

Constitution of India and Environmental Governance:

Administrative and Adjudicatory Process

Professor M.K. Ramesh

Professor of Law

National Law School of India University

Lecture 59

Suggestions and Wrap Up

The final segment of the 12th Module in our enquiry and journey into Environmental Law, some Suggestions summing up and Wrap Up.

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ENVIRONMENTAL LAW, GOVERNANCE AND JUSTICE: CRYSTAL -GAZING INTO THE FUTURE!



- AS THE DISCOURSE REACHES THE HOME STRETCH, TOWARDS ITS CULMINATION AND CONCLUSION, A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ARISE: LIKE,
 - WITH SO MANY LAWS AND AUTHORITIES AROUND, WHY IS OUR ENVIRONMENT STILL NOT GOOD? WHAT ARE THEY DOING? WHY IS IT THAT IT IS GETTING FROM BAD TO WORSE? WHAT ARE OUR POLICY MAKERS DOING? - IS THERE NO BODY TO CARE? RESPOND? REPAIR? RESTORE? TO ACCOUNT FOR? AND, BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE?...etc., etc.
 - WHILE SUCH QUESTIONS ARE, NATURAL AND LEGITIMATE, SOME EFFORT WAS PUT IN THE EARLIER MODULES AND IN THE PREVIOUS SECTIONS OF THIS MODULE, IN PARTICULAR, TO ADDRESS AND ANSWER THESE AND MANY MORE, BESIDES, OFFERING SUGGESTIONS.
- THE FOLLOWING ARE A FEW FINAL SET OF OBSERVATIONS, TO BRING ALL THIS TO A LOGICAL CONCLUSION, FOR THE STUDENT, TO REFLECT



UPON, MULL OVER AND, IF FOUND USEFUL, TAKE HOME, AS PART OF LEARNING OF THIS DISCOURSE!

- ENVIRONMENTAL LAW, GOVERNANCE AND JUSTICE DISPENSATION, IN ITS INFANCY(- "EARLY STAGES OF INNOCENCE"), BEGAN WITH GREAT PROMISE AND OPTIMISM, WITH CLEAR DETERMINATION TO PUT INTO ACTION, THE COMMITMENT TO ENABLE AND ENSURE THE HUMANITY, GET OVER THE "ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS" THAT IT HAS PLUNGED INTO, WITHIN A CLEARLY DEFINED PERIOD OF TIME- WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN A WAVE AT ITS CREST, OVER TIME, HAS WANED AND EBBED, ALMOST EVERY WHERE- WHAT IS HAPPENING IN INDIA IS, NOT AN EXCEPTION, NOR, IN ANY WAY, DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE REST OF THE WORLD!- TRULY, THIS IS, INDEED, A GLOBAL PHENOMENON !
- VARIOUS FACTORS AND CIRCUMSTANCES, AS DISCUSSED, SO FAR, HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS IN AN INCREMENTAL WAY- WHILE ACCUSING



It is also an attempt in doing a bit of a crystal gazing into the future as to the law the governance and justice. We have reached our home stretch and we are on the verge of concluding our study. I think we will have to encounter this question or the host of questions definitely now having postponed it all the while. And these questions do really bother us.

Like so many laws, so many authorities we discussed why is it that our environment is still not good enough, what are they doing? Why is that it is getting bad? And it is not just getting bad it is getting from bad to worse what our policy makers doing, is there nobody to take care, respond, repair, restore and account for and be held accountable? And so many myriads of questions are in this. Such questions according to me are very natural and legitimate for us to have.

Even after this much of learning. But as you must have noticed, quite a bit of effort has been put in, in all these earlier modules and particularly in the previous sections of this module to address and answer these questions and many-many more including a host of suggestions being offered. At this final stage, the following are a few final set of suggestions more by way of observations to bring all these learning into a logical conclusion, especially for you the student to reflect upon mull over and if you find it useful take it home as part of the learning of this discourse.

Environmental law, governance and justice dispensation, if you take a panoramic view of its development and its infancy we call it as a very early stage of innocence, it began with great promise and optimism, with a clear determination to put into action, the commitment to enable and ensure humanity to get over the environmental crisis that has befallen us by ourselves by our own misdeeds and within a clearly defined period of time we will get over this crisis, that is the commitment we made.

Remember the 1972Stockholm Summit,, the global solemn promise, this was it. So, what should have been a way of its crust; over a period of time of these nearly 50 years, it has was waived and ebbed to almost nothingness everywhere. What is happening in India is not an exception definitely not in any way different from what is happening in the rest of the world. Definitely, without an iota of a doubt, this is a global phenomenon.

We have seen quite a good number of factors and circumstances have contributed to this sorry state of affairs in a very incremental way competing with each other to contribute to what we are now.

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- FINGERS ARE POINTED AT THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE AND THE INDUSTRY FOR THIS, THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES OF PEOPLE ARE, IN NO WAY, LESS FOR THE CURRENT EXACERBATION OF THE CRISIS SITUATION!
- NONE THE LESS, AS THE PRIMARY CUSTODIANS OF OUR ENVIRONMENT, AS CONSTITUTIONALLY MANDATED, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THE POLICY-MAKERS AND LAW MAKERS- OUR REPRESENTATIVES IN THIS LARGEST DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD- MUST GET BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD, TO DO AN OVERALL REVIEW AND INITIATE STEPS TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE, RECOVER AND RESTORE BOTH THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND INTEGRITY, THROUGH WHICH RECOVER AND RESTORE THE FAITH THAT PEOPLE HAVE REPOSED IN THEM! TO THAT END, HERE IN BELOW ARE A FEW ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS AND, MORE PARTICULARLY, SUGGESTIONS THAT ARE WITH IN THE REALM OF "DOABLE" AND "REALISABLE", IN THE NEAR FUTURE:
- FOR QUITE SOME TIME, THERE IS THIS TALK ABOUT THE INVOCATION OF DOCTRINE OF GOOD FAITH :



Yes, accusing fingers are always going to be pointed at the system of governance and definitely on the industry. But for this particular state of affairs the contributions of individuals like me and you and the communities of people are in no way less.

For the current exacerbation of the crisis situation, nonetheless as a primary custodian of the environment, as constitutionally mandated, it is imperative. But the policy makers and the law makers, our representatives in the largest democracy in the world they must get back to the drawing board, to do an overall assessment, review and initiate steps to repair the damage, recover and restore not just the environmental health and integrity.

And through this particular process recover and restore the faith the people have reposed in them, and to that end here in below are a few additional observations and more particularly suggestions to the powers that we and in my opinion, these are in the realm of doable, realizable in near future by our decision makers. First it has been for quite some time there has been this talk about invocation of the doctrine of good faith, what is this?

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AT FIRST BLUSH, WHEN THERE IS NOTHING TO SUSPECT OR TO GET SUSPICIOUS ABOUT, THIS IS A WELCOME AND A POSITIVE ATTITUDE. THIS IS SOMETHING THAT THE JUDGES HAVE ADOPTED, ALL THE WHILE THAT, "EVERYONE IS PRESUMED INNOCENT TILL, PROVEN GUILTY"- IN AMERICAN COURTS OF LAW, JUSTICE OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, INVOKED THIS WITH GREAT FLOURISH, WHEN HE IMPLORER THAT EVERY ACCUSED PERSON SHOULD BE VIEWED THROUGH THE, "EYES OF A GOOD MAN".

BUT, THERE IS A CAVEAT: IN THIS APPROACH, MAKE SURE THAT THERE IS NO PAST RECORD TO SUSPECT- THEN, VIEW THINGS ON ITS FACE VALUE AND JUDGE. IT SHOULD NEVER BE MISPLACED. THE IDEA THAT HAS BEEN VENTILATED FOR QUITE SOME TIME, THROUGH HIGH POWER COMMITTEE REPORTS AND BY THE LATEST DRAFT BILL ON EIA, 2020, HAS GOTTEN THIS IN TO THE LAW. AS DISCUSSED EARLIER, UNDER THIS LAW, THE DOCTRINE OF GOOD FAITH MAY BE APPLIED IN THE CASE OF THE PROJECT PROPONENT, IN CERTAIN CASES OF LAPSES AND VIOLATIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT MAY BE PERMITTED TO CONTINUE, AFTER COLLECTING A FINE FOR THE DEVIANCE!



The doctrine of good faith, it simply means at the very first blush at the outset when there is nothing to suspect or to get suspicious about having and thinking good of someone is a welcome and a positive attitude. In fact, this is something with the courts of law that judges have adopted all the while because you know what they say, everyone is presumed innocent till proven guilty. In the American courts of law this idea has been used with great flourish by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes.

When he implored that every accused person that appears before him should be viewed with the lens of a good man. There is a word of caution or a caveat in this particular approach. Make sure that there is no past record to suspect, then view things on their face value and judge but make sure that this act of good faith should never be a misplaced one.

This idea has been ventilated for quite some time including through a high-powered committee setup for this purpose, its report mentions this and the latest draft bill which we have seen on environment impact assessment 2020 has gotten this into the law itself, as we have discussed earlier under this law the doctrine of good faith may be applied in the case of the project proponent.

In certain cases of lapses and violations by him, and the development may be permitted to continue, not to start, it is already started, there is a violation but you are applying the doctrine of good faith by collecting a little fine for the deviance and allow him to continue under certain circumstances, this is what the application of doctrine of good faith with regard to the environment impact assessment law.

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THIS IS NOT ONLY A MISPLACED FAITH, BUT SOMETHING THAT DISMANTLES THE VERY FOUNDATION OF THE EIA LAW (- PRINCIPLE OF PRECAUTION). THE RIGOUR OF THE EIA SYSTEM, AS WE HAVE WITNESSED IN AN EARLIER MODULE, GOT DILUTED OVER TIME AND WORKED UNDER THE OVERWHELMING INFLUENCE OF THE PROPONENTS OF DEVELOPMENT, "AT ANY COST". THIS HAS BEEN FACILITATED BY THE "EVER OBLIGING BUREAUCRATIC SET UP", THAT HAS NEITHER CHANGED ITS COLOUR, ATTITUDE OR APPROACH, NO MATTER ANY CHANGE IN GOVTS. OR THEIR POLICIES- TO ENSURE "BUSINESS AS USUAL" AND MAKE ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS TO REMAIN AS "EXTERNALITIES". THE CLARION CALL OF "MAKE IN INDIA AND SELL EVERYWHERE, WITH ZERO EFFECT AND ZERO DEFECT", IS SO CLEVERLY MANIPULATED AND ORCHESTRATED BY THE PROPONENT OF DEVELOPMENT, EVERYTIME, TO ACHIEVE THE FIRST PART AND COMPLETELY IGNORE THE LATTER PART - THE GLOBAL RANKING OF INDIA IN THE LATEST ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDEX (EPI) AT 168th OUT OF 180 COUNTRIES, IS A TELL-TALE EVIDENCE, TO SUBSTANTIATE THE



POINT. THE POLICY MAKERS AND THE DECISION MAKERS SHOULD REALISE THIS FOLLY OF MISPLACED TRUST AND REVERSE IT TO RESTORE THE SPIRIT OF THE EIA LAW – HIGH TIME, THIS IMAGE, ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL FRONT IS REVERSED- " DURING COVID 19 TIMES"- IF AT ALL, THIS PANDEMIC TEACHES ANY LESSON TO US- IT SHOULD BEGIN WITH RE-ANCHORING EIA TO THE PRINCIPLE OF PRECAUTION AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

- A LOT OF GROUND WORK AND PREPARATION AND PLANNING IS REQUIRED, IN OUR INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS, NOT JUST TO SECURE "CLIMATE JUSTICE", BUT, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOR THE PEOPLE OF INDIA- MUCH NEEDED SKILLS OF INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY AND BUILDING ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY COMPETENCE, CONSPICUOUS BY ITS ABSENCE SO FAR, NEED BE BUILT INTERNALLY AND SKILLS HONED



I had already stated that earlier but let me expand and put it more pointedly that this is not only a misplaced faith but something that dismantles the very foundation of the environment impact assessment law which is founded on the principle of precaution. The rigor of the EIA system as

we have already witnessed in an earlier module over a period of time right from 1994 to the present draft bill got diluted over time.

And it has worked out under the overwhelming influence of the proponents of development at any cost. And this has been facilitated by the ever-obliging bureaucratic setup that has neither changed its colour, attitude or approach no matter who is at the helm, who is in charge of the government or what their policies are? To ensure business as usual and make environmental concerns to remain as externalities, this is real-real danger.

And this has to be met up front. Please recall the clarion call that was given “make in India and sell everywhere with zero effect and zero defect”. This call which is one of the highest policy pronouncements made from the rocky ramparts of Red Fort on the Independence Day in 2014 has been so cleverly manipulated and orchestrated by the proponents of development.

And when I say proponents of development not just the industry, not just the developer but those who are cahoots with them in the administration as well every time to achieve only the first part. What is that? Make in India and sell everywhere, facilitate ease of doing business. That is the only thing that has been done, you do not view it totally because the second part is most important with zero effect and zero defect.

This has been completely ignored. What is zero effect? Having least adverse impact on the environment, zero defect; yeah if you want to sell abroad to capture the global market it should have very little defect in it otherwise it would come back and so this is the underlying theme, ensure that there is zero effect and there is zero defect. This part has been overlooked, the first has been projected to make business as usual.

And this goes against the very root of this wonderful policy pronouncement. The global ranking of India in the latest environment performance index, at the 168th position out of 180 countries is a tell-tale evidence of this sorry state of affairs the substantiate the point make.

The policy makers and the decision makers should not make any more compromise, they should realize this folly of misplaced trusts and reverse it to rest over the spirit of the EIA law. It is high time this image on the environmental front is reversed, the global image, the national image and the image that is there before the people of India is something which is sunny. And definitely during this COVID-19 times it is more relevant than any time in human history.

If at all this pandemic teaches any lesson it should begin with re-anchoring this EIA law to the principle of precaution at environmentally sustainable development. There is nothing to negotiate over this, there is nothing to show that misplaced trust any more. The sooner we realize the better environment we are going to have. This is just an example and just to show how the malaise has gotten into the system as to give a very bad account of ourselves.

Next here a lot of ground work is required besides preparation and planning in our international negotiations. Not just to secure climate justice but environmental justice for all and for this much needed skills of international diplomacy and building of environmental advocacy competence is conspicuously absent so far in us this needed to be built internally and our skills are honed very urgently.

I think we needed to take a massive exercise of training, teaching and equipping these representatives of us who go abroad to participate in international deliberations to be better informed, to prepare plan A, plan B and plan C to really sit on power with the other negotiators and really get environmental justice for the people of India. This is another very important task that needed to be taken on a priority.

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- WHILE EVERYTHING APPEARS TO BE WORRISOME AND GLOOMY ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL FRONT, LET ME HASTEN TO ADD HERE, THAT THIS IS NOT AS HOPELESS, AS IT APPEARS. WE HAVE TO RE-RAIL THE ENTIRE THING, IF WE ARE SERIOUS ABOUT ACHIEVING ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN EQUITY, INTERNALLY, - DOMESTICALLY AND LOCALLY -AS THE CONSTITUTION ASPIRES. THE POWERS-THAT-BE WILL DO WELL, IN THE DAYS TO COME, TO REMAIN AS "PUBLIC TRUSTEES"
- THE EXISTING ATTITUDE AND APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL ADMINISTRATION WILL NOT DO- BUILDING CAPACITY;STRENGTHENING COMPETENCE; TIGHTENING THE LEGAL PRESCRIPTIONS TO ENSURE AUTONOMY AND CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT TO INFUSE CONFIDENCE, IN THE "WARRIORS OF ENVIRONMENT", MAY GO A LONG WAY.



Honestly everything may appear to be worrisome and gloomy on the environmental front but let me hasten to add here that this is not as hopeless as it appears. All that we needed to do is and bit determination, conviction and stop not this goal is little beneath that goal to re-rail the entire thing if we are really serious about achieving environmental and human equity, internally especially within India within local community's level.

The constitution aspires the same, I think the power that we should do well in the days to come to remain as public trustees this is a must. The existing attitude and approach to environmental administration I think it is pathetic we have discussed that in great detail, this will no longer do, their capacity needed to be built, their competence needed to be strengthened, the legal prescriptions needed to be strengthened to give them a proper direction.

And also, to ensure their autonomy, their autonomies under threat and then you asked it to perform better, improve that aspect in the law and create an enabling and a facilitating environment to infuse confidence in them and through which they will be able to give confidence to us and confidence in them is something which is non-negotiable because there over warriors of environment and these will go a long way in bringing in better environmental governance.

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- AS "PUBLIC TRUSTEES", THE GOVT. SHOULD NOW , MORE THAN AT ANY POINT OF TIME, REPOSE FAITH IN COMMUNITIES OF PEOPLE WHO, WITH THEIR TRADITIONS, KNOWLEDGES AND SKILLS, BEEN THE CONSERVERS, PROTECTORS AND DEVELOPERS OF THE ENVIRONMENT, FOR GENERATIONS. THE EXISTING SPACE FOR THEIR ENGAGEMENT IN THE LAW NEED HAVE TO BE ILLUMINATED, PUT INTO APPLICATION AND EXPANDED.
- WITH THIS DISCOURSE, IT IS HOPED , THAT THE IDEA MUST OF TOUCHED THE CONSCIENCE OF OUR STUDENTS THAT THIS CURRENT PLIGHT IS, MORE THAN ANY OTHER, ON ACCOUNT OF THE EVER CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLICY-MAKERS, ITS MANAGERS AND OUR OWN, ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT, ITS UTILITY, VALUE AND IMPORTANCE IN OUR LIVES



As public trustees the government, centre, state, the local government or whoever has been put in charge of any activity in relation to environment should more than at any point of time now repose faith in communities of people who with the traditions, knowledges and skills being the conservers, protectors and developers of the environment for generations.

The existing space for their engagement in the law should be recognized and that position needed be accorded to them this has to be illuminated put it to application and expanded, this is another priority. Well, I can go on for a long time but many of these and many more in addition to these have already been conveyed all throughout our discourse, they needed to be picked and put to use if they are found to be of some use.

With this discourse and I am addressing my student here of this particular discourse the idea must have touched the conscience of every one of you that this current plight of hours and of our environment is more than any other on account of the ever-changing perceptions of a policy makers have, the managers have and definitely our own about environment, this has been constantly in a flux about its utility, its value and importance in our lives.

On the basis of which we will decide on how important environment for us and accordingly we act on and so blaming anyone or everyone around us will not do that is business as usual and that should stop. And we needed to think inwardly.

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– IN EVERY SUCH MOMENT, THERE WOULD ALWAYS BE VESTED INTERESTS, TO LOOK FOR SHORT TERM GAINS FOR THEMSELVES AND TO THE DETRIMENT OF OTHERS AND, WHAT HAPPENS TO THE ENVIRONMENT, IS NOT THEIR BOTHERATION- YES, ACCORDING GREATER IMPORTANCE TO ENVIRONMENT IN OUR LIVES, AS LIFE-GIVER, SUSTAINER, PROTECTOR AND ENHANCER OF QUALITY OF OUR EXISTENCE, WOULD, MOTIVATE US TO CARE FOR IT, SO THAT IT CAN TAKE CARE OF US- THE MAGIC OF BETTER ENVIRONMENT AROUND US WOULD BE A REALITY, TO SEE AND EXPERIENCE FOR OURSELVES!



We also know that in every such moment of a doubt, confusion, difficulty that we experience there would always be wasted interest, to look for short term gains for themselves and to the detriment of others and they care two hoots what happens to the environment. We needed to be very conscious of that and we need have to be very weary of that and we need have to really take care as to see that such people will not take advantage of that situation and to that end, we perform our role of environmental steward.

And for doing that according greater importance to environment in our lives as life give a sustainer, protector and enhancer of quality of our existence should motivate us. To care for it so that it can take care of us. Learning to live with environment rather than conquering it should be the password. The magic of better environment around us is bound to be a rarity and that is for us to see, experience and enjoy for ourselves.

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WRAPPING UP...FINALLY!



- *THE COURSE IS ALL ABOUT AN ATTEMPT, TO KINDLE CURIOSITY, ENCOURAGE AND EXCITE, ONE TO GET INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE LEARNING THE SUBJECT - TO DEEPEN THE CONCERN FOR CONSERVATION- BUT, NOT TO DEAL WITH IT EXHAUSTIVELY OR TO "EXHAUST" !- AS A MATTER OF FACT, QUITE A LARGE NUMBER OF TOPICS UNDER THE SUBJECT REMAIN UNCOVERED HERE. TO MENTION JUST A COUPLE OF THEM: DISASTER MANAGEMENT LAW; AGRICULTURE AND THE LAW etc.- IT IS WELL- NIGH IMPOSSIBLE TO DEAL WITH EVERYTHING CONCERNING ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND ENCAPSULATE IN A SINGLE FRAME OR DISCOURSE-CONSTRAINTS OF TIME AND THE EVER EXPANDING NATURE OF THE SUBJECT, CONTRIBUTE TO THIS DIFFICULTY*
- *THIS VENTURE, IT IS HOPED, WOULD SERVE AS THE APPETIZER AND ENABLE EVERYONE OF US TO, RENEW OUR INTEREST IN THE ENVIRONMENT AS A "SHARED COMMONS"; ASSUME THE*



CONSTITUTIONALLY ASSIGNED ROLE OF " ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS" AND DO OUR BIT IN CONTRIBUTING TO BETTERRING THE SYSTEM OF ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE IN INDIA AND FURTHER AND EXPAND ON THE LEGAL SPACE AVAILABLE FOR EACH ONE OF US TO BE THE PARTNERS, PARTICIPANTS, "EYES AND EARS" FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF OUR ENVIRONMENT.

- *AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW EDUCATOR, FOR ABOUT THEREE DECADES, THIS JOURNEY IN TO THE EXCITING WORLD OF ENVIRONMENTAL LAW HAS BEEN RICH, REWARDING AND HIGHLY SATISFYING. MY SINCERE THANKS FOR EVERYONE, FOR HAVING JOINED ME AS A FELLOW TRAVELER AND CONTRIBUTED TO MY LEARNING!*
- *HOPE, THIS HAS BEEN SO TO YOU, TOO!!*



Well friends it is time to wrap up finally. The course is all about a humble attempt, to kindle curiosity, encourage and excite, to want to get into the depths of the learning of the subjects, to deepen the concern for conservation, protection and sustainable use of the bounty of nature that is available to us. Definitely there is no attempt made here to deal with the subject exhaustively, or even to exhaust.

As a matter of fact, quite a large number of topics as you know under the subject remain uncovered. Just to mention a couple of them I have not touched the disaster management law. Agriculture and law is a huge area by itself. It is well-nigh impossible to deal with everything concerning environmental law.

And encapsulate it in a single framed discourse as we are attempting to. Constraints of time and the ever-expanding nature of the subject contribute to this difficulty as I have explained to you time and again. And so, I hope this venture would serve as an appetizer and everyone would be enabled according to me to renew our interest in environment as a “shared commons”.

And not a just shared commons but to assume and take up our constitutionally assigned role of environmental stewards and do above it in contributing to improving the system of environmental governance in India. And further expand on the legal space available for each one of us to be the partners, participants, eyes and ears for improving the quality of our environment.

As an environmental law educator for about 3 decades, this journey has been very exciting. The world of environmental law has been offering a very rich and a rewarding and highly satisfying experience to me, my thanks very sincere one at that are to everyone for having joined me as a fellow traveller and contributed to my learning as well. Hope this has been so to you too, Namaste.