

*Indian Council of Social Science Research sponsored two days International Seminar Report on*

**“Environmental Issues, Global Politics and India’s Leadership: Historical Perspectives”**

*Organised by*

*Department of History(Hindi Shift)*

*Banwarilal Bhalotia College, Asansol, WB-713303*

*Date-4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2024*

The Department of History (Hindi shift), Banwarilal Bhalotia College, Asansol, West Bengal organized a two-days international seminar, entitled “Environmental Issues, Global Politics and India’s Leadership: Historical Perspectives “ on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2024. The event was generously funded by Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi. More than one hundred participants from various discipline had registered from all over India for the seminar and presented paper both in online and offline mode. Environmental issues is major concern for present days and scientists, global leaders, policy makers also trying to minimise the problems for better future. India is playing major role under leadership of Hon’ble PM Narendra Modi to prevent climate change. As we know the major part of the G20 summit in Delhi was climate change or environment related problems. History of environment cannot be discussed only within the arena of humanities or in social science perspectives. Keeping this, in mind the organising committee allows paper presenters form science and commerce discipline also. Faculties, scholars from various discipline like chemistry, geography, zoology, management presented their research papers in this conference. So in this respect the seminar was truly multidisciplinary in nature. From this perspectives Esteemed resource persons specializing in environmental history and working on environmental issues delivered their valuable lectures on various themes pertaining to the history of environment and recent activities to protect our nature. They were equally zealous to engage in lively interaction with the learned audience. We also had a huge pool of paper presenters from different parts of our country.



### **Resource Persons and Dignitaries:**

Day 1: The inaugural session saw pertinent introductory remarks by Professor Debashis Bandyopadhyay, the respected Vice Chancellor, Kazi Nazrul University, followed by Professor Amitava Basu, the respected Principal, Banwarilal Bhalotia College. While the former delivered deep into our ancient past in his search of relevance of the history of environment, the latter warned us with the contemporary environmental challenges which had roots in the past. Professor Debashis Bandyopadhyay reminded us that without nature, would turn into a world of Anthropocene. Professor Amitava Basu insisted on putting an end to relentless abuse of nature.

Our first resource person was Professor Sajal Nag, retired professor Dept. of History, Assam University. The title of his paper was- 'Bamboo flowering and Rat Famine; A periodic Ecological disaster in North East India'. He spoke on bamboo flowers and rat famine in the context of Assam. He eloquently demonstrated the peril that nature can bring on the course of human history. Rat famines in colonial times not only led to ecological crisis but also it caused several political movements.

Professor Sutapa Chatterjee Sarkar, Professor, West Bengal State University, delivered her lecture, on the way we can look at environmental history. She did not limit environmental history to one aspect or one dimension. According to her, the history of environment needs to be studied in combination with social and cultural history. Professor Chatterjee Sarkar brought in the case study of the Sundarbans to substantiate her argument. The case of the Sundarbans was about vulnerability and resilience. She demonstrated how land reclamation changed the course of environmental history in the region. The respected chairperson Prof. Tridib Santapa Kundu, Principal of the Deshbandhu Mahavidyalaya summed up the session with his intriguing inputs. The resource persons engaged in a fruitful interaction with the audiences that included teachers, students, paper presenters and other esteemed participants.

In the second half of day-1, young scholars were invited to speak on their intriguing fields of research pertaining to environmental history. Dr. Enayatullah Khan's, Associate Professor, Aliaha University, Kolkata, area of focus was medieval India, especially Mughal India. He referred to several Mughal sources of history which depicted the flora and fauna of that time period. He also referred to the impact of plagues during the Mughal rule. A connection between

famines and diseases was unearthed in his eloquent talk. Dr. Manas Dutta's ingenious endeavors was to establish a credible correlation between military history and environmental history. He cited contemporary examples tussles between superpowers with the environment as the backdrop.

**Day 2:** Professor Rohan D'Souza, the keynote speaker, arrived from Kyoto University, Japan and delivered his keynote speech. He spoke about the responsibility and craft of the historian working on the history of environment. According to him, nature is not a passive backdrop to an unfolding of human drama. The historians are supposed to explore the active role that the nature plays in human history. While speaking about the history of "modern" river, he has shown how the river not only changes the course of history but also changes the course and precinct of land. Bengal and Bihar were always remade by rivers and he rightly stated that the Permanent Settlement did not work because the changing nature of land in those regions. He reminds the modern-day policymakers to take into account the nature while formulating new policies. Professor D'Souza also claimed that at some level nature is also culture which we need to preserve.

His scholarly lecture was followed by interesting presentations by Dr. Paulami Guha Biswas and Dr. Tirthankar Ghosh, Assitant professor, Kazi Nazrul University, Asansol. The former studied the history of environment from the perspective of road construction and sustainable development, the latter showed us how we could study cyclones and the impact of cyclones from the historical perspective.

In the second half of day 2, we had two parallel sessions i.e. online paper presentation and offline mode. Dr. Krishnendu Mandal, Scientist, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, discussed about the Wild life Crime and laid bare a dark truth behind the fashion industry that involved merciless killing and poaching of animals, use of their body parts and involvement of foreign powers.

### **Online and Offline Presentations:**

We receive huge response to our call for paper presentations. We had both online and offline presentation on both days. Esteemed presenters covered a wide array of themes pertaining to environmental history, thus leading to further enrichment of our conference. Scholars from

diverse disciplines contributed their presentations, making it a truly multidisciplinary event. For example, Prof.K Damodaran, from the Central University of Tamil Nadu presented paper entitled 'Addressing the Challenges to E-Vehicle Adoption in India: From a Consumer Perspective'. In his presentation he discussed government initiative for the promotion of green energy, e vehicles and sustainable development. Mr.Ranajit Mandal, Assistant Professor of B B College discuss about the international affairs/ relations of India in the context of environmental issues. The topic of his paper is 'India's position on environmental issues in Global Politics'. Mrs. Kanchan Kumari, SACT teacher of our college also presented paper on Delhi G20 Summit and Environment Agreements.

This seminar is organised by the Department of History and a major thrust was the environment consciousness in from ancient times in India. so participants like Dr.Sumita Mandal, Associate Professor, Khandra College, Asansol talked about ancient literary edification for environmental conservation. Dr.Goutam Majee another participant presented paper on 'Ecological Perceptions in Early Indian spiritual thought'. Another faculty of B. B. College, Mr. Prasenjit Daw gave presentation on environmental thinking during Vedic times. Dr. Anamika Ganguly, Assistant Professor,Balarampur College, presented paper on 'Ecological Wisdom in Vedic Literature: A Comprehensive Analysis'. All these papers show the Indian cultural tradition and love, respect for our mother nature. Rituparna Sarkar, Assistant professor, Bidhan Chandra College, Asansol discussed about ecological perspectives presented in Ramayana. Dr.Nurul Islam, Assistant professor of Karmashree Hiteswar Saikia College, Assam presented paper on Environmental Consciousness in Yogic System of Ancient India: An Analytical Study.

We received papers dedicated to Sustainable Development Goal-2 and initiatives to ensure No-Hunger in India. Another paper examines the intersection of eco-ethics, religious/spiritual teachings, and higher education, focusing on the translation of micro-rituals into macro-impacts on ethical perspectives and educational practices. An important paper was focused on Climate change and its impact on human health in the Northeastern region of India. A scholarly take on diminishing coral reefs provided us food for thought. Impact of Environment and Mental Health of Women was explored in another paper. While one presenter threw in insights into environmental consciousness in Ancient India, another presenter spoke on pollution in the space. Exploration of environmental awareness from the literary points of view was also in vogue.

Hence, various aspects of environmental history were explored not only from different time periods (ancient, medieval and modern) but also from multidisciplinary perspectives (combination of natural sciences, social science and humanities). This international seminar also lived, recorded and updated to our college YouTube channel, i.e <https://www.youtube.com/live/2Ew1PT-5bUk?si=I6EeKi-5Jiod7KIn>

*Debashis Mandal*  
Convenor

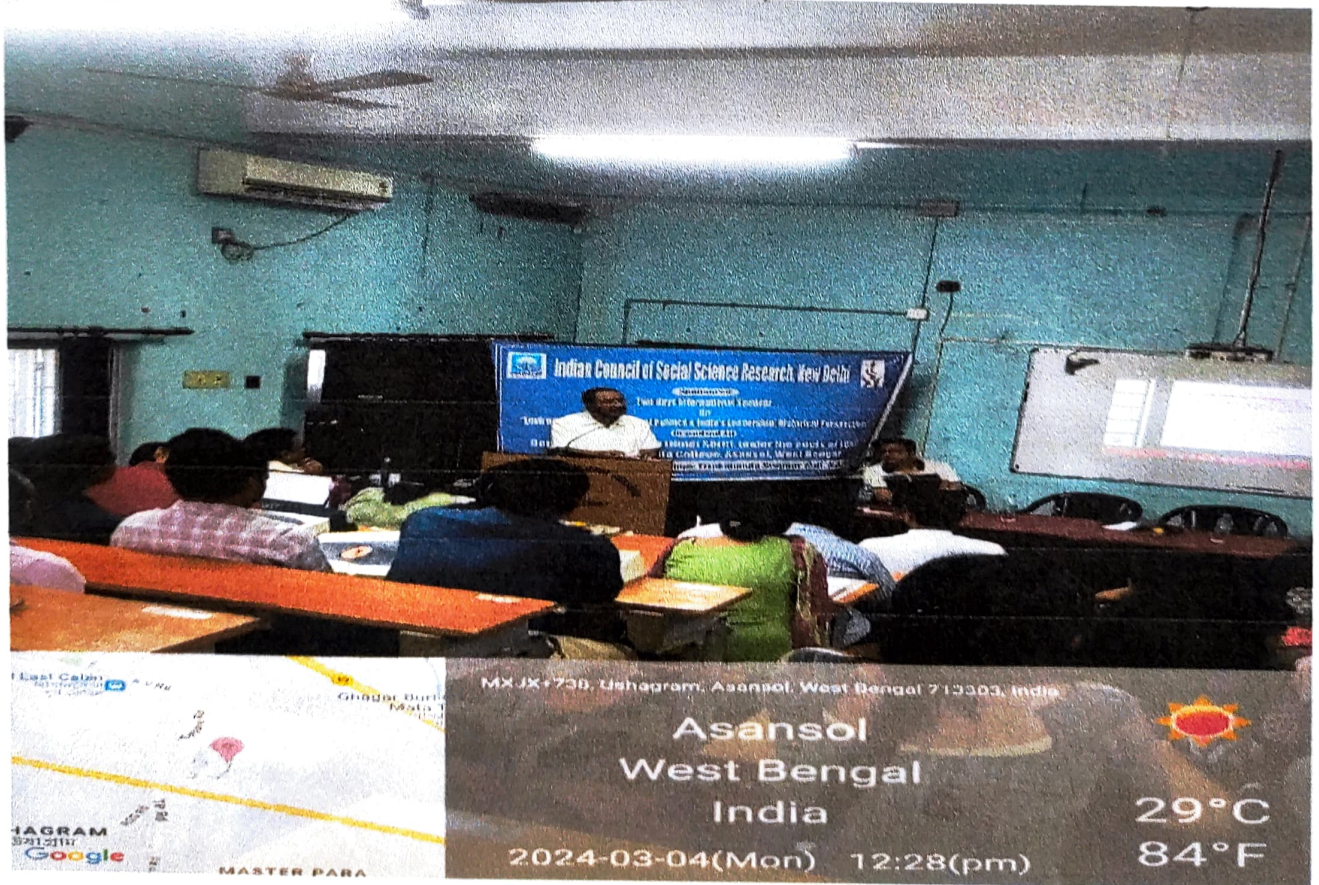
Dr. Debashis Mandal

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  
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**Some photographs of the seminar:**









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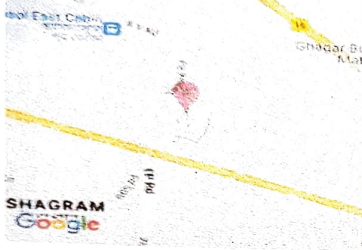
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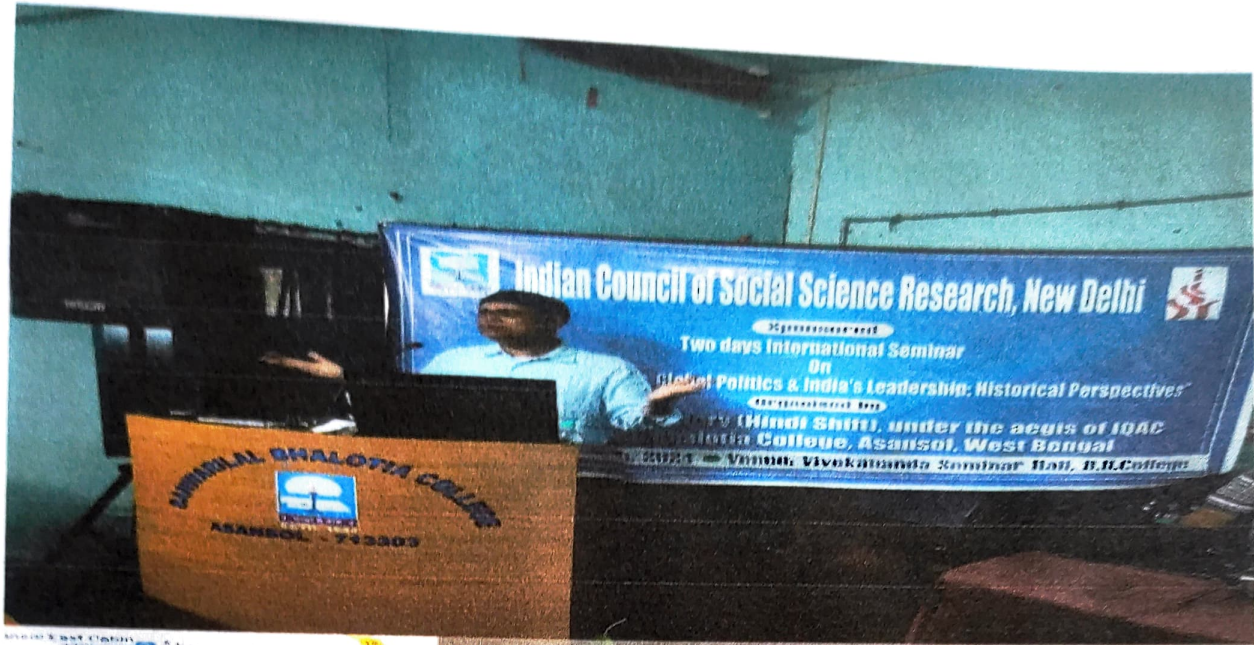




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-----Thank You-----

*Debashis Mandal*  
Signature  
Convenor  
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