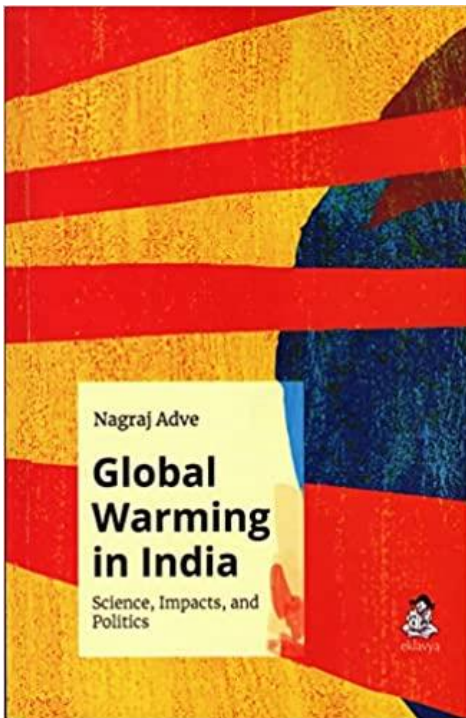


BOOK REVIEW

Discerning Global and Local of Climate Change in Indian Context

Alankar*

Nagraj Adve, *Global Warming in India: Science, Impacts, and Politics*, Eklavya Foundation Bhopal, 2022



Nagraj Adve's *Global Warming in India: Science, Impacts, and Politics* is a booklet-length effort that aims to make the complexities of climate change and global warming accessible to school and college students, teachers, and activists. The emphasis throughout the booklet is on bridging what Adve considers to be a growing chasm in the understanding of climate change between abstract high science and people's popular perceptions about challenges on the ground.

The first chapter, titled "Understanding the Science", explains in a patient and accessible manner several of the technical aspects related to the

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debate on global warming—in particular, how different greenhouse gases (GHGs), such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxides, and others, combine to produce the green-house effect. In North India, this would be referred to as a *razai* effect, the equivalent of trapping heat under a thick cotton blanket, preventing it from escaping. Such, in fact, has been the intensity of human-induced emissions, that, by 2020, we reached an alarming build-up of 412 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere — “which is the highest it has been in 2 million years” (Adve 2022, 13).

Having equipped us with some of the relevant technical terminology, Chapter 2 unpacks the increasingly complicated politics around climate change. Adve states that there are essentially three frameworks within which the issue of blame and responsibility for the unbridled emission of GHGs is often discussed. The first is a discrete sector-wise measurement of GHG emissions—by industry, agriculture, infrastructure, transport, and energy. The second framework weighs the likely differences in terms of carbon footprint between rural livelihoods and urban lifestyles. And the third, which is also by far the most contentious, concerns deciding who the top emitter nations are. While Adve is even-handed in how he discusses the various strengths and weaknesses of each approach, the actual emphasis of the chapter is on the thesis that “the roots of global warming lie in the inherent drivers of the world economy—maximizing profits and growth—and multiple inequalities of income and wealth” (23). In effect, it is the underlying logics of capitalism and economic growth that need to be discerned in order to make sense of the larger picture of GHG emissions.

Chapter 3 shifts the discussion to tracking how climate change impacts affect people and ecosystems. Erratic weather patterns in a now rapidly overheating planet affect different strata of society (and environments) differently, and Adve emphasises that such varied consequences can, and often do, further exacerbate existing political and economic inequalities within and among nations. This chapter, in particular, offers several examples from across India to demonstrate how global warming is affecting and altering seasons, biodiversity, the monsoons, and agriculture. Coincidentally, the author of this book review is associated with a trans-disciplinary research project, TAPESTRY,¹ the findings of which also correspond to the findings in the booklet under review regarding the

¹ “Transformation as Praxis: Exploring Socially Just and Transdisciplinary Pathways to Sustainability in Marginal Environments (TAPESTRY).”

<https://t2sresearch.org/project/tapestry/>.

impacts of climate change on marginalized communities in different parts of India.

Chapter 4 critically evaluates the policies and actions of the Indian government vis-à-vis climate change. Specifically, Adve focuses on the various national- and state-level climate action plans—solar energy, water management, sustainable agriculture, energy efficiency projects, sustainable habitats, and the Green India Mission. The government’s strategy is essentially two pronged: (a) *mitigation*, which refers to large-scale infrastructural and technological efforts to decarbonize energy and economic activities in general, and (b) *adaptation*, involving various programmes that help people cope with changing weather patterns or even harness some of the new opportunities that may arise from climatic shifts. Interestingly, Adve points out that *mitigation* efforts tend to attract more support in state plans because they also happen to be financially profitable and allow for private collaboration, whereas *adaptation* gets short shrift because it needs government spending and is mostly meant to cushion the poor against climate change impacts.

Chapter 4 ends with a useful mapping of the larger geopolitical scenario that has been shaping climate change negotiations. While briefly touching upon some of the main points debated during the different rounds of the Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings—from Kyoto (1997) to Paris (2015)—Adve is keen to underline that it is the industrially advanced countries of the North that are reluctant to make meaningful commitments to reduce emissions. On the other hand, the poorer nations of the South, such as Bolivia, Cuba, and Ecuador, seem to be making genuine efforts to tackle global warming–induced ecological challenges.

The final chapter elucidates how individual and collective efforts can be mobilized to tackle climate change challenges. While at the individual level, several consumption choices can be pursued, such as choosing to install solar panels or buying energy efficient cars, collective or people-led struggles for climate justice, on the other hand, will involve more than scaling up local efforts. Crafting global solidarities on the theme of climate change, in fact, will greatly depend not only on how the inner logic of capitalism is challenged, but crucially also on how meaningful demands are formulated for decarbonizing the economy and enabling the transition to non–fossil fuel energy.

In sum, *Global Warming in India: Science, Impacts, and Politics* is a very useful contribution. It is accessibly written, and in a compelling way, untangles many of the most complicated aspects of the climate change debate. But

crucially as well, we finally have the teaching textbook on global warming that would bring the student community up to speed on the pivotal questions concerning planetary sustainability in their generation.