

## ROLE OF INDIA IN CLIMATE DIPLOMACY

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Climate change has been in the news recently as it is affecting the whole biotic community. The unplanned industrialization taking place all over the world has led to rampant forest degradation and an imbalance in the biosphere. It is maintained in the form of global warming and acid rain. So leaders across the world, realizing its gravity want to protect the climate. Their dilemma lies in the fact that concern for the environment is coming in the way of development which is mostly assessed in terms of rate of industrialization. Hence, resort to climate diplomacy to protect environment vis-à-vis their national interest. In this context India known to be a lesser pollutant emitting country with a long track record of having eco-friendly policies is in an advantageous position to give a new direction to “climate diplomacy.”*

**KEYWORDS:** *The Unplanned Industrialization, Environmental Ethics and Postmaterialism, Individual and Environment*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Climate change is one of the most debatable topics in the present period given the nature of the changes taking place in our surroundings. Rampant desertification, extinction of biological diversities, global warming, and the rise of sea level, wild fire, abnormal rain pattern and loss of productivity are a few of its manifestations. The obvious reason is extensive, unplanned industrialization taking place since the middle of the nineteenth century. As a result, there has been the depletion of the ozone layer and rise of temperature. It has compelled the world leaders to come together to protect the environment vis-a-vis their self interest through climate diplomacy. India is no exception to it.

The real challenge of climate came when Europe came under the spell of the Industrial Revolution. The Renaissance culture and the demand for industrially motivated people to adopt an anthropocentric approach to use environmental resource to the maximum possible extent for his exclusive benefit. It led to habitat destruction and resource depletion. Rachel Carson, one of the earliest ecologists in his ‘The Silent Spring’ made people aware of misuse of science and technology in the field of agriculture for quick gain.<sup>1</sup> The indiscriminate use of natural resource had a catastrophic impact. Garret Harden termed it ‘tragedy of the commons’.<sup>2</sup> It would be wrong to assume that concern for ecology was absent before the Industrial Revolution. During the Greek period, Aristotle made ‘Good Life’ inclusive enough to cover the uniform growth of the whole biotic community.<sup>3</sup> Rousseau and Burke challenged the self seeking atomized portrayal of human nature by Locke and defended environment tacitly. Rousseau, a critique of human reason and modernity warned people against misuse of nature. He cautioned the people in the civil society, “Beware of listening to this imposter; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all and the earth itself to nobody”.<sup>4</sup> Burke’s idea of partnership between generations highlights the concern for future and emphasizes that the fault of present impinges the posterity.<sup>5</sup> The revision of utilitarianism by reformist ecologist like J.S. Mill emphasized upon a balance between ecology

and self interest. Marxism as a radical political alternative attacked the commoditization of nature by the capitalist to earn more surplus value. Ecology as an ideology was given shape, particularly in Europe with elements such as holism, sustainability, environmental ethics and postmaterialism. Its feminist perception equates attack on the environment as the symbol of patriarchy. Green political parties are formed all over the World to influence policymaking to harmonize human and non-human equation.

The situation became critical around the 70's. The depletion of natural resources, leading to the Oil Crisis (1973), misuse of science and technology, resulting in Bhopal Gas tragedy (1984) and Chernobyl disaster (1986) and casual approach of the people associated with industries making acid rain very common, forced the policy makers to accept the 'non-renewable' nature of the environment. Keneth Boulding argued that people were not in a cowboy economy to display extravagance. According to him, the earth is like a spaceship which would decay in the absence of regular supplement of external input.<sup>6</sup> Such type of realization added an ethical connotation to the existing study of ecology. The Gaia hypothesis was developed by James Lovestruck to replace the humancentric environmental study into an eccentric approach. It talked about 'deep ecology' emphasizing more on the health of the planet than the interest of the individual.<sup>7</sup>

Apart from the ongoing theoretical postulations, the publication of the Brunt Land Commission Report (1987) on 'sustainable development' made climate change a serious policy issue. The problem of 'green house effect' caused due to the excessive release of chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) especially by the developed countries became a matter of great concern. Environmental groups like Green Peace and Friends of the Earth sensitized the world community about global warming. For the first time the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was convened in 1992 in Rio. It was popularly known as the 'Earth Summit'. It developed a framework convention on climate change (UNFCCC) to supervise the meetings of the world leaders termed as the Conference of Parties (COP) to be held every year. The third meeting in such order was the Kyoto Conference of 1997. It was historic as for the first time it made the nations realize the gravity of climate change. Secondly, it introduced a Common Binding Differential Responsibility (CBDR) formula for the effective use of carbon space. The developed nations like USA, Canada and members of European Union known to be the historic emitters of CO<sub>2</sub> were put under Annex- I category and were asked to limit their emission below 1990 level. On the other hand, the non-Annex developing nations were encouraged to use green technologies to protect the environment. The provision of 'carbon trading' was introduced to help the developing nations to compensate their emission of CO<sub>2</sub> by purchasing Green House gas emission reduction credit through investment in green projects particularly in developing countries.<sup>8</sup> The Kyoto Protocol's market based mechanisms include Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), Joint Implementation (JI) and Emission Trading (ET). CDM has the potential to help the industrial countries to finance mitigation projects in developing countries to earn credits. JI helps industrialized countries to have emission credits by financially supporting projects in other industrialized countries. ET encourages countries with a higher emission range to buy unused quota for other countries. Thus, Kyoto resolution provides a comprehensive and accommodating framework.

But the 2007 Bali Action Plan moved ahead one step further. It included tropical countries with extensive forest reserve to check deforestation and reduce global warming. A UN programme on Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) was launched in collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nation Environment Programme (UNEP) for the purpose. Further, REDD+ was initiated by the parties to the UN Framework on Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for the developing countries provide them technical assistance tailored to national circumstances to reduce emission and conserve

forest reserve. Thus, REDD+ recognized the role of tropical countries, including that of India in climate mitigation. There has been a realization to provide incentives to countries adopting policies to reduce emission. The inclusion of Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and Carbon Partnership Facility (CPF) helped to move beyond the Kyoto Protocol and to think beyond 2012 focusing on new areas with the help of new modalities. The 2009 Copenhagen Accord declared the establishment of Technology Mission to accelerate technology development for both adaptation and mitigation. It resolved to reduce emission from deforestation and forest degradation and remove green -house emission by mobilizing financial resource through REDD+. The next summit held in Cancun held in 2010 launched the Green Climate Fund to protect the environment more effectively.

Amidst all these developments, India has been playing a crucial role. Its cultural milieu is known for advocating intense bond between individual and environment. The early Vedic Period popularized 'vasudeva kutumvakam' based on the worship of nature. Kautilya in his Arthashastra allowed the king to enforce danda to protect animals and environment. During the period of Ashoka, burning of chaff after the harvest was considered to be an offense. Like the deep ecologist in the west, long back Buddhist in India, believed that enlightenment referred to transcending the self and linking it to the whole universe.<sup>9</sup> The provisions of Article 48(A) and 51A (g) of Indian constitution speak about the sincerity of the Indians towards protection of the environment. India is also a signatory to the Stockholm Declaration, which is considered as Magna Carta on the human environment. Soon after the independence, the Government of India introduced 'Vanamahotshava' programme to generate consciousness among the people towards protection of natural resources. During the Third and Fourth Five Year Plans social forestry programme was launched to enhance forest coverage through voluntary labor. The National Forest Policy (1988) introduced the Joint Forest Management Programme with the help of the World Bank to implement sustainable forest management India has initiated Green India Mission (GIM) in 2008 under the National Action Plan on Climate change to monitor its policies on climate protection up to 2010. The plan intends to take a holistic view on greening with due focus on decentralization and involvement of local tribes. It has integrated the primary producers of forest such as the traditional dwelling communities with fuel, fodder, timber and non timber forest products. The mission has not only focused upon plantation, but also tried to restore the ecosystem and enhance habitat diversity. This intention clearly manifested in the mission aims at addressing climate change by enhancing carbon sink in sustainably managed forests and other ecosystems, enhancing the resilience and ability of vulnerable species and ecosystem to adapt to the changing climate and enabling the adaption of forest dependent local communities in the face of climatic variability.<sup>10</sup> Its attempt to involve the Forest Development Agencies at the state and District level and Joint Forest Management Committee at the local level helped a lot to bring success. Though such an initiative is not free from criticisms for providing scope to commercial forestation, yet there is no doubt that over the years India has developed enough potential to provide carbon service to the international community.<sup>11</sup> Not being a historic polluter, it has come forward to follow a carbon neutral industrialization based on increase of water use efficiency and renewable energy. Its memorable role played at the Bali Summit (2007) helped in converting REDD approach into the REDP+ programme with additional provisions like conservation sustainable management of forest and enhancement of forest carbon stock.

In view of the global shift manifested through the gradual decline of USA as a major economic power, emergence of China as the most powerful manufacturing nation, enhancement of bargaining strength of the south block of Nations, dispelling myth of globalization and rise of ultra-nationalism as a cloak to protect national interest compelled the World leaders to resort to 'climate diplomacy' which has threatened the environment protection agenda. In this background, the

prospect of the second phase of Kyoto plan which began in 2012 with a vision for 2020 seems quite bleak. The plan has become weaker due to the withdrawal of Canada and Russia and defiance of USA towards it, especially during the period of Trump administration. Moreover, China, which was put in non-Annex fold by the Kyoto plan has emerged as one of the major polluters. All these developments made the CBDR (Common Binding Differential Responsibility) principle infeasible. The rule emphasizes upon 'intergenerational equity' by providing equal carbon space to each nation and the 'intergenerational equity' by harping upon the historic pollutes to share more burden. The developed nations denounce to take up the historic responsibility in view of the growth of China as one of the most polluting nations. On the other hand, the developing countries argue on the basis of per capita emission in which the USA is still leading.

The contradiction perceptions have created an impasse and affected global policymaking on the conservation of ecology. India can still play a larger role to break the ice. The existence of a huge market, availability of soft power within the country and the threat of terrorism has brought both USA and India closer. The recently articulated 'Act East' policy of the Government has been useful to a large extent to counter the burgeoning strength China. Last but not the least, the long track record of India on climate protection has helped it with confidence to pursue 'climate diplomacy' to convince other major players on climate protection while its own long-term interest.

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