

Preface

Issues relating to the environment seem to be caught in an impasse as of now. When we look around, it seems as though they are attracting more and more attention. Little children in different parts of the world seem to be very aware of the environment, the significance of the web of life, interrelationships of species and human and non-human and so on. Curriculums world-wide stress these aspects.

In international forums, climate change, pollution and biodiversity attract attention and so does talk of the planet Earth, our one and only home. However, governments of nation states pay lip service to these understandings and go on nevertheless with 'business as usual' with primary indices of their economic success being GDP rates of growth. Corporates focus on profit too, to the neglect of all else, with a few honourable exceptions. A great deal on ecosystems and the planet Earth is, of course, talked about within the ivory towers of academia.

At the same time, we are told that academics interact very little with the world at large. They only write papers for journals read by a small number of their peer group. New ideas are thus not communicated as widely as they should. This is indeed cause for concern. However, when I look back at 30 years and more in academics, I think that many of us always focused on the policy implications of our work. The following questions therefore arise: Did our work impact thinking in government, corporate and activist circles? If it did not, why so? Did we, academics, learn from them?

Understanding this journey of interaction between different segments of society is itself a study in the evolution of policy. More so, because issues relating to the environment were new both in research and in policy, with activism being a strong voice linking the two. The motivation for writing this brief is purely one of attempting to document this interaction with respect to different sectors relating to the environment.

I have collected many debts in the course of my academic journey. This brief has evolved out of research over three decades but also equally out of talks and discussions with several friends and colleagues. Parts of it have been read and commented on by Vikram Dayal, Purnamita Dasgupta and Nandan Nawn. I am thankful to them for their lucid comments which were very helpful. Over the years, my erstwhile

colleagues at the Institute of Economic Growth have contributed to my thinking in substantial ways. The IEG provided an environment for academic innovation and new thinking, and I benefitted in no small measure. Simultaneously, my interactions with a peer group spread across many continents were enabled by my associations with the Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics in Stockholm, the International Centre for Theoretical Physics at Trieste and the South Asian Network for Development and Environmental Economics. The meetings of the International Society for Ecological Economics and the 5-year association with the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment further strengthened these interactions. I owe a great deal to a large number of individuals, far too many to list. I will not even try to do it.

The brief would not have been written without the persistent support of Sagarika Ghosh at Springer. I am thankful to her.

My family has been a constant source of support in my academic undertakings. My husband, Om, has withstood many hours of my absence and preoccupation with ungrudging indulgence. So have my children, Piyush and Priyanka, and their spouses.

However, wise use of our planetary resources is all about holding them in trust for the future. And so, this brief volume is for my grandchildren, Ananaya and Aarit, in the hope that their generation does better than ours on this count as well.

Gurgaon, India
January 27, 2017

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Development and Environmental Policy in India

The Last Few Decades

Chopra, K.

2017, XI, 72 p. 1 illus., Softcover

ISBN: 978-981-10-3760-3