

Global Initiative of Academic Network (GIAN) Programme

Dr. Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya (A Central University)
Sagar, Madhya Pradesh

Report on Conduct of GIAN Course

Title of GIAN Course	Emergence and evolution of environmentalism in a cross-cultural perspective: A comparative study of the US and India”	
GIAN Course ID	174046G05	
Period of Course	22-27 April 2019	
Name and Department of Faculty from	Department of Anthropology	
Course Coordinator		
Name	Dr. Rajesh K. Gautam, Associate Professor	
Department	Department of Anthropology	
Name and Affiliation of International Faculty		
Name	Dr. Neeraj Vedwan	
Affiliation	Department of Anthropology, Montclair State University, NJ, USA	
Structure of the Course		
Duration of course (1 week or 2 weeks)	1 Week	
Number of credits (1 or 2)	1 Credit	
Total number of lectures in the course	10	
Number of lectures by International Faculty	8	
Number of lectures by Host Faculty	2	
Number of hours of laboratory/tutorial sessions	10	
Participants of the Course		
Number of student participants	22	
Number of participants from Industry/ Research Organisations	0	
Number of Faculty participants	4	
Total Number of participants	26	
Number of participants who credited for the course	22	

Brief Summary

Environmentalism emerged in the twentieth century as an organized social movement globally in response to the adverse impacts of industrialization, urbanization and, more broadly, modernization. Despite similarities in their overall objectives, environmental movements differed in their specific goals, methods and outcomes, which varied widely depending on the political, economic and cultural context. The participants in this course learnt about the origins, characteristics, evolution and the contemporary nature of environmentalism in two different national contexts: US and India. Furthermore, they also introduced to the different theoretical and empirical explanations that have been used to understand the reasons for the emergence of environmental movements and their outcome.

Objectives:

The main objectives of the course were four-fold:

1. To explain the origins of the environmental movement in the US and India and the political, economic and social factors that contributed to its emergence;
2. To elaborate the Socio-economic characteristics of the environmental movement and their relationship to the wide political and policy framework;
3. To explain the shifts in environmentalism over time and changes in the mobilization strategies, symbols, and discourses used;
4. To educate on contemporary environmentalism and its relationship to consumerism in the US and India

This course focuses on a comparison of environmental movements in India and the United States. This comparison is appropriate for several reasons. The US has some of the oldest institutions (e.g. national parks) to promote environmental conservation in the world, which grew out of a movement that was largely led by the elite. In contrast environmentalism in India ("environmentalism of the poor") is predominantly rooted in the socio-economic struggles of the marginalized aimed at achieving livelihood security and social justice. The comparison between the US and Indian cases highlighted the plurality of environmentalism(s) and their diverse sources and histories. This also helps challenge the fallacy that environmentalism is a luxury that only affluent societies can afford. Other points of comparison also included the rootedness of Indian environmentalism in folk religious and cultural traditions, such as the plethora of tribal and rural knowledge, practices and perspectives that have enabled communities all over India to exist in a state of relative harmony with their environment. In other words, the comparison between the Indian and US cases allow for a focus on the different ways in which environmentalisms can inform policy making, such as by emphasizing the need for deepening democratic practice and participation in India's case; whereas the US case points to the critical role of technical-bureaucratic institutions in formulating environmental policy. In sum, the US and Indian encounter with environmentalism are examples of distinct paradigms whose comparison enabled a deeper understanding of the human-environmental relations and the unique forms they can take in different societal milieus.

Environmentalism, or the collective socio-economic and political response to environmental crises, represents a very significant development in the last several decades. As climate change has emerged as a potential threat to the collective future of humanity, and especially for the vulnerable inhabitants of Third World countries, there is an urgent need to understand the different ways in which society can respond to this unprecedented challenge. Environmental movements can not only complement governmental response to the multi-dimensional challenge posed by climate change, but it can also act as a source of pressure on the state to commit more resources in the fight to combat it. Additionally, grassroots environmental movements can also deepen democracy by promoting engagement with the institutions and policy-making organs of the state. Ultimately, these environmental movements can, therefore, act as mechanisms for promoting the wider goals of social justice and inclusivity.

This achieved the desired goals and course resulted in a long lasting collaboration between the faculty and students of two universities of India and USA.