prenatal, gestational, and postpartum periods. Since they often serve as the primary carers and, in many parts of the world, are responsible for cooking for their families, they are exposed to high levels of indoor air pollution. This is why it begins to affect them even before they are born, while they are still in their mothers's womb. Women are typically seen as the family's carers, expected to cook and perform household chores. This perception has greatly influenced the public's ignorance about women's health difficulties and the health problems associated with air pollution. The next presentation was given by Dr Sanjukta Ghosh on "*Biopiracy and Protection of Traditional Knowledge: Analysing Conservation Criminology through the Lens of Theft and Nature*". Traditional knowledge refers to the customs, beliefs, and knowledge that have been passed down from one generation to the next. The term "bio-piracy" describes the unauthorised use of biological material and related traditional knowledge for profit, frequently without acknowledging or compensating the communities that created and preserved the information. If

biopiracy is only done for commercial gain, it is detrimental to both the environment and the market, since those who hold the product patent enjoy a monopoly over the market and the environment is constantly exploited. Biopiracy is only justified when it is done ethically, giving due credit and recognition to the people from whom the knowledge has been acquired and making judicious use of the same. Bio piracy done without proper consent, recognition and credit is biological theft. The last presentation of the second session was given by Ms Akankshya Anuska Babu and Ms Bijayini Namrata Patel on *"Environmental and Climate Justice: A Public Policy Discourse"* Environment justice is the first step that has to be accomplished to achieve the long-term goal of social, political and economic justice. Climate change issues can be considered environmental justice issues because in this process it affects an individual as well as countries with not so high income. Only if policies for climate change adaptation and mitigation are developed and implemented with the intention towards improving justice and fairness they will be able to minimise this problem if they are not implemented properly they may make the situation worse.

#### 4.1 Theme 3: Cultural Dimensions of Conservative Practices

The session was chaired by Prof. (Dr.) Maria Stoicheva, Prof. (Dr.) Bharti Kumar and Prof. (Dr.) Pallavi Sharma. The moderators were Dr. Mitul Datta, Dr. Bhubaneswari Bisoyi and Dr. Binita Behera. The first presentation of this session was on the topic *"Forests at The Crossroads of Indigeneity and Bureaucracy: Some Musings About Forest Governance in India"* presented by Mr. Shreyasi Bhattacharya, Ujal Kumar Mookherjee and Akshra Mehla. The presentation focused on the cultural, spiritual, and economic ties between indigenous communities and Indian forests, highlighting their traditional ecological knowledge and potential for sustainable governance, while also discussing bureaucratic challenges. The last topic of the 2 Day Symposium was *"Beyond Crime: The Case for Zemiological Methodology in Addressing Environmental and State Corporate Crimes"* presented by Ms. Bhavya Tandon and Ms. Raushan Tara Jaswal. The presentation focused on Zemiology which is a criminological approach that examines social harm, environmental crimes, and state corporate crimes. It highlights the impact on communities and the environment and emphasizes the need for international cooperation to address transboundary issues and address policy development and legal frameworks.

Followed by a presentation by Ms. OLA OLAJIDE *"Bottom Up Green Technology"* Green technology is the result of combining science and technology to create environmentally conscious products or services. Green technology is an investment in repairing the environmental harm that has already been done as well as in creating and reviving better living conditions for the upcoming generation. The bottom-up approach to green technology shows that, if widely adopted and adhered to, even small efforts can result in significant environmental changes. Globalization makes it impossible to fully cease using resources and technology, but finding an appropriate, environmentally acceptable substitute can make a big difference by advancing the cause of ensuring a sustainable environment and enough resources for

both the current and upcoming generations. The last presentation of the session was given by Ms. Emily Dobrich on “*Reclaiming Embodied Agency in the Anthropocene*”.

## 5 Conclusion

Over two days of engaging discussions, the symposium highlighted the pressing need to understand the political and sociopolitical dynamics shaping our environmental perceptions. Through insightful presentations and deliberations, participants delved into the influence of neoliberalism on our environmental consciousness, emphasizing the importance of legal and political frameworks in addressing environmental challenges.

The symposium also drew attention to the deceptive sense of invulnerability fostered by globalization and technological advancements, which hinder our ability to effectively tackle environmental issues. Discussions on the adverse impacts of industries heightened manufacturing, and rampant consumerism underscored the urgency for holistic strategies to combat environmental crises. Furthermore, the symposium showcased the invaluable contributions of indigenous practices and knowledge to sustainable living, advocating for a harmonious alignment with nature. Presentations highlighted the challenges faced by indigenous communities, emphasizing the need for legal protection and recognition of their rights.

Overall, NDIEAS-2024 provided valuable insights into the intersections of human behaviour, societal structures, and environmental sustainability. By fostering dialogue and collaboration, the symposium laid the groundwork for crafting comprehensive strategies to address the pressing environmental concerns of our time.

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