

From Environmentalism to Climate Governance: The Evolution of Green Political Thought

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Abstract: In the past 100 years, environmentalism has undergone a paradigm shift that has led this movement, which was predominantly concerned with conservation of natural resources and preservation of ecosystems, to be transformed to a holistic system of green political thought that takes into account the interdependence of ecological sustainability, social justice, economic development, and democratic politics. The twenty first century has contributed to this debate by the increasingly rapid impact of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and resource depletion, where the term climate governance has come into the limelight, meaning the concerted effort of government, international, civil, business and local communities in responding to the global environmental problems. Such intellectual and policy formation is a pointer to a significant shift in the trajectory of the paradigm of sustainable development and, subsequently, on climate governance, such as adaptation, mitigation, resilience, and climate justice. The paper comes to the conclusion that green political thought has evolved over time to extend beyond an ecological conservation focus to comprise sustainability, ecological democracy, environmental justice, and climate resilience. The modern climate governance uses more and more multi-level and multi-stakeholder strategies incorporating scientific knowledge, participatory decision-making, technological innovation, and international collaboration. However, challenges that are being faced still like lack of implementation, inequality in climate, inadequate finance of climate, political polarization, and incompatibility of economic growth and environmental conservation are still challenges to good governance. The article concludes that the improvement of climate institutions, ecological justice, greater involvement of people, strengthening green innovation and promoting international cooperation are the steps towards building an inclusive, equitable and resilient climate governance framework which will be able to react to the characteristics of the twenty first century environmental issues.

Keywords: Environmentalism, Climate Governance, Sustainability, Ecological Justice, Climate Change, etc.

Introduction

The twenty first century has been marked by the unprecedented rise in the environmental related problems that threaten ecological balance, human health and sustainable development of the entire world. (Ijoyah, 2024) The increasing incidences of extreme weather patterns, global warming, deforestation, desertification, pollution and the reduction of natural resources and the fast disappearance of the biosphere have made environmental issues not to be a local ecological issue but a global political, economical, and security problem (Radcliffe, 2000). Specifically, climate change has been one of the questions of our age, which has affected the food security, human health, water availability, energy infrastructure, migration, and world peace. Meanwhile, the acute escalation of the biodiversity loss and worsening of the ecosystems has weakened the resilience of natural systems that underpin human societies (Burchell, 2002). Air, water and land pollution have continued to have high economic and direct health consequences particularly in the developing countries, and there is an immediate need to have integrated environmental governance that will create a balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability.

The essence of these intermingling environmental crises has basically transformed the nature of political talk and mass policymaking. Preservation strategies that were largely founded on the concept of preserving forests, wildlife



and natural resources are not thought to be sufficient to address the complex global environmental problems (Dijkink, 1992). Rather, the governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector are becoming more aware that environmental protection should be combined with economic planning, social equity, technological innovations, and democratic governance. Consequently, the environmental governance has turned into a multidimensional strategy that strives to establish balance between the public policies, legal institutions, market mechanisms and the involvement of citizens to promote sustainable and climate-resilient development (Handoyo, 2024). This change of attitude towards environmental problems is manifested in the intellectual formation of green political thought. (Effendi, 2024) During the early years of environmentalism, emphasis was placed primarily on the traditional environmental protection, which includes wildlife protection, pollution, forest protection, and sustainable use of natural resources. In spite of the fact that these schemes had massive influence as far as raising environmental awareness was concerned, they paid more attention to the symptoms rather than to the structural aspects of environmental degradation.

The release of the Brundtland report (1987) was a big milestone as it brought in the notion of sustainable development, which is defined as development that satisfies the needs of the current generation without affecting the capacity of future generations to satisfy their needs (Landells, 2021). It was a strategy that broadened the environmental agenda by integrating environmental protection, economic development, and social democracy. Sustainability therefore emerged as a principle in the decision making of national and international policy, whereby national and international policymakers need to consider the environment protection and development as complementary and not conflicting goals. With scientific evidence about global warming getting more and more strong, environmental politics moved further to the broader framework of climate governance. In contrast to the conventional environmental regulation, climate governance acknowledges climate change as a transboundary issue that needs concerted efforts at various levels of governance (David Coen, 2020). It involves mitigation of climate, adaptation to climate, resilience, climate finance, technological development, international co-operation, governmental participation, international organizations, local communities, businesses, indigenous communities and civil society organizations. The move is reflective of the understanding that the unilateral state policy cannot be effective in climate action but that multi-level and collaborative forms of governance are required. With more recent developments, the discourse has broadened to the ecological transition, which proclaims the changing of political, economic, and social systems to work within planetary limits (Dijkink, 1992). The ecological shift promotes renewable energy, circular economy, sustainable consumption, green technologies and biodiversity protection and low carbon development with a justice, equity and democratic participation focus. This is in place of ensuring that environmental protection is a sectoral concern, instead, it seeks to incorporate ecological sustainability across all aspects of governance and social policy.

Here, green political thinking has gained significant importance since it offers the normative and theoretical frameworks of how society, the economy, democracy and the natural environment relate. It condemns the conventional development paradigms based on open-ended economic development, endorses ecological sustainability, environmental justice, intergenerational equity, participatory politics, and responsible stewardship of natural resources. Green political theory also offers some important critiques of the climate justice, ecological democracy, environmental ethics, and the involvement of states and international institutions in solving world environmental crises (Hussian, 2024). It is against this backdrop that the current article looks at the development of green political thinking since the beginning of environmentalism to how it is being manifested today in the form of climate governance. It will set out to explore the history and theory of green political theory, learn the transformation of environmental protection into sustainability and climate governance, explain the newest approaches to ecological governance both nationally and internationally, and the key challenges and opportunities of effective, equitable, and democratic climate governance in the twenty-first century.



Historical Evolution of Green Political Thought

Green political thought is a contemporary political philosophy, which facilitates ecological sustainability, environmental justice and democratic environmental governance. With the words of Arne Naess, the flourishing of human and non-human life on the Earth has its own value, meaning that nature has its own value without human use. It acknowledges the fact that environmental degradation, climate change and resource depletion are political, economic, ethical and social issues that need combined solutions (Weber, 2022). Environmentalists promote conservation, pollution and sustainable management of resources by reforming the existing political and economic systems. Ecologism, in turn, advocates a radical restructuring of society, economy and government to bring an ecological equilibrium. Green politics is an effort to implement these ideals by advocating of renewable energy, biodiversity, climate justice and participatory democracy. According to Murray Bookchin, the idea that man has to rule nature is a direct result of the rule of man over man, which points to the connection between social inequality and the destruction of nature (BEST, 1998). The key green political ideas are ecological sustainability, intergenerational justice, environmental ethics, ecological democracy, precautionary principle, and sustainable development. Vandana Shiva has rightly said, in the economy of nature, money is nothing but the life, and we need to preserve ecosystems rather than exploit them economically (Shiva, 2022). In this way, the contemporary climate governance is anchored in green political thought that incorporated environmental protection, social justice, and sustainable development in the policy.

The green political thought has emerged as a consequence of a series of intellectual, social and political courses of action, which transformed environmental protection into a conservationist movement, and then a system of sustainable development and climate governance. Yadav et al. (2024) This phenomenon is a manifestation of the changing views on human cultures interrelations and the natural world due to scientific discoveries, ecological catastrophes, social movements and the international community (Hussian, 2024). The green political thought has increasingly widened its scope and its purpose, since the early conservation political campaigns, and the contemporary focus on climate resilience and just transition.

A. Early Conservation Movement.

The modern green political thinking can be traced back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the problems of the fast industrialization, deforestation, and exhaustion of natural resources elicited the creation of the conservation movement. It was a period of heightened consciousness that unchecked economic expansion was a menace to forests, wildlife and natural environment and that the government and scientific management of resources was needed. One of the most prominent thinkers of this movement, and generally regarded as the father of the modern preservation movement, was the Scottish-American naturalist and environmental philosopher, John Muir. Muir was of the view that nature had its own spiritual and ecological value without reference to human usefulness (Yvard-Djahansouz, 2017). His concepts incorporated the protection of wilderness and their preservation without interference by people and that forests, mountains, rivers and wildlife should be preserved against commercial exploitation. His work inspired the establishment of the national parks in the United States, including Yosemite National Park, and the founding of the preservationist tradition, later to play a predominant role in politics of the environmental movement (Yvard-Djahansouz, 2017).

In contrast, the first Chief of the United States Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot, promoted the science conservation ideology. Although Pinchot is equally worried about the environment as Muir, he suggested that natural resources must be used in a sustainable manner so that it would maximize utility to the maximum number of people over an extended period (Miller, 2003). He discouraged the use of the resources but instead encouraged sound forest management, sustainable harvesting of timber, conservation of the watersheds, and sensible utilization of natural resources. The intellectual discussion between preservation and conservation has created two lasting traditions in environmental thought, the first was the focus on the intrinsic worth of nature, and the second, the focus on the management of resources so as to be sustainable (Miller, 2003). The governments began to appreciate the need to



conserve forests and protect wildlife during this time by establishing protected areas, national parks, forest reserves and wildlife sanctuaries. These campaigns formed the institutional basis of contemporary environmental regulation and showed that the environment protection demanded systematic public policy and not just voluntary environmental protection.

B. Environmental Movement (1960s-1980s)

The 1960s and 1980s was a radical shift in the environmental movement as environmental degradation became an international political issue, and no longer a conservation issue. Blistering industrialization, urbanization, pesticides, nuclear experiments, environmental disasters formed the overall awareness of people on the impact of modern economic development of environment. Among the most significant ones, one should mention the book by Rachel Carson titled *Silent Spring* (1962). Carson brought to light the ecological and human health dangers of blindly using pesticides, in this case, DDT, and demonstrated the endangerment of wildlife, ecosystems, and human health by the chemical pollution (NRDC, 2015). The book upset the conventional ideas of the technological progress and gave rise to the modern environmental movements with the focus on the interdependence of ecological systems.

The alarm of the population was at its highest point when the first Earth Day was marked in 1970 and millions of people all around the world participated in support of environmental protection. The Earth Day was a symbol of environmentalism becoming a mass social movement and got governments to enforce environmental laws, create environmental protection agencies and enact pollution control policies (Gledhill, 2023). Another contribution to the environment discourse was by the Club of Rome in 1972 with its publication *The Limits to Growth*. It was claimed in the report that the unrestricted economic and population expansion in a finite planet would be unsustainable to the environment based on computer-based systems modelling (Higgs, 2022). It cautioned that in the long run, depletion of resources, pollution and further industrial growth might surpass the ecological carrying capacity of the earth. Irrespective of its controversial character, the report made a great impression on the debates concerning sustainable development and ecological boundaries. It is also at this period that saw the emergence of strong environmental groups such as the Greenpeace which was formed in 1971 and employed the non-violent direct action in protest against the nuclear testing, commercial whaling and environmental decimation. On the same note, Friends of the Earth which was founded in 1969 advocated environmental justice, sustainable development, protection of biodiversity and citizen involvement in environmental decision making (Purdy, 2018). These groups transformed environmental politics to go beyond conservation to focus on participation by the masses, international collaboration and environmental responsibility.

C. Sustainable Development

Sustainable development was a significant intellectual change in green politics. The Brundtland Report is the historic report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (under the chairmanship of Gro Harlem Brundtland) released in 1987 as the Brundtland Report. The definition of sustainable development in the report was development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Purdy, 2018). This definition has significantly redefined the environmental governance bringing together the ecological protection and economic development and social justice. Rather than considering environmental conservation and economic development as two distinct objectives, the Brundtland Report hypothesized that there was a long-term prosperity that required development that was environmentally friendly. It coined the terms of intergenerational equity, reduction of poverty, responsible resource management, and international cooperation, thus making sustainability the main principle of the environmental policy-making process across the globe.



D. Rio Earth Summit (1992)

In 1992, the Rio Earth Summit, a watershed in the development of green political thought, was the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED), which took place in Rio de Janeiro. The Summit placed sustainable development as a policy agenda in the world and called on governments to place environmental issues in the national development planning (Chaswal, 2024). One of its biggest outcomes was Agenda 21 which was a detailed action plan which promoted sustainable development, through incorporating activities at both local, national and international levels. Agenda 21 emphasized on poverty eradication, sustainable consumption, environmental education and conservation of natural resources and participatory governance. The Summit also supported Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of biological resources and equitable allocation of benefits as being important aspects of environmental governance. Also significant was the fact that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted that created the primary international tool to address the problem of climate change by means of concerted action, emission reduction, adaptation, and international cooperation (David Coen, 2020). The agreements signified the shift in environmental protection to institutionalized global environmental governance.

E. The Paris Era: Climatic government and green transition

The twenty first century has seen the development of green political thinking about sustainability to the issue of wide climate governance. Introduction of the Paris Agreement (2015) to the UNFCCC was a breakthrough in the global climate cooperation. The Paris Agreement, in contrast to the previous methods that were mostly centered on environmental regulation, created a global framework, which compels all the countries to prepare and periodically reinforce nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to curb global temperature increase and encourage adaptation and resilience (Jernnäs, 2024). The Paris period saw the emergence of a number of new ideas which have become the hallmark of modern green political thinking. Achieving Net Zero greenhouse gas emission has been one of the focal points to control global warming through decarbonization, development of renewable energy sources, carbon capture and technology. Simultaneously, the interest in climate resilience is increasing, and resilience is aimed at improving the capacity of societies, ecosystems, and economies to adapt to climate change risks and disasters (Hussian, 2024).

The other important development is the idea of a Just Transition that recognizes that the shift to low-carbon economies should not impose on workers, vulnerable communities and developing countries disproportionate social and economic burdens. Climate governance is increasingly therefore encompassing of environmental justice, fairness, participation and inclusive development besides the minimization of emissions (Purdy, 2018). The evolution of the green political thought history thus reveals a sensational transformation- conservation and protection of wilds to environmental activism, sustainable development, global environmental governance and the new climate governance. The green political idea today extends beyond the conservation of nature and suggests an all-encompassing change to ecology that would bring ecological sustainability, democratic self-government, technological innovation, climatic fairness and worldwide cooperation (Dijkink, 1992). By providing the intellectual foundation, such a development will provide the means to address the problematic environmental challenges of the twenty-first century and improve a more sustainable and just global future.

Green Political Thought and Climate Governance

The development of climate change as the environmental issue of the twenty-first century has changed the basis of the green political thought and its direction. The previous policy of environmental politics mainly concerned the preservation of natural resources, regulation of pollution, safeguarding biodiversity and management of environmental degradation in national borders (Geus, 1996). Despite the fact that these goals have not become obsolete, the transnational and global nature of climate change has already demonstrated the need to have a more holistic form of governance that includes the notion of environmental protection and the concept of economic



growth, social justice, scientific information, technological breakthroughs, and international cooperation (Geus, 1996). As a result, the green political thinking has shifted towards conservation towards the multidimensional approach of institutions, policies, and actors to curtail climate change and increase resilience. The twentieth century saw the rise of the traditional environmental politics because of the pollution of the environment by the industries, deforestation, overexploitation of wildlife and exploitation of resources. The governments primarily relied on environmental legislations, pollution, conservation areas and regulatory authorities to address environmental degradation. Environmental issues were largely seen as domestic policy issues and they were addressed by the national institutions and sector regulations.

Climate change is a complex issue compared to previous environmental issues since the emissions of greenhouse gases do not respect national boundaries and impacts on all regions regardless of the sources of emissions. Rising world temperatures and flood waters, weather extremes worldwide, biodiversity, and ecosystem decadence requires a concerted effort that transcends the frontiers of a single state (Degl'Innocenti, 2019). This has resulted in the development of climate governance, which is not just about environmental regulation but climate mitigation, climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, sustainable development, climate finance, renewable energy transitions, technological innovation, and environmental justice (David Coen, 2020). Unlike the traditional environmental politics, climate governance recognizes the need to have governments, international organizations, scientific institutions, private business, local governments and civil society working together to achieve successful climate action. It is an indication of the response to the centralized environmental regulation turning to multi-level, participatory, and collaborative governance that can respond to the intricate global environmental issues.

Global Climate Governance

Development of climate governance has been informed by a progression of international institutions and agreements that give the legal, political and scientific grounds of global climate action. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which was adopted during the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 is at the centre of this framework. The Convention set the goal of stabilizing the levels of greenhouse gases at levels that would not cause human interference to the climate system in a dangerous manner (David Coen, 2020). It also brought in the concept of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC) in which all countries have a shared responsibility in combating climate change, but the developed countries have more responsibility in past and have more financial and technological capacities. The UNFCCC is enforced through the convening of annual Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings during which member states negotiate international obligations, review the implementation, and strengthen collective climate action (Hussian, 2024). The COP conferences have over the years, become the major global arena in which various issues are addressed on emissions reduction, adaptation, climate finance, transfer of technology, loss and damages as well as assisting developing countries. It is observed through these negotiations that climate governance is a process that is continuous in politics and involves the process of making consensus amid the different national interests.

One of the biggest achievements in the area of climate governance was the implementation of the Paris Agreement (2015). Unlike the earlier agreements, where there were binding commitments which were largely binding on the developed countries, the Paris Agreement entailed a universal conception where all the Parties would contribute to the environment in terms of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) which will denote their involvement towards climate. The goal of the Agreement is to make sure that the global average temperature does not increase by more than 2 C beyond the pre-industrial levels with a view to attempting to make sure that there is no rise in the warming beyond 1.5 o C. It also emphasizes adaptation and resilience, transparency, climate finance, and periodic reinforcing of national commitments, rendering climate governance more adaptable, inclusive, and dynamic (Purdy, 2018).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is equally important in climate governance with the help of scientific knowledge. In 1988, the IPCC was established to consolidate the global scientific information on



climate change, analyze the impact of climate change, predict future risks, and assess the policy options on reducing and adapting to climate change. Its assessment reports are informed by the scientific nature of the evaluations it makes, which in turn informs international negotiations, national policy on climate and the general awareness of the population and makes climate governance not a political initiative but a decision making process based on evidence (Purdy, 2018).

At the domestic level, the countries are more formulating National Climate Policies to implement their international commitments. These include climate action plans, renewable energy plans, reduction of carbon plans, adaptation programmes, biodiversity conservation plans and legislation that promotes sustainable development. The national policies are used to translate the global needs into activities at the local level to satisfy the local socio-economic needs and environmental conditions are considered during the planning of the development.

Multi-Level Climate Governance

One of the most typical characteristics of contemporary climate governance is also a multi-level governance structure. Climate is no longer an action of national governments, but it is diffused at different levels of political power and social organization. Governments determine climate laws, develop national adaptation and mitigation policies, control emissions, encourage alternative energy, and align international agreements at national level. The legal and financial set-up that is required to enforce climate policies and to mobilize popular investment is offered by national institutions (Degl'Innocenti, 2019). Intergovernmental organizations and regional cooperation mechanisms at the regional level enable policy coordination, exchange of knowledge and technology transfer and collective response to transboundary environmental problems. Of particular significance are the regional initiatives as far as common ecosystems, river basin, forests, coastal management and disaster preparedness are concerned.

Local governments and local authorities are becoming the center stage of the actualization of climate policies at the local level. The fact that most of the climate impacts are locally felt means that decentralized governance enables local context-specific adaptation strategies to be used to meet the needs of the community (David Coen, 2020). Waste management, water conservation, public transport, urban planning, energy efficiency and disaster risk reduction are directly managed by local governments and are thus related to national climate goals. The idea of urban climate governance has acquired a very special significance since cities contribute a considerable part of the total greenhouse gas emissions all over the world and at the same time, they are exposed to high risks of climate change. Cities nurture sustainable transport, green buildings, renewable energy, climate-resilient infrastructure, urban forestry, and climate-sensitive land-use planning. Smart cities, urban low-carbon development and nature-based solutions are growing to be part and parcel of urban climate governance.

The action of Non-State Actors

The current climate governance is perceived to be beyond the government system and it includes a host of non-state actors that have become very necessary in the realization of global climate goals. Climate change is a multifaceted problem that requires joint governance by different stakeholders that have complementing expertise and resources (David Coen, 2020). The role of the private sector is crucial by investing in renewable energy, clean technologies, sustainable finance, carbon reduction approaches, and green business practices. More and more companies are embracing environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles and making net-zero commitments and adhering to sustainability within business practices. The non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play their role in advocating the environment, raise awareness, research on policies, legal responsibility, and mobilization of the community (Geus, 1996). They are likely to be the mediators between the governments and the local communities and also monitor the policy implementation and enhance more transparency and climate justice.



Similarly, civil society organizations, indigenous people, school movements, youth movements, and grassroots organizations contribute to climate governance by engaging people in the process, educating them about the environment, the knowledge of people and democracy. Their involvement enhances the validity of policies, participatory decision-making processes, and climate governance is more reflective of alternative social perceptions and not just restricted to the interests of the government (Degl’Innocenti, 2019). Another area that businesses and financial institutions impact climate governance is through financing green innovation, sustainable investment, carbon markets, and climate-resilient economic development. Their technological potential and funds are now being considered as a key to long-term decarbonization and sustainable development.

Contemporary Green Political Theories

The contemporary green political thought has also surpassed the earlier environmental protection to develop the advanced theoretical frameworks, which address the inter-relationship problems of climate change, sustainable development, economic inequalities and democratic governance. These theories aim to describe how societies can be ecologically sustainable and at the same time prosper economically, socially and politically. Although these assumptions and policy prescriptions are different, each of them occupies its niche in the contemporary climate governance and ecological transformation discourse.

Ecological Modernization

The theory of Ecological Modernization (EMT) holds that, environmental protection and economic development are not necessarily incompatible, but can be reinforced by each other with institutional reforms, technological innovation and sustainable economic policies (Dulcimar José Julkovski, 2021). This school of thought was informed in the 1980s and 1990s in response to the opinion that environmental control was inextricably linked to restrict economic growth. Instead, it implies that governments, industries and markets can work together to achieve environmental sustainability and enhance economic competitiveness. The central concept of ecological modernization is the concept of green growth according to which the economic growth must be based on low-carbon technologies, renewable energy, resource efficiency, and sustainable production systems. Solar and wind energy, electric mobility, the practice of the circular economy, and energy-efficient infrastructure are also considered as ways to create job opportunities and decrease the environmental degradation (Dulcimar José Julkovski, 2021). The place of technology and innovation in this theory is central. The technological advancement of artificial intelligence, online environmental reporting, carbon capture solutions, smart energy system, precision farming, and green manufacturing are considered the required resources in order to reduce emissions and improve environmental performance. Ecological modernization thus focuses on technological advancement, novelty of policy and institutional change as the main avenues to sustainable development.

Degrowth

Unlike ecological modernization, Degrowth perspective claims that endless economic growth is inherently irreconcilable with ecological constraints of the Earth. Degrowth scholars believe that excessive production and excessive consumption, particularly by the rich civilizations, are major factors contributing to climate change, loss of biodiversity and depletion of resources. They, propose to decrease material consumption and decrease the use of energy instead of continuing with constant economic growth (Masterson, 2022). The theory recommends consumption decline through encouraging sustainable living, fewer workdays, and responsible use of resources, localized economies, and dependency on less fossil fuel. Well-being, environmental quality, health, and educational quality are the main measures of the desirable development, instead of the usual Gross Domestic Product (GDP), in the theory of degrowth. Degrowth has been referred to as post-growth model since it aims at restructuring the economies to focus on ecological sustainability and human well-being rather than on infinite market growth (Lasenby, 2022). Although critics have argued de-growth will curtail the economic growth activity,



particularly in the developing world, those who advocate the concept have argued that it will prove a much-needed solution to the current unsustainable trends of production and consumption that we see on earth today.

Just Transition

The concept of a Just Transition has been increasingly becoming stronger in climate governance as countries accelerate the process to shift towards low-carbon economies (Matthew S Henry, 2020). It recognizes that workers, vulnerable populations, and those areas dependent on fossil fuel industries need not be overburdened by climate policy. Social justice and environmental sustainability must thus go together. A just transition is an effort to provide a cushion to the workers whose livelihoods may be affected by closure of coal mines, thermal power plants or other industries that are carbon intensive. The governments are encouraged to embark on retraining programmes, employment support, social protection and green job opportunities to ensure that no part of the society is left behind in the transition. The role of the communities, particularly, the ones that depend on the old energy sectors at the economic level is also addressed by the theory (Matthew S Henry, 2020). Community input, planning of the region and equitable portion of the benefits of renewable energy is needed in order to achieve socially acceptable climate policies. Lastly, the energy transition should not only make the clean energy feasible, but also should be fair, non-discriminatory and economically stable to those populations that will be affected.

Climate Justice

Climate Justice continues green political thought, by emphasizing that climate change is not only an environmental issue, but a human rights, equity, and global justice issue. It claims that the impact of climate change extends disproportionately to nations and social classes, with important ethical and political issues. Among the problems is the unequal treatment of North and South. Traditionally, the industrialization in the developed nations has contributed the greatest part of the green house gas emissions in the world and most of the developing nations have been the worst sufferers of the climate despite relatively low contribution to global emissions (Hussian, 2024). Climate justice consequently favors the idea of common yet differentiated responsibilities that encourages more financial aid, transfer of technology, and capacity-building to the developing countries.

Ecological Democracy

Ecological Democracy states that proper environmental governance entails participatory, inclusive and transparent decision-making. Since the environmental issues directly concern the citizens and local communities, the engagement of the citizens in the process of making the environmental policies is not restricted to the periodical elections only, but to the continuous communication with the citizens (Hussian, 2024). The focus of this approach is to involve the citizens by way of public consultations, environmental impact assessment, participatory budgeting, citizen assemblies, and community-based management of resources. These processes increase accountability, change the validity of policies, and include the local ecological knowledge in the ecological decision-making. Deliberative types of governance are also improved by ecological democracy, where governments, scientists, civil society, business, indigenous people, and local communities deliberate with informed discussion and come up with new environmentally friendly policies (David Coen, 2020). Deliberative governance promotes consensus-building and cooperative problem-solving, instead of centralized state power.

Ecological democracy recognizes the value of local communities in biodiversity protection, conservation of natural resources and climate change adaptation. The realization that indigenous knowledge systems, traditional ecological practices, decentralized governance institutions and community-led conservation initiatives are useful in sustainable management of the environment is also taking shape (Burchell, 2002). Collectively, such modern green political theories indicate that the art of environmental governance goes much further than conservation and pollution. They all endorse the new paths of ecological sustainability with the convergence of the technological development, economic change, social justice, democratic involvement and responsibility. Their growing popularity is an indication of the realization that the environmental problems of climate change cannot be



addressed just by using scientific and technological methods but with great political, economic and social reforms that can result in a more sustainable and fairer and robust future.

India and Green Political Thought

India has a long tradition of inputs to green political thought which is based on its civilizational philosophy, cultural tradition and constitutional obligation towards protecting the environment. The contemporary political movement known as environmentalism has just made it clear that the Indian society was emphasizing upon the significance of peaceful co-existence of nature and human beings long before the advent of modern political movement (Aarif, 2023). Respect towards forests, rivers, wildlife, and living beings was promoted in ancient scriptures like the Vedas, Upanishads, Buddhist and Jain traditions. The concept of Vasudha Iva Kutumbakam (the world is one family) and the culture of considering nature as sacred evolved an ecological worldview of stewardship, rather than exploitation (Aarif, 2023). The current ecological policies and green politics in India echo off these traditional ecological values.

One of the best-known examples of grassroots environmental activism in India is the Chipko Movement that originated in the Himalayan region of the present Uttarakhand region in the 1970s. Villagers (particularly women) under the guidance of environmental activists such as Gaura Devi embraced trees in order to thwart commercial logging by contractors. The movement demonstrated that local livelihoods, community rights over the nature resources, and water security were closely connected to environmental conservation. Chipko was an international leader in non-violent environmentalism and other environmental movements around the world were inspired by her (Aarif, 2023). It also boosted the principles of participatory environmental governance and community-based forest management.

Appiko Movement was founded upon the Chipko movement and it started in the early 80s in Karnataka under the leadership of Pandurang Hegde. The movement tried to remove the deforestation of the Western Ghats by coordinating the local population to protect forests through peaceful resistance, environmental education and conservation of the resources. Appiko was a strong proponent of the ecological importance of forests as biodiversity conservation, water resources, and rural livelihoods and promoted decentralized environmental management (Aarif, 2023). Another exemplary example of native environmental ethics of India is the Bishnoi Community of Rajasthan. The Bishnoi is based on the twenty-nine postulates provided by Guru Jambheshwar (Jambhoji) in the fifteenth century which teaches compassion to all living creatures, protection of trees, protection of wildlife and a sustainable life. The Khejarli Sacrifice (1730) when Amrita Devi Bishnoi and more than 360 Bishnois committed suicide to protect Khejri trees, which were being felled down, remains one of the most well-known and the first examples of non-violent environmental preservation (Aarif, 2023). The Bishnoi philosophy shows that environmental sustainability can be nurtured through cultural, ethical and religious ethics and not necessarily through legal restraint.

The Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) also furthered the green political thought process in India by linking the environmental protection with social justice and human rights. Activists such as Medha Patkar headed the movement who opposed the idea of big dam projects on the river Narmada that would have evicted the native people, farmers and the rural population. Instead of dismissing development, the movement challenged development paradigms that disregarded the environmental sustainability, fair rehabilitation, and democratic involvement (Aarif, 2023). It made a considerable impact on the popular discussions about the environmental impact assessment, displacement, and sustainable development.

There has also been institutional and legal reforms of environmental governance in India. The establishment of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) under the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 was an enormous stride towards adjudicating the environment. The Tribunal provides professional and prompt resolution of environmental disputes and ensures the effective execution of environmental legislations and the development of the culture of



sustainable development, precaution principle and, polluter pays principle (Aarif, 2023). The NGT has become a crucial institution to the climate and environmental governance framework in India by improving access to environmental justice.

The Government of India has become aware of the growing threat of climate change and in 2008, it unveiled the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). The Plan has eight National Missions such as missions on solar energy, enhanced energy efficiency, sustainable habitat, water conservation, sustainable agriculture, protection of Himalayan ecosystem, Green India, and strategic knowledge on climate change (Aarif, 2023). The NAPCC is included in the national development planning of the climate mitigation and adaption, and the policy foundation of the climate governance architecture of India. Recently, India has introduced a new program known as the Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) Mission that promotes sustainable consumption and environmentally friendly behaviour among its people. LiFE Mission being an international campaign is centered on personal and social engagement in climate action, through conservation of resources, minimizing waste, leading a sustainable life and responsible consumption. It is reflective of the insight that climate governance should be fuelled both by behavioural change and government policies and technological innovation. India has also become a worldwide pioneer in renewable energy, by widely increasing the production of solar, wind, hydro- and bioenergy (Aarif, 2023). The change in India to the low-carbon developmental pathway is declared in the policy of the National Solar Mission, the big scale renewable energy parks, green hydrogen policies, and the pledges to achieve the goal of net-zero emissions by 2070. These efforts are geared towards ensuring economic growth and environmental sustainability and enhancing energy security and reduction of fossil fuel dependence.

The role of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and local governance is also an important characteristic of the environmental governance in India. The decentralized governance enables the village panchayats, municipalities, and the local communities to participate in the forest management, watershed development, biodiversity conservation, waste management and climate adaptation. Engaging communities makes them more accountable, incorporates native ecological wisdom, and sells solutions that are environmentally appropriate in the area. Other ways in which the grassroots governance can contribute to environmental protection are joint Forest Management programmes, biodiversity management committees and local disaster preparedness (Chaswal, 2024). Irrespective of these successes, India still has a daunting task to strike a balance between development and the environment. The rate of urbanization, industrialization, growth of infrastructure, mining, deforestation, pollution, the growing energy needs, tend to create tensions between economic growth and conservation of nature. Forests may become threatened by massive infrastructure projects in the areas where climate change exacerbates water shortages, heat waves, floods and bad weather conditions, which impede the livelihoods and biodiversity of indigenous and rural communities. The need to achieve an inclusive development without having to undermine the ecological integrity thus is one of the main challenges of modern Indian environmental governance.

India has demonstrated that a combination of strange blend of traditional environmental ethics, local environmental movements, constitutional requirements and assurances, judicial ingenuity, and climate policy initiatives shape the green political thinking. India has played a significant role in formulating green political thought by integrating the culture ethics, democratic participation, scientific planning and sustainable development (Aarif, 2023). The rest of the work though is to strike a balance between the development objectives and the sustainability of the environment in order to make the future just, climate predictable and environmentally secure.

Challenges to Climate Governance

- Political polarization establishes ideological clashes that undermine long-term climate commitments and continuity of policies.

- Greenwashing erodes the belief of the people as it overstates the performance in terms of environmental performance without substantial climate action.
- Inappropriate climate financing restricts mitigation, adaptation, renewable energy initiatives in developing nations.
- The key issue is balancing energy security and decarbonization continues to be a challenge to most fossil fuel-dependent economies.
- The international climate negotiations are complicated by the differences in views between the developed and developing nations regarding responsibility and support.
- The implementation gap indicates a lack of effective action on climate commitments by many countries.
- Loss and Damage emphasises the necessity of funding to respond to unavoidable effects of climate change on vulnerable nations.
- The lack of transfer of technology deprives the developing countries of the access to clean and low-carbon technologies.
- Climate migration is on the rise because of the rise in sea-level, droughts, floods, and other similar catastrophes caused by climate changes.
- Corporate power may undermine environmental laws and postpone serious climate policies.
- Weak governance, financial constraints and institutional constraints remain obstacles to good global climate governance.

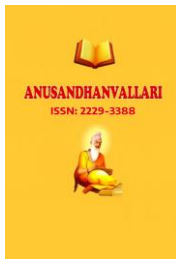
Conclusion

The development of green political thought is indicative of one of the greatest intellectual and policy metamorphoses of the modern world. What started as a movement that was mainly focused on forest, wild animals conservation and natural resource conservation has over time evolved into a holistic system of climate governance combining ecological sustainability, social justice, economic growth, democratic inclusion and international collaboration. The growing scientific understanding of environmental decay, the mounting panic of climate change and the realization that environmental problems are not national but global, and must be tackled at a variety of governance levels, have contributed to this change. The discourse provided in this paper shows that environmentalism has been transformed into climate governance, and a wider change in political theory and policy. The shift in green political philosophy has also been impressive--where previously it was founded on conservation with concern of preserving natural ecosystems, to now promoting sustainable development with the scope of achieving a balance between environmental protection and economic growth and social well being. More recently this discussion has been extended to encompass climate justice, the unequal distribution of climate risks and exposures among countries and populations, and ultimately ecological change, which implies radical changes in political frameworks, economic orders and processes of production and consumption to make the world long-term sustainable.

Environmental governance is a lot more than modern climate governance. It requires democratic institutions that are able to support transparent and participatory decision-making, scientific policies and a governance system that is based on justice, equity and human rights. Effective climate change response includes strong international action, technological innovativeness, climate finance, local action, and extensive government, business, civil society, indigenous and citizen partnerships. All these dimensions must be combined in order to come up with good societies that can adapt to environmental change and ensure sustainable and inclusive development. Green political thought does not simply lie in defending nature but in changing political, economic, and social institutions to work within ecological boundaries and provide justice, equity and human dignity. Climate governance should thus not be confined to environmental regulation but must be developed into a holistic approach of democratic ecological governance that can deal with the challenge of the twenty-first century.

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