



GREEN POLITICS: INDIA'S ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT

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Abstract

When people think of the green movement they think principally of groups that are concerned with protecting the environment. Yet greens have always been concerned with broader political, social and economic issues, too. The common misapprehension, still held by a large section of the population, is that Green Politics is about environmentalism – that the principal objective is to get more effective legislation in place to combat pollution, encourage recycling, protect the countryside from excessive development and so on: in effect, to achieve a more environmentally-friendly version of the current system. Green politics is a political ideology that aims to create an ecologically sustainable society rooted in environmentalism, nonviolence, social justice, and grassroots democracy. It began taking shape in the western world in the 1970s; since then Green parties have developed and established themselves in many countries around the globe, and have achieved some electoral success. This paper makes an attempt to examine the green politics and four pillars of the green party. It also makes an endeavor to study the environment performance of India and other major countries through EPI.

Keywords: *Green Politics, Environmentalism, Nonviolence, Social Justice, Grassroots Democracy.*

Introduction

The common misapprehension, still held by a large section of the population, is that Green Politics is about environmentalism – that the principal objective is to get more effective legislation in place to combat pollution, encourage recycling, protect the countryside from excessive development and so on: in effect, to achieve a more environmentally-friendly version of the current system.

This reformist approach is the remit of most environmental charities and campaigning groups, but not of the Green Party. From very early on, the Greens recognised that the system under which we live is the root cause of all the problems, and no amount of reforms could change that. The environmental movement has had, and continues to play, a valuable role in damage limitation, but it's fighting a losing battle.

For decades, the Green Party has been perceived by most people as a single-issue party. Whenever it was approached by the media for comment, it was always with respect to an environmental issue. Few people were aware that the party has a comprehensive set of detailed policies covering every aspect of life, a radical programme advocating a total transformation of the social, economic and political systems that currently prevail.

In a way, people are right – we are a single issue party – if that issue is to safeguard the environment to preserve a planet that continues to provide a decent home for the human race and the complex and amazing web of life of which it is a part. The first rule of Green Politics is that you cannot divorce the economic system and human values from the health of the planet. Green politics can be described as activism, an ideology, a political ideology, a social movement, a political movement and a part of the environmental movement.

Objective of the Study

- To examine the green politics and four pillars of the green party.
- To study the environment performance of India and other major countries through EPI

Green Politics

Green Politics (also known as **ecopolitics**) is a political ideology that aims to create an ecologically sustainable society rooted in environmentalism, nonviolence, social justice, and grassroots democracy. It began taking shape in the western world in the 1970s; since then Green parties have developed and established themselves in many countries around the globe, and have achieved some electoral success.

Green politics refers to a political ideology which fights for creation of sustainable and environmentally conscious society. It is closely related to the concepts of ecology and environmentalism but it also deals with social justice, nonviolence and civil liberties. It is usually considered left in terms of political orientation.



Green Politics aims to reconstruct the patterns of human activities and relationships so that they come to respect and value the natural systems on which they depend. This goal is unachievable until equity and social justice are woven into the fabric of society. Equitable societies are healthier, happier and more likely to undertake the large-scale changes required to ensure sustainability. Green Politics is fundamentally different from other political ideologies because it is concerned with the relations between people and planet, as well as between people and people.

Supporters of green politics share many ideas with the ecology, conservation, environmentalism, feminism, and peace movements. In addition to democracy and ecological issues, green politics is concerned with civil liberties, social justice, nonviolence, sometimes variants of localism and tends to support social progressivism. The party's platform is largely considered left in the political spectrum. The Green ideology has connections with various other ecocentric political ideologies, including ecosocialism, ecoanarchism, and ecofeminism, but to what extent these can be seen as forms of Green politics is a matter of debate. As the left-wing 'Green' (i.e. capital 'G') political philosophy developed, there also came into separate existence unrelated and polar opposite movements on the right that include ecological components such as green conservatism and eco-capitalism.

Criteria for Identifying the Key Elements of Green Politics

Jonathon Porritt's criteria for identifying the key elements of green politics:

1. A reverence for the Earth and for all its creatures;
2. A willingness to share the world's wealth among all its peoples;
3. Prosperity to be achieved through sustainable alternatives to the rat race of economic growth;
4. Lasting security to be achieved through non-nuclear defense strategies and considerably reduced arms spending;
5. A rejection of materialism and the destructive values of industrialism;
6. A recognition of the rights of future generations in our use of all resources;
7. An emphasis on socially useful, personally rewarding work, enhanced by human scale technology;
8. Protection of the environment as a precondition of a healthy society;
9. An emphasis on personal growth and spiritual development; respect for the gentler side of human nature;
10. Open, participatory democracy at every level of society;
11. Recognition of the crucial importance of significant reductions in population levels;
12. Harmony between people of every race, color and creed;
13. A non-nuclear, low-energy strategy, based on conservation, greater efficiency and renewable resources;
14. An emphasis on self-reliance and decentralized communities.

Source: *Jonathon Porritt Seeing Green, Blackwell, London 1987.*

Four Pillars of the Green Party

A Green party is a formally organized political party based on the principles of green politics, such as social justice, environmentalism and nonviolence. Greens believe that these issues are inherently related to one another as a foundation for world peace. Green party platforms typically embrace social-democratic economic policies and forming coalitions with leftists. Green parties exist in nearly 90 countries around the world; many are members of Global Greens.

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, was a practitioner of "green politics" far ahead of his times. His politics in the first half of the last century embraced the six principles of green politics, namely social justice, ecological wisdom, grass-roots democracy, non-violence, ecological wisdom and sustainability, that were adopted in 2001 at the first Global Greens Congress at Canberra, Australia. Despite Gandhi's green politics, no established political party in India can claim to be a "green party" in the accepted sense of the term.

The Four Pillars of the Green Party are a foundational statement of Green politics and form the basis of many worldwide Green parties. The Four Pillars are:

- Ecological wisdom
- Social justice
- Grassroots democracy
- Nonviolence

Different Green Parties that list the Four Pillars phrase them somewhat differently. In general, the four pillars define a Green Party as a political movement that interrelates its philosophy from four different social movements, the peace movement, the civil rights movement, the environmental movement, and the labour movement



1. **Ecological Wisdom:** Ecological wisdom encompasses environmental issues and strives to reduce the harmful impact of human activities on the environment. To achieve a harmonious coexistence with other forms of life on Earth, Green politics advocates radical change in both politics and economy. The members of Green parties and their supporters demand more environmentally responsible economic model. They see a solution in support of environmentally friendly industries through subsidies and refusal of the latter to companies that pollute the environment, exploit natural resources, emit too much carbon dioxide or harm the environment in any other way.
2. **Social Justice:** (sometimes "Social equality and economic justice") reflects the general rejection of discrimination based on distinctions between class, gender, ethnicity, or culture. Green Parties are almost universally egalitarian in their outlook, seeing that great disparities in wealth or influence are caused by the perversion of or total lack of social institutions that prevent the strong from plundering the weak. It strictly rejects any form of discrimination in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, class, culture or sexual orientation. 'Green' social justice is in its root almost total egalitarian and demands more effective protection of the weak from the wealthy or/and influential members of the society.
3. **Grassroots Democracy or Participatory Democracy** is embraced by Greens as the only reliable governance model for achieving social change. Many Green parties have rejected or constrained the traditional role of leaders as "party boss", in favor of having figurehead leaders or spokespeople. Many Green party constitutions are configured to prevent the party bureaucracy from accumulating too much power in the organization, in favor of more decentralized or member driven processes. The Greens advocate a stronger political action on a local and even on an individual level. According to the Green politics, the citizens must have a greater role and influence on policy making.
4. **Nonviolence** reflects the Green movement's policy of rejecting violence as a means to overcoming its opponents. Green Philosophy draws heavily on both Gandhi and the Quaker traditions, which advocate measures by which the escalation of violence can be avoided, while not cooperating with those who commit violence. In term of nonviolence, Green politics advocates peaceful resolution of conflicts and strongly opposes war. As an alternative to the latter, it suggests promotion of democracy, human rights and a greater role of women in the society as well as in policy making.

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Other Issues

Other issues that are given the highest priority by Green politics include:

Nuclear Power: All Green parties strongly oppose nuclear power and promote clean and environmentally friendly sources of energy such as solar energy, wind power, geothermal power, etc.

Deforestation: The Greens warn about the devastating consequences of deforestation. They campaign heavily for a global action because the destruction of rainforests affects the entire planet.

Genetically Modified Food: Green parties either oppose genetically modified food or advocate strict restriction due to concerns about its effects on human health and the environment.

Other: Many Green parties also deal with issues such as the rights of indigenous peoples, land reform, biosecurity, biosafety, teak sets, etc.

Ranking the Environment Performance through EPI

The Environmental Performance Index (EPI) is a method of quantifying and numerically marking the environmental performance of a state's policies. This index was developed from the Pilot Environmental Performance Index, first published in 2002, and designed to supplement the environmental targets set forth in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

There are nine indicators in ranking the environment performance through EPI including Health Impacts, Air Quality, Water and Sanitation, Water Resources, Agriculture, Forests, Fisheries, Biodiversity and Habitat Climate and Energy. The following table indicates India's ranking on different parameters.



Table 1: Ranking the Environment Performance of India through EPI

India's Overall Ranking	141	155
Various Indicators		
Health Impacts	134	127
Air Quality	178	174
Water and Sanitation	126	124
Water Resources	101	87
Agriculture	136	117
Forests	31	57
Fisheries	104	67
Biodiversity and Habitat	135	125
Climate and Energy	79	104

Source: Environmental Performance Index

India has improved its performance by 14 points ever since the last report was released (it ranked 155th in 2014), there is little reason to cheer: It ranked 123rd in 2010 and 125th in 2012.

Table 2: Ranking the environment performance of different countries through EPI

Finland	1	18
Iceland	2	14
Sweden	3	9
France	10	27
New Zealand	11	16
United Kingdom	12	12
Australia	13	3
Switzerland	16	1
Luxembourg	20	2
Russia	32	73
South Africa	81	72
China	109	118
India	141	155

Source: Environmental Performance Index

July 2016 Yale University, US, report has ranked India 141st among 180 countries worldwide in Environmental Performance Index (EPI), worse than all the “competing” BRICS countries. The report ranks Brazil 46th, Russia 32nd, China 109th, and South Africa 81st.

The ten best performers in EPI are Finland, Iceland, Sweden, Denmark, Slovenia, Spain, Portugal, Estonia, Malta, and France. United Kingdom ranks 12th and the United States ranks 26th.

The report stresses, there is no relationship between countries’ EPI performance and economic development. “For instance, countries located in Europe tend to have higher EPI scores in relation to their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita”, while “China and India both have “high GDP per capita but receive low scores on the overall EPI.”

The only consolation for India is, it ranks better than three of the immediate neighbors – Pakistan, which ranks 144th, Bangladesh, ranking 173rd, and Nepal, ranking 149th. Sri Lanka ranks 108th and Bhutan 110th.



2016 Variables

EPI	Objective	Issue Category	Indicator
Environmental Performance Index (EPI)	Environmental Health (50%)	Health Impacts (33%)	Environmental Risk Exposure (100%)
		Air Quality (33%)	Household Air Quality (30%)
			Air Pollution - Average Exposure to PM2.5 (30%)
			Air Pollution - PM2.5 Exceedance (30%)
			Air Pollution - Average Exposure to NO2 (10%)
	Water and Sanitation (33%)	Unsafe Sanitation (50%)	
	Ecosystem Vitality (50%)	Water Resources (25%)	Drinking Water Quality (50%)
		Agriculture (10%)	Wastewater Treatment (100%)
			Nitrogen Use Efficiency (75%)
		Forests (10%)	Nitrogen Balance (25%)
			Change in Forest Cover (100%)
		Fisheries (5%)	Fish Stocks (100%)
		Biodiversity and Habitat (25%)	Terrestrial Protected Areas (National Biome Weights) (20%)
			Terrestrial Protected Areas (Global Biome Weights) (20%)
			Marine Protected Areas (20%)
			Species Protection (National) (20%)
Species Protection (Global) (20%)			
Climate and Energy (25%)	Trend in Carbon Intensity (75%)		
	Trend in CO2 Emissions per KWH (25%)		

Green Political Parties in India

The Uttarakhand Parivartan Party (UKPP) - directly translated in English as the "Uttarakhand Transformation Party", is the first Green party in India and is registered in the state of Uttarakhand. UKPP was formed on January 18, 2009 after two years of grassroots deliberations. The party fielded two candidates in the 2009 parliamentary elections and 15 candidates in the 2012 state assembly elections. UKPP is raising awareness about Green politics among the masses, although yet to win representation in government.

Conclusion

Green politics is, to repeat, not just about political parties but includes wider social movements. In turn, the philosophies that underpin green politics extend beyond environmental concern. Green politics is more than environmentalism but increasing evidence of climate change and other eco threats has fueled its growth.

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