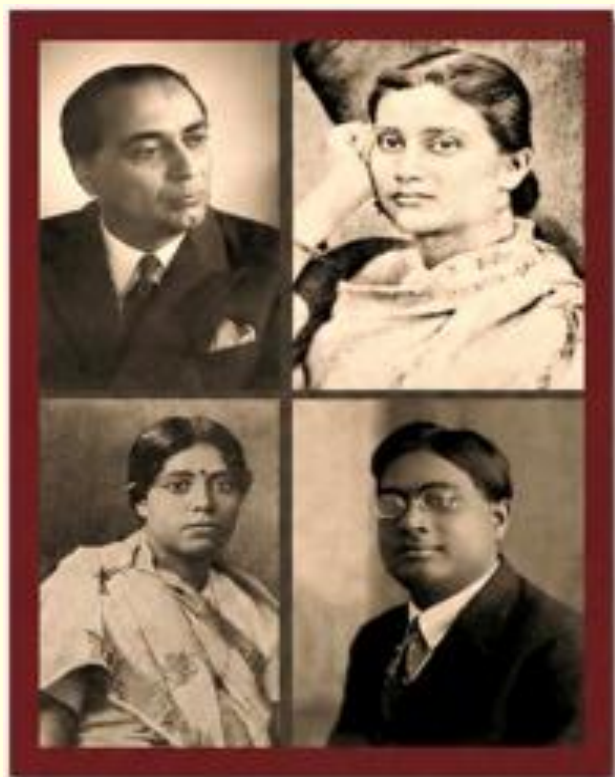




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About the Society

The objective of the society is to promote research and teaching in the history of science in the context of India through the ages.

Here the term science includes also technology, environment and medicine. The term history includes history in all possible dimensions. Thus, the said society focuses on histories of science, technology, environment and medicine (HISTEM).

In achieving this, the society intends to strengthen the linkages between other institutions and organizations interested in the history of science, leading to greater appreciation of the role of the history of science in society.

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Editorial

From Spade to Algorithm: Technology's Journey in Revealing the Past

Suprakash Chandra Roy

Gone are the days when archaeologists used classical tools and technology to reveal the history buried in relics, including manuscripts. The history of archaeology is inseparable from the evolution of technology. Each generation of tools has expanded our ability to uncover ancient structures, relics, and manuscripts, transforming archaeology from a discipline of manual excavation into one of digital revelation, which occasionally rewrites history. In the **classical era**, discovery was a matter of physical endurance. Archaeologists relied on picks, shovels, and brushes to expose ruins,



while epigraphists (specialists who study and decipher inscriptions permanently engraved on durable materials such as stone, metal, pottery, or shell) copied inscriptions by hand. These methods, though pioneering, were slow, invasive, and often destructive. Fragile manuscripts and artefacts were easily damaged, and much knowledge was lost in the process.

The **scientific revolution of the 19th and 20th centuries** introduced precision and preservation. Photography and film provided faithful documentation of sites; radiocarbon dating established reliable without damaging the artefact.

Remote sensing began to map landscapes from above. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) allowed scholars to visualise settlement patterns, while 3D scanning and photogrammetry (the technology of extracting reliable 3D measurements and models from overlapping 2D photographs) created digital replicas of monuments and artefacts. Archaeology is becoming less destructive, more analytical, and timelines. Modern approaches emphasise *non-destructive* or *minimally invasive* techniques such as X-ray fluorescence (XRF), Raman spectroscopy, Fourier-transform infrared (FTIR), and mass spectrometry, which reveal composition, corrosion, pigments, and binders increasingly interdisciplinary with the advancement of technology.

Today, in the AI era, discovery has entered a new dimension. Machine learning algorithms sift through satellite imagery to detect anomalies that may conceal buried structures. Predictive models forecast excavation hotspots, guiding archaeologists to promising sites with remarkable efficiency. AI-assisted restoration revives eroded inscriptions and manuscripts, reconstructing missing words by learning from linguistic and stylistic patterns. Neural networks classify pottery and tools by cultural origin, accelerating research that once took decades to accomplish.

From Spade to Algorithm.... Contd.

Meanwhile, virtual and augmented reality recreate ancient cities and manuscripts, allowing immersive exploration by scholars and the public alike.

India boasts of the largest known collection of ancient and medieval manuscripts. But many remain unread due to the painstaking manual labour needed to decipher. The Asiatic Society in Kolkata, established in 1874, which is a treasure house of old manuscripts, contains more than 52,000 manuscripts, many of which have remained undeciphered so far. They have recently started transliteration of the manuscripts using machine learning to make these texts accessible to scholars worldwide, ensuring their survival for future generations. To train and validate these models, researchers utilise handwritten manuscripts in digitised form, some of which date back to many centuries BC.

A recent news item in the 13 July edition of the Times of India made a startling revelation that a 12th century sculpture at Dhar in Madhya Pradesh, known as the goddess Saraswati, has now been identified as the goddess Gayatri, who personifies the Gayatri Mantra and Vedic wisdom. * The revelation happened due to the use of precise digital documentation and high-resolution 3D mapping of the red sandstone sculpture and decoding iconographic clues which had remained unnoticed for centuries.

The trajectory from 'spade to algorithm' underscores a profound truth: technology does not replace human insight but amplifies it. Archaeologists, along with historians, remain the interpreters of context, culture, and meaning. And with digital tools and artificial intelligence, the past is no longer confined to fragile ruins or fading manuscripts. It is preserved, illuminated, and made accessible to the world—ensuring that ancient voices continue to resonate in the modern age. History is getting rewritten by technology.

*Comments made by Deepak Kumar: Idol of Gayatri is rare indeed, maybe because the Gayatri mantra does not extol any God or goddess but 'bhargo devasya' that is god-like light Jyoti, and that too, which is 'dhiyo yukt', that is endowed with intellect.

Professor Suprakash Chandra Roy

Editor-in-Chief,

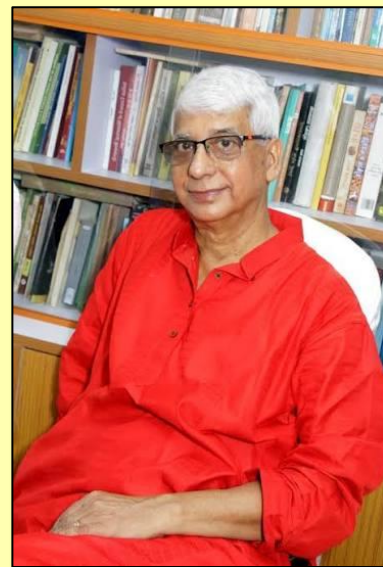
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Why should we do Environmental History in the History of Science?

Arun Bandopadhyay

It is a brief note, and I should clarify what I mean by 'environmental history' and 'history of science' before I proceed. Environmental history is a term coined not by historians but by scientists to explain and illustrate the moot problems of their arguments as articulated by them either in environmental science or its broader version as environmental studies. History of Science, a field increasingly searching for its legitimacy since the middle of the nineteenth century, now is more widely referred as HISTEM or History of Science, Technology, Environment and Medicine. Here two things come to our immediate purview. First, though search for the theories of the history of science is age-old, no major attempt has been made to theorize the subject matter of HISTEM beyond its general inter-connection. Secondly, we should not forget that environment is not merely a component part of HISTEM, but a crucially critical part of it, particularly in relation to Science with a capital S, as pointed out by some analysts recently.

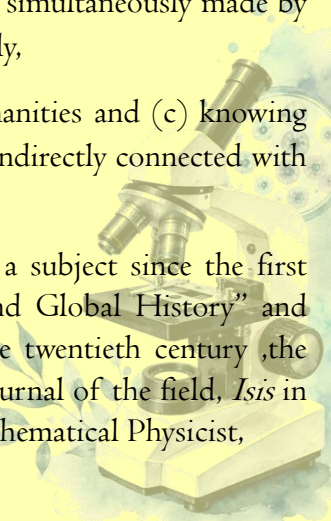


'Thoughts' and 'Stakes' associated respectively with Science and Environment, though often intricately mixed, are also to be clarified in the beginning. Many aspects of environment are prominent here, especially in the dichotomy of anthropocentric and biocentric approaches raised around it. By contrast, 'science' posits in the picture with many observable data, and understanding them with rigours, increasingly with the help of technology-based analysis.

While there is a growing literature on the relation between history of science as part of broader social history, a search for the grounds of the justification for the study of it has been simultaneously made by scholars such as Helge Kragh who identified at least three crucial grounds, namely,

(a) critical self-examination (b) bridging the gap between the science and humanities and (c) knowing the genesis of scientific theories more historically. All these aims are directly or indirectly connected with questions of knowledge system, institutions and society.

Herein come the related issues of the evolution of the history of science as a subject since the first quarter of the twentieth century. In an article titled "History of Science and Global History" and published in 2025, Kapil Raj has argued that ever since the beginning of the twentieth century, the capital-S Science was coming to the fore, so much so that the first specialized journal of the field, *Isis* in its first issue in 1913 contain an article of George Sarton (1884-1956), the mathematical Physicist,



Why should we do Environmental History...contd.

with the following questions: “Is science not *the most forceful factor* of human history? Would it not hence be legitimate that *all other factors be subordinate to science* in the evolutionary narrative?” (italics mine). Later, in his writings during the 1930s, he even went to the extent of saying that science not only reflected the human genius “of any single man or group of men but that of mankind as a whole”. In between the two World Wars, a number of scholars such as the Soviet scientist Boris Hessen (1893-1936) and British intellectuals and scientists such as Joseph Needham (1900-1995), J.D. Bernal (1901-1971), and J. B. S. Halden (1892-1964) highlighted a radical, new historical materialist understanding of science, which was followed in a different way by the idealist French philosopher Alexander Koyre (1892-1962). After the Second World War, science spread along with the value of the West during the Cold War. In the 1960s, in the wake of the détente, new models of diffusionism came with the historians such as George Basalla (1928-2025) with W.W. Rostow’s (1916-2003) five-stage non-communist model of economic growth. In one of Basalla’s books, published in 1960, it was mentioned that one of the seven tasks to be done was “the replacement of traditional moral principles and human relationship with a systemic study of the natural world”. Then came the counter-culture movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, when the attention was radically shifted from e-counting the progress of capital-S Science grounded in a perception of knowledge to being disembodied and universal at the same time – ‘everywhere and nowhere’ view. Even this view was confined mostly in Western Europe and North America. The Eurocentrism did not diminish. Only contingencies of place came to acquire key importance in recent sociological and historical studies of science.

Finally, the collapse of the post-World War II world order at the close of the twentieth century happened to affect profoundly the global academic scene of science. Closer attention was then given to cross-border entanglement of science and knowledge in their circulation and production, thus helping to an extent to subvert the classic centre-periphery model of diffusion of science.

Let us now make a very quick reference to recent social and environmental criticism of the rise of capital-S Science, taking them one by one.

A. Science and Society. There has been an enormous and often contentious relationship between the two. A classic example of it is Marc Bloc’s discussion of ‘causation’ in his posthumous book *The Historian’s Craft*. Here the simultaneous issue of the occurrence of a microbe in water and the existence of poverty has been identified as the cause of cholera, one obviously medical and the other social. The second important aspect of science and society is the idea of ‘open science’ which is composed of such critical materials as open data, open materials, open access, open source, and open educational resources through which the healthy connection between the two may be maintained. Vini V. Krishna in his recent article on “Open Science and its Enemies” has argued how this has been effectively challenged during the post-Covid-19 times. This was due the increasing commodification of knowledge, profit-oriented global R & D and the technological imperialism unleashed by some restricted technologies of AI. There is another issue of the relation between religion and science in a civilizational context. Long ago, Joseph Needham made a classic statement in his 1926 text (*Science, Religion and Reality*) which is still valid even after hundred years, in 2026:

Why should we do Environmental History...contd.

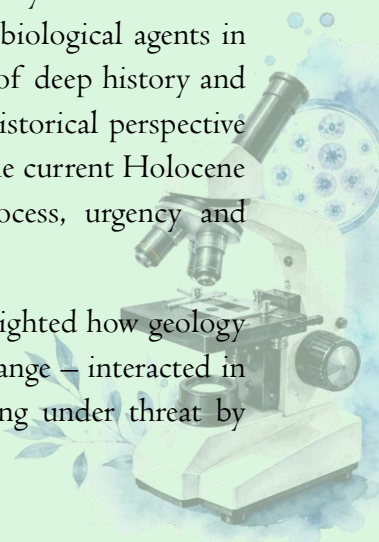
“superstitions may be negative as well as positive, and the excess of unbelief may be as extravagant as those of belief.” Deepak Kumar in one of his articles thinks that “there was exceptional men of genius who began with tradition, remained in tradition and still transcended it.” His example was Rammohan Roy, but he also contends – ‘the debate continues’.

Science and Environment. The first important thing here is to note that environmental studies began with a critique of science. At the simplest level, this critique of science in environmental studies probes into such issues as how empirical data can be value-laden, reductionist and shaped by political or institutional interests rather than existing as purely objective truth. At the deeper level, one may detect several hidden norms in the value-laden science, more often in capital-S Science. One of them is masked personal values, frequently representing present subjective human preferences as scientific facts. The second aspect brings disciplinary lenses where different scientific fields view nature through unique frameworks, tying data to specific ethical or political goals. The third point is problem definition. Owing to lack of clarity or a wider awareness, policy debates often hinge on how a problem is framed, suggesting objective data cannot automatically resolve social, political or environmental disputes.

We shall now briefly dwell on several issues as highlighted by two recent books of Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* (2021) and *One Planet, Many Worlds: The Climate Parallax* (2024), issues which touch on the vexed relation between science and environment, possibilities of a new understanding along with its methodological problems, a limited success for charting a new path in projecting the relation, though not without its attendant problems.

These issues are important, and they are many. As Chakrabarty has articulated them in his first book, we are repeating his arguments. But the issues are important to be named. They are: the beginning and critique of environmental humanities as it developed in the last 50 years, the visible collapse of the distinction between Natural History and human history more or less in the last 100 years, the emergence of an understanding of human beings as biological agents in environmental history more definitively in the twenty-first century, the idea of deep history and its growing connection to evolutionary sciences and neurosciences in long historical perspective as formulated in the last 25 years, the idea of the rise of Anthropocene in the current Holocene Age, negative universal history and the co-relationship of causality, process, urgency and eventuality of the Doom's Day as perceived by Chakrabarty in particular.

Over and above the issues listed here, Chakrabarty in his second book highlighted how geology and biology – respectively non-living and living factors of environmental change – interacted in the history of the Planet Earth to create life-supporting system now being under threat by climate change.



Why should we do Environmental History...contd.

Herein comes the need to recognize the difference of the meanings of 'globe' and 'planet'. French Philosopher Cathrine Malabou (1967-) is probably first to point out that the meaning of the word globe in globalization and globe in global warming is different, as the first refers to at best the last 500 years covered by the humans, while the second refers to the Earth System many million years old.

The globe-planet distinction is fundamental in this analogy, and Dipesh Chakrabarty has tried to develop them in his second book on the subject already referred to. It is important to note that the distinctions that Chakrabarty elaborates are manifold. They cover issues such as human-made and nature-made, recorded history and long history, different purposes of the globe and the planet in creation and inter-action, different meanings of sustainability for both, geo-biological history versus human history, the difference between the global processes and planetary processes, and finally the question of planetary multiplication which is the shift of the planet from one state to another in a "dynamic and self-organized way".

While discussing the Earth System Sciences (ESS) and their many viewpoints, Chakrabarty has even raised the methodological questions. Is the existing analytical tools in social and human sciences are adequate to deal with and explicate these viewpoints?

It seems that apparently Chakrabarty has some doubts about their efficacy. It is true that he has referred to such contrasting terms as 'geologizing the social' or 'socializing the Anthropocene', but he has left them without much discussion. Indeed, he has opened the methodological question but has not answered it.

A hiatus remains. We now have considerable literature to suggest that history of science or its wider form HISTEM is unintelligible without the respective contribution and critique of environment and environmental studies towards it. We know that ESS themselves function as a fundamental critique of the projection of capital-S Science. Dipesh Chakrabarty, however, has failed to locate and expand this idea in his otherwise very forceful arguments for planetary version of environmental and climate change. The idea is either hidden or sporadic in his discussion, never forming a focal point of it. A task for the future is thus to explicate and elaborate them, in such a way as to comprehend the complementary and contradictory relation between science and environment more fruitfully. Only then we shall be able to understand fully why we should do environmental history in history of science.

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The Earliest Research Centre in India on The Environmental History of South Asia: The First Five Years of the UGC Programme, A Coordinator's Retrospective, Department of History, Jadavpur University

Ranjan Chakrabarti

When the University Grants Commission sanctioned the Special Assistance Programme (Departmental Research Support) to the Department of History, Jadavpur University, in December 2004, with its thrust area on the Environmental History of India, few could have anticipated how quickly the Department would grow into a recognised centre for environmental history in South Asia. As Coordinator of the Programme, I set down here a connected account — year by year — of what the Department set out to do, whom it brought to its seminar halls, what it published, and what, in the end, it achieved. The research programme on Environmental History of South Asia was initiated in the Department of History, Jadavpur University, way back in 2004. I had the privilege to lead the programme between 2004 and 2011. In November 2011, I had to take extraordinary leave from Jadavpur University to serve. This programme at Jadavpur University was the first of its kind in the country.



This centre for environmental history gradually earned recognition both within the country and beyond. The faculty members of the Department published quite an impressive number of books and articles on the subject. Such publications grew out of the research projects undertaken at our centre. A large number of international and national conferences on various themes of environmental history were organized. Such publications grew out of the research projects undertaken at our centre. A large number of international and national conferences on various themes in environmental history were organised, and the Department also hosted about twenty outstanding scholars as Visiting Professors, including Richard Grove, Mahesh Rangarajan, Christopher Mauch, Ravi Rajan, Deepak Kumar and several other scholars.

Year I (2004–2005): Laying the Foundations

The grant reached the Department only in December 2004, and the Advisory Committee — chaired by Vice-Chancellor Prof. A.N. Basu, and including Prof. Kapil Kumar (Indira Gandhi National Open University) and Prof. Y. Vaikuntham (formerly of Osmania University) as UGC-nominated outside experts — was constituted on 17 December that year. With barely three months of the financial year remaining, the first priority was necessarily infrastructural: computers, laptops, a scanner, an LCD projector, a Xerox machine, digital cameras, a handy cam and internet connectivity were procured, and a dedicated DRS office was established on the fifth floor of the PG Arts Building to serve as a research and database centre. Despite this late start, seven faculty members initiated research projects in the thrust area — Prof. Chittabrata Palit on public health and sanitation in colonial Bengal; Dr. Kunal Chattopadhyay on the history of environmental activism; Dr. Sudeshna Banerjee on Earth System Science in Indian academia; Dr. Jayanta Sengupta on a bibliography of India's environmental history;

Prof. Mahua Sarkar on the ecological history of Bengal's rivers; Sri Subhasis Biswas on colonial and post-colonial forestry; and Prof. Ranjan Chakrabarti on the Annual Progress Reports of Forest Administration — several supported by field trips to archives as far afield as the India Office Library, London, and the Forest Research Institute, Dehradun.

The Department also convened its first major public events. The three-day **International Seminar on "Situating History of Environment"** (3–5 March 2005) drew some thirty scholars, with eighteen papers presented; the keynote was delivered by Prof. Arun Bandopadhyay, Nurul Hasan Professor of History, University of Calcutta. A companion **panel discussion on "City and Environment"** was held at the Victoria Memorial Hall (4 March 2005), bringing together Dr. Richard Grove (Australian National University), Dr. Rita Pemberton (University of the West Indies) and Prof. Lawrence Gundersen (Jackson State College, USA). A two-day **workshop on "Towards a History of Environmental Activism"**, held in collaboration with

The Earliest Research Centre in India.... contd.

Visva-Bharati University at Santiniketan, featured a keynote address by Sri Hirak Ghosh, former Secretary, Department of Environment, Government of West Bengal. Other invited lectures that year came from Prof. C. Rajendran (University of Calicut), Dr. Lucas Delattre (Council of Europe, Paris), Dr. Richard Grove again, and Prof. Osvaldo Coggiola (University of São Paulo).

The Department's first UGC Visiting Fellows were Dr. Richard Grove of the Australian National University, Canberra, and Dr. Archana Prasad of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, both of whom lectured extensively during their stay and presented papers at the International Seminar.

Publications arising from Year I included Prof. Palit's *Bigyaner Aloke Oupanibeshik Bangla* (Colonial Bengal in the Light of Science, 2005) and his article "Rabindranath and Environment" in *Visva Bharati Annals*; Prof. Sarkar's chapter "Deforestation, Crisis of Women and Eco-Feminism in India in the Nineteenth Century"; Prof. Chakrabarti's chapter "Colonising the Forest: 1800–1860" and article "Taming the Maneaters of the Sundarbans, 1880–1947"; and Sri Subhasis Biswas's article "Christianity and Environment: A Case Study of Its Impact on the Tribes of Eastern India" (*Social Aspects of Religion*, Slovakia, 2004) — all appearing in Sukumar Bhattacharya (ed.), *Mountains and Forests of India* (Kolkata, 2005), among other venues.

Year II (2005–2006): Consolidation and Expansion

With infrastructure in place — and Rs. 6.50 lakh sanctioned for additional renovated space on the third floor of the newly built Subarna Jayanti Bhavan — the second year saw the Programme move decisively into full academic activity. Six research projects were completed: Prof. Anuradha Chanda on Joint Forest Management in West Bengal; Prof. Amit Bhattacharyya on the Kolaghat Thermal Power Plant; Dr. Jayanta Sengupta's directory of scholars; Prof. Mahua Sarkar on the rivers and tribal villages of Mayurbhanj; Dr. Rupkumar Barman on the traditional fishing communities of Bengal; and Prof. Chakrabarti on the history of shikar (hunting) in colonial India.

Three major events anchored the year. The **International Seminar on "Santal Hool 150: An Environmental Perspective"** (23–24 November 2005), organised with the Centre for World Environmental History at Sussex

University and the Department of History, Visva Bharati, carried a keynote by Prof. Nandini Sundar (Delhi School of Economics). The **International Seminar on "History of Waters in South Asia"** (3–4 March 2006) drew some thirty leading scholars and more than

thirty papers across twelve sessions; the keynote was delivered by Prof. Y. Vaikuntham, with Dr. Mahesh Rangarajan, Dr. Richard Grove, Dr. Michael Mann and Dr. Heather Goodall among the speakers. The **National Seminar on "Understanding Environmental History"**, held with the Institute of Historical Studies, Kolkata (10–11 March 2006), carried a keynote by Dr. Pratap Chandra Chunder, former Union Minister and noted educationist, with papers by Dr. Mahesh Rangarajan, Dr. Michael Mann, Prof. Ranjit Sen, Prof. Amal Das, Prof. Chakrabarti, Dr. Malay Mukherji, Dr. Sudeshna Banerjee and Dr. Susmita Guha Roy.

The Department's UGC Visiting Fellows this year were Dr. Vinita Damodaran of the Centre for World Environmental History, University of Sussex, and Dr. Mahesh Rangarajan, the well-known environmental historian and television journalist based in New Delhi; the Department was additionally able to host Dr. Michael Mann of Fern University, Germany, as an academic guest (his visit funded independently). This was also the year in which the Department's first formal international partnership took institutional shape: a **Memorandum of Understanding with Jackson State Community College, Tennessee (USA)** was signed, providing for comparative research in environmental history between the two institutions. Ms. Subhosree Chaudhuri and Ms. Mili Ghose joined as Project Fellows.

Publications: Prof. Palit brought out three books in a single year — *History of Medicine in India* (ed., Kalpaz Publications, 2006), *Scientific Bengal* (Kalpaz, 2006) and *J.C. Bose and National Science* (Readers Service, 2006) — besides an occasional paper, "Santal and Public Health". Prof. Chakrabarti's *Random Notes on Modern Indian History* (Readers Service, 2006), containing the chapter "New Directions of History: Environmental History", appeared alongside three articles, including "Writing Environmental History" in *Dialogues Between the Past and the Present*. Dr. Subhasis Biswas published "Imaging the Nature of the Orient" in C. Neogi (ed.), *Reorienting Orientalism* (Sage, 2006) and "Birsa Munda and the Right of Forests" in a volume honouring Mahasweta Devi. The manuscript of the first seminar volume, *Situating Environmental History* (ed. Ranjan Chakrabarti), was accepted by Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, for publication.

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Year III (2006–2007): The Programme in Full Swing

By the third year, the cumulative effect of steady work became evident: twenty research projects were completed by the Faculty, spanning arsenic poisoning in North 24-Parganas (Prof. Amit Bhattacharyya), early Indian environmental thought (Dr. Nupur Dasgupta), the writings of Tarasankar Bandopadhyay (Prof. Himadri Banerjee), post-colonial fisheries (Dr. Rup Kumar Barman), environmental activism (Prof. Kunal Chattopadhyay), and the rivers of Mayurbhanj (Prof. Mahua Sarkar). Two edited volumes drawn directly from the Programme's seminars appeared in print: *Does Environmental History Matter? Shikar, Subsistence, Sustenance and the Sciences* (ed. Ranjan Chakrabarti, Readers Service, 2006) and *Situating Environmental History* (ed. Ranjan Chakrabarti, Manohar, New Delhi, 2007).

The Department's signature event was the **International Workshop on "History of Global Climate Change: Water, Ecology, Deforestation, Agriculture, Politics and the Management of Nature"** (22–23 March 2007), organised with the Global India Foundation, Kolkata, and attended by roughly a hundred participants. Speakers included Prof. Heather Goodall (University of Technology, Sydney), Dr. Ravi Rajan (University of California, Santa Cruz), Dr. Mark B. Tauger, Dr. Mahesh Rangarajan, Dr. Arabinda Samanta and Dr. Arupjyoti Saikia. A **National Seminar on "Democracy, Development & Environment: Situating Environmental Activism"** (8–9 February 2007), held with the Regional Centre of the National Afforestation & Eco-development Board, drew nineteen papers.

Beyond these flagship events, the Department hosted an unusually rich sequence of extension lectures: Prof. Heather Goodall twice (on Australian environmental debates and on Indigenous conservation and social justice); Dr. Ravi Rajan twice (on justice in environmental thought and on environmental policy); Prof. Deepak Kumar (Jawaharlal Nehru University) on knowledge, science and society in colonial India; Dr. Lawrence Gundersen (Jackson State Community College, Tennessee) on the historiography of early American history; and Dr. Leela Gandhi (La Trobe University, Melbourne) on post-colonial theory. Prof. Heather Goodall and Dr. Ravi Rajan served as this year's UGC Visiting Fellows. By this point the Department's holdings in environmental history had

grown to be counted among the richest in Eastern India.

Year IV (2007–2008): Deepening Scholarship, Widening Recognition

The fourth year carried this momentum further, with twenty-four research projects completed — among them Prof. Amit Bhattacharyya on industrialisation and the Tata Motors controversy at Singur, Prof. Anuradha Roy on nature in Bengali nationalist literature, Prof. Mahua Sarkar on disaster and survival in North Bengal, Dr. Sudeshna Banerjee on the vanishing wetlands east of Kolkata, and Dr. Subhasis Biswas on the Totos and Ravas of North Bengal.

The Programme's publication record grew to three volumes: *Situating Environmental History* (Manohar, 2007); *Indian Vistas of Environment* (eds. Chittabrata Palit and Mahua Sarkar, Kalpaz Publications, 2007); and *Environment and History: Recent Dialogues* (ed. Mahua Sarkar, Kalpaz Publications, 2008) — the last carrying chapters by Dr. Nupur Dasgupta, Prof. Amit Bhattacharyya and Dr. Subhasis Biswas among others.

A **Workshop on "Select Themes in South Asian Environmental History"** (3–4 March 2008), held in partnership with the **Association of South Asian Environmental Historians**, welcomed around a hundred participants, including Prof. Deepak Kumar, Prof. Sajal Nag (Assam University), Prof. Anuradha Roy, Dr. Sudeshna Banerjee, Prof. Mahua Sarkar, Prof. Sujata Mukherjee, Prof. B.R. Tomlinson and Prof. Lawrence Gundersen. The program featured a series of extension lectures: Prof. Deepak Kumar delivered two talks, one on eighteenth-century science and technology and another on the development discourse; Prof. Sajal Nag spoke twice, on the history of rain and on the bamboo-flowering famine in North East India; Dr. Lawrence Gundersen addressed the subject of genetically modified crops; and Steven Xantapolous, an American lawyer specializing in minority rights, discussed the environmental disenfranchisement caused by Hurricane Katrina. Prof. Deepak Kumar and Prof. Sajal Nag served as the year's UGC Visiting Fellows.

Individual recognition also came to the Programme during this period: as Coordinator, I was invited to deliver public lectures at South West Tennessee College, Memphis; at Duke University (jointly organised by the Forest History Society and the Department of History); and at North Carolina University; to present papers at the German Historical Institute, Washington D.C., and at Dyersburg State and Jackson State Community Colleges; and to deliver the keynote address at the ICHR National Seminar on Kerala's landscape

The Earliest Research Centre in India.... contd.

and environment. I was also invited to join the **International Editorial Board and Panel of Referees of the journal Global Environment, published from Naples, Italy** — a mark, I believe, of the Programme's growing international standing.

Year V — DRS Phase II, Year I (2009–2010)

The Programme entered its second phase (UGC Reference No. F.5-82/2009) with a broadened thrust area — Environmental History, History of Environment and Related Areas — but, as in 2004, the Phase-II grant reached the Department only in December 2009, and the Advisory Committee, again presided over by Vice-Chancellor Prof. P.N. Ghosh, was reconstituted on 21 December 2009. Four research projects were undertaken in 1600–1945 (Setu Prakashani, 2010) and, as co-editor with B.K. Ghosh, *Human Rights in India: Historical Perspective and Challenges Ahead* (Setu Prakashani, 2010). Prof. Anuradha Roy brought out a compilation on the martyr Sachindranath Mitra and a Bengali translation of Romila Thapar's *The Past and Prejudice* (published as *Purakal o Pakshapat* by the National Book Trust, 2009).

Dr. Nupur Dasgupta co-edited *Ancient Indian System of Rasayana: Suvarnatra — A Treatise on Alchemy/Rasayana* (Kalpaz, 2009) and published six further articles across journals and festschrifts. Dr. Sudeshna Banerjee contributed seven articles, including “Non-Bengali’ Icons of Malevolence” in *Calcutta Mosaic* (Anthem Press, London, 2009) and the chapter “Human Population and the Environment” for Jadavpur University's e-book on Environmental Studies. Dr. Kaushik Roy published two books with major academic presses — *The Armed Forces of Independent India* (Manohar, 2010) and, as editor, *Warfare, Technology and Society in South Asia* (Viva, 2010). Dr. Subhasis Biswas, Dr. Tilottama Mukherjee, Dr. Rupkumar Barman and Dr. Chandrani Banerjee Mukherjee each added further articles to the Programme's growing bibliography, and two further edited volumes drawn from the year's seminar proceedings were reported to be in the pipeline. Ms. Mili Ghose and Ms. Priyanka Ghosh were appointed Project Fellows under the new phase, with Dr. Sudeshna Banerjee taking charge as Head of the Department.

In Closing

Read together, these five years trace a clear arc: from the necessary, unglamorous work of building infrastructure in 2004–05; through the rapid expansion of research, seminars and international collaboration across 2005–08, during which the Department welcomed leading environmental historians from Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany and closer home; to a Programme that, by the start of its second phase in 2009–10, was sending its Coordinator to the First World Congress of Environmental History at Roskilde and its faculty's work into international journals such as Global Environment. Across these years, some three-dozen distinguished scholars — among them Richard Grove, Mahesh Rangarajan, Heather Goodall, Ravi Rajan, Deepak Kumar, Vinita Damodaran, Michael Mann, Dennis Wheeler, Sajal Nag, Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt and John Mathew — lectured within these walls, and the Department's faculty produced, by conservative count, well over a dozen books and some sixty articles and book chapters in the thrust area alone.

It has been a privilege to coordinate this work, and the Department remains grateful to the University Grants Commission for its sustained support, to the Advisory Committee and its UGC nominees for their guidance, and to the many Visiting Fellows, collaborating institutions, Project Fellows and students whose contributions made this progress possible.

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Science at the Service of Society: A Portrait of William Stanley Jevons's Thought

- Eleonora Buono

On 17 November 1857 William Stanley Jevons wrote a letter to his sisters, Lucy and Henrietta, from Sydney. In this letter, he informed them of his decision to return to England. The following sentence summarises the reason for this momentous decision: Jevons wanted to be “a *powerful good* in the world”.¹ He wanted to return to England to continue his studies and use his knowledge to contribute to social improvement.

Jevons is a key figure in the history of economic thought. He is often mentioned alongside Carl Menger and Léon Walras as one of the three initiators of the so-called marginal revolution, which revised the theory of value and paved the way for modern economics. However, my recent book on Jevons does not begin with his economic theory or an evaluation of his contribution to the history of economic thought. I chose the passage quoted here as a starting point. This decision may raise a few eyebrows among historians of economic thought, but this sentence reveals an aspect of Jevons's thought that previous studies have overlooked (see the references): his aim to put science at the service of society. Although Jevons is often portrayed as an economist who was only interested in theory, he was socially engaged and his engagement extended beyond economic policy. In this intellectual biography of Jevons, titled *Science and Society in William Stanley Jevons's Thought: Improvement through Knowledge*, I tried to give a broad picture of his thought, viewing him not primarily as an economist, but rather as a scientist who wanted to use his knowledge for the benefit of society. Here I present some of the key features of his scientific approach and explain how they demonstrate his commitment to improving society.

Scientific enquiry and the Creator

To understand his view of science, it is important to remember something that scholars often forget: Jevons was a believer. His faith was not just a private matter; it also shaped his understanding of nature. First of all, Jevons's religious beliefs influenced his view of science through the concept of probability. Jevons believed that the universe created by God was infinite. Instead, the human mind was finite. This gap between the finite human mind and the infinity of God's creation explains why probability is relevant to Jevons's view of scientific enquiry.



Consequently, human knowledge can never be completely certain: it can only ever be merely probable, because the finite human mind cannot fully grasp the infinite universe. Therefore, it is crucial to apply the theory of probability to the study of nature, which for Jevons is essentially an investigation into the exact and necessary laws that God gave to the world.

However, this raises the question: if human knowledge can never be certain, how could Jevons be so confident that natural laws were exact and necessary, or even that they existed at all? This conviction could not be explained without considering Jevons's faith. For him, the existence of God and the idea that He was a benevolent and divine artist, who had created a universe that could be investigated scientifically, were never in question. God served as guarantor of nature's order. This view of God is consistent with a long-standing tradition associated with a branch of theology known as “natural theology”. Natural theologians tend to investigate God's creation rationally, representing the Creator as the divine designer of an ordered universe. Jevons contributed to this tradition, as I argued by analysing not only his published works and correspondence, but also a manuscript titled *On the evidence of Design*, in which the word “Design” is tellingly capitalised.² But what does all this tell us about the relationship between science and society in Jevons's thought? First of all, the answer lies in the role that natural theology played in Victorian Britain. At the time, scientific discoveries were often accused of being irreligious when they were perceived as a threat to established faith. Against this backdrop, some scientists, such as Jevons, employed natural theology as a means of reconciling science

Science at the Service of Society...contd.

and religion. Second, and more broadly, the idea that God had imbued Creation with necessary laws formed the basis of Jevons's scientific approach. In his view, this formed the basis for developing a sound scientific system which could genuinely contribute to societal improvement.

²JA6/05/I01 [6 p.], Jevons Family Papers, John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester.

¹William Stanley Jevons, *Papers and Correspondence of William Stanley Jevons*, ed. by Robert Denis Collison Black and Rosamond Könekamp, Vols. 7 (London: Macmillan, 1972–1981), II: p. 307.

Useful Knowledge

Jevons's commitment to putting science as the service of social improvement was evident from an early age. At least, it is evident from the time he was a young man living in Sydney and studying various branches of natural science, including meteorology, geology and geography. Jevons collected climate data twice a day and became meteorological observer for the Australian *Empire* newspaper. He also conducted meteorological experiments and published two papers on cloud formation. In a letter to his cousin Harry (better known as the chemist Henry Roscoe), Jevons explained that his goal was to understand “the causes of the forms of clouds, of the precipitation of rain & such like things”, while attempting to correct their nomenclature, which he found “not to be altogether correct & philosophical” ³. These studies reveal something more than mere naïve curiosity. Jevons investigated nature using a scientific approach based on classification and categorisation.

In the same years, he applied the same approach to the study of society. Notably, he conducted a survey of the city's topography in relation to living conditions, which is now known as the “Social Survey of Sydney”. This survey shows how he believed that science could be useful to society. No less than physical nature, society was governed by God's exact laws. Therefore, the only way to improve society was to understand these laws. Jevons categorised the population of Sydney into three classes according to their rank. He then assigned a colour to each social group and marked their places of residence, along with the city's main commercial routes, on a map – which unfortunately has been lost. This scientific knowledge was intended to provide a foundation for social reform. Jevons's article *The Social Cesspools of Sydney*, based on this survey,

demonstrates this intention. This article, which was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, denounced the deplorable conditions of Sydney's poor and called for reform.

Throughout his life, Jevons remained committed to improving society through science. In this book, I have attempted to demonstrate how this commitment encompassed all facets of his thought, including logic, political and moral thought, and economic theory, as for him “any Scientific knowledge is eventually reduced to practise”. ⁴

³ Jevons, *Papers and Correspondence*, II: p. 161.

⁴ Jevons, *Papers and Correspondence*, II: p. 328.

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Trails in the Forest

Latin American Environmental History

- Claudia Leal

In a quarter of a century Latin American environmental history has gone from being a curiosity to a solid trend that is changing the general understanding of the region's past. Deforestation defined the field in the early days. In *With Broadax and Firebrand* (1995), Warren Dean framed the history of Brazil as one in which, during 500 years, the forest that skirted the coast (where most Brazilians live) practically disappeared. Reinaldo Funes did something similar for the largest Caribbean island in *From Rainforest to Cane Field in Cuba* (2008, first published in Spanish in 2004). He traced how, between 1815 and 1926, the sugar economy expanded by eating away the island's forests.

It is no wonder that these books had so much sway. They retold, after the 1980s outcry about tropical rainforest deforestation, the histories of two countries of significant regional standing as ones of environmental destruction. They reminded us that what was happening in Amazonia at the end of the twentieth century had already happened to other seemingly endless forests. This was the ultimate cautionary tale for a territory dominated by trees: Latin America is largely a humid region that just 200 years ago had forests of various kinds covering almost 70% of its area. That is a lot of forests: about four times the size of India!

See John Soluri, Claudia Leal and José Augusto Pádua, eds., *A Living Past* (Berghahn Books, 2018), 7, 21.

Many were lowland tropical rainforests. In the Andes and the mountains that cross Central America, they became montane forests and, in the northern and southern tips of the region, temperate forests, with oaks and pine trees in Mexico and a different kind of oaks and beeches in Chile and Argentina. Largely responsible for the region hosting six megadiverse countries, forests served as a proxy for nature. But, of course, there is much more to the region's geography and land cover: coasts of different shapes and kinds almost all around, both on the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans; glaciers, highland moors (páramos) and dry punas, above the tree line; savannas; deserts; wetlands...

Despite this variety, explaining or celebrating diversity has not been a key trait of Latin American environmental history. Rather, a forebearer was the arrival, in the sixteenth century, along with Iberian colonizers, of viruses which decisively contributed to killing around 90% of the population in about a century, and of animals, who played key roles in dramatically changing local lifeways and landscapes.



Alfred Crosby's 1972 pioneer, *The Columbian Exchange*, was followed in 1996 by Elinor Melville's *A Plague of Sheep*. While the former painted a broad picture and argued that conquest was also biological, as these organisms helped colonizers to impose themselves over local populations, the latter focused on the transformation of one key valley north of Mexico City from a lush pre-Columbian countryside into a desert, thanks to an invasion of woolly quadrupeds. These harrowing claims were contested, in various articles, by geographer Karl Butzer. Historical geographers had for several decades explored topics that historians were just starting to address. (Melville was an exception, as she was trained in anthropology rather than history).

When Latin American environmental history began to take shape at the beginning of this century, this line of inquiry did not gain traction, as researchers devoted their attention to more recent periods. Last year, however, Marcy Norton revisited this foundational topic in her impressive book *The Tame and the Wild*, which interprets colonization as a clash between two contrasting ways of relating to animals. In her account, colonization imposed animal husbandry, a system that turns certain animals into objects for the service of human lives.

Two decades ago, researchers continued to focus on the transformations that resulted from Latin America's integration into the wider world. They turned to another pivotal moment of globalization: the 'export boom' that extended from the mid-19th century through the Great Depression.

Trails in the Forest.... contd.

In those decades, with the Industrial Revolution's insatiable appetite, Latin America diversified an economy that since colonial times had rested on the export of natural resources. The early emphasis on silver and gold had already expanded to sugar from the seventeenth century onward. Other tropical commodities, notably coffee and bananas, followed. These plantation crops, grown in vast monocultures, depended on clearing forests, whose ashes temporarily fertilized the soil. Thus, the export economies developed after Independence strengthened the concern with deforestation that defined the field but also included other topics, such as agricultural pests, and other environments, such as the dry guano islands of the coast of Peru.

As new topics gained traction, literature on forests diversified and became more political, coming closer to the Indian tradition. Outside the tropics, in northern Mexico and southern Chile, forests lose diversity and unruliness, becoming more manageable. State attempts at developing forestry in the 20th century attracted researchers' attention, as can be seen in Christopher Boyer's *Political Landscapes* (2015). As in India and taking distance from the long European tradition, examination of forestry focused on local people and their competing claims over forest resources. My own book, *Landscapes of Freedom* (2018), took another path in making forest history more social: it explores how control over forests gave descendants of slaves, in one of the most humid jungles of Earth, a high level of autonomy. Unlike India, however, colonial forestry was not the focus. In Latin America, the three centuries of colonialism, which ended well before direct British rule took hold over all of India, did not produce major advances in forest management.

Studies of the colonial period, spanning the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, and of colonial legacies have not been at the center of the field. Nevertheless, scholars have produced important works on a variety of topics. These include major infrastructure projects, as in Vera Candiani's *Dreaming of Dry Land* (2014), and climate change, as in Bradley Skopyk's *Colonial Cataclysms* (2020), which examines the effects of the Little Ice Age on what became Mexico.

Now that the field has matured, it has expanded in breath and it has become hard to discern defining trends. Nature conservation, which was addressed in some of the earliest monographs, remains relevant. The last book on the topic is Emily Wakild's *A Moderating Force*, published this year, which covers three countries and shows how celebratory and condemning views don't do justice to the

complexity of conservation efforts. Conspicuous environments, notably rivers and cities, have enriched the regional scholarship, as is also the case with animal history. And we could go on.

This strength and variety have been achieved by both Latin American and North American scholars, with a few Europeans chipping in. In this essay I have referred to monographs published in English so that Indian scholars who might be interested can consult them, but also because these works carry an important weight in the overall scholarship. Within the region itself, many products take the form of articles and edited volumes, with Brazil leading the way. The journal HALAC (halacsolcha.org), which publishes articles in Spanish, Portuguese and English, and is highly ranked, is the most important forum of the regional network.

This network takes official form in the Latin American and Caribbean Society for Environmental History, SOLCHA (www.solcha.org), which holds biannual symposia. The last one was held in July of 2025 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and the next one will take place in Mendoza, Argentina, in September of 2027. SOLCHA also organizes, again biannually but in alternate years, one-week graduate schools in which professors discuss the work of students from various countries. In 2019, members of SOLCHA hosted the Third World Congress of Environmental History in Florianópolis, Brazil.

Latin America and India stand out as prolific regions from the Global South within the worldwide panorama of environmental history. However, dialogue between them has been scarce. The *Great Convergence: Environmental Histories of BRICS*, edited by S. Ravi Ranjan and Lise Sedrez in 2018, stands out as a notable exception. I hope that the generous invitation to write this piece serves as a stepping stone to bring the scholars of these two parts of the world closer together. Comparisons and collaborations hold the promise of producing novel viewpoints and enriching our understanding of both South Asia and Latin America. They would also make our work and lives more interesting and fun.

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3rd Annual Seminar of the Society

Organised by
Maulana Azad National Urdu
University, Hyderabad
15—17 September, 2025

The Society for the History of Science Kolkata (SHSK) successfully hosted the Third Annual Seminar and Meeting from September 15-17, 2025, at the Library Auditorium, Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU), Hyderabad. This significant event was organized in collaboration with the Department of History and the H.K. Sherwani Centre for Deccan Studies at MANUU. The seminar, which continued SHSK's mission to promote teaching and research in the history of science, technology, environment, and medicine (HISTEM), focused on the central theme: "SCIENCE IN THE DECCAN A HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE." The event was generously sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi, and the Indian National Science Academy (INSA), New Delhi.

The three-day program attracted a wide range of scholars, researchers, and faculty members, fostering a vibrant intellectual exchange on the unique scientific and technological heritage of the Deccan plateau across different historical periods.

Adding to the scholarly atmosphere, the seminar also featured display-cum-sale counters by leading publication houses, including Cambridge University Press and Primus Books.

Inaugural Session **(Day One: 15 September 2025)**

The seminar commenced with a formal Inaugural Session chaired by Prof. Syed Ainul Hasan, the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of MANUU. The session began with the University Tarana and the traditional felicitation of the guests. Prof. Rafiullah Azmi, Convener and Head of the Department of History, MANUU, delivered the Welcome Address, followed by Prof. Salma

seminar's theme, highlighting the region's critical contributions to global scientific history.

The Keynote Address was delivered by Prof. Atluri Murali (Former Professor, University of Hyderabad), setting a comprehensive scholarly context for the discussions to follow. Prof. SK. Mahmood, Vice Chairman of the Telangana State Council of Higher Education (TSCHE), graced the event as the Chief Guest, emphasizing the importance of historical inquiry in modern education. Prof. Deepak Kumar, President of SHSK, and currently Honorary Professor at MANUU, addressed the gathering as the Guest of Honour.



Inaugural session

A major highlight of the session was the presentation of two prestigious awards, each consisting of Rs. 10,000.00 and a certificate of award, presented by the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Prof. Syed Ainul Hasan:

The existing "S.P. Banerjee Memorial Prize for the History of Engineering & Technology" was awarded to Mr. Sayanta Chatterjee, Research Assistant, Institute of Development Studies Kolkata (IDSK) and Research Scholar, Rabindra Bharati University,

3rd Annual Seminar Report.. contd..

Kolkata (Membership ID: AM 20—2025), for his comprehensive paper, "The Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute, Bombay: Education and the Question of Industrialization, 1888-1925." The newly instituted "Parthaprotim Bandyopadhyay Memorial Prize for the History of Medicine" was awarded to Ms. Aatreyee Bhattacharyya, Research Scholar, Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata (Membership ID: LM 57), for her excellent paper, "Kitchen and the healing ladle: Study of the South Indian Culinary Therapeutics."

Furthermore, the session marked the official release of the SHSK Newsletter (Vol. 2, September 2025) and a new academic work, *Fighting the Fever: Kala-azar in Eastern India, 1870s-1940s*, (Cambridge University Press, 2025) by Prof. Achintya Kumar Dutta, who is a Life Member of our Society (Membership ID LM 08). Prof. Syed Ainul Hasan delivered the Presidential Remarks, followed by the Vote of Thanks proposed by Dr. Abdul Adil Paray (Assistant Professor, Department of History, MANUU).

Evening Cultural Programme (15 September 2025)

The intellectual discussions from Day One were wonderfully complemented by an enriching evening of



Special lectures and technical sessions

culture. The audience was captivated by a stunning Kuchipudi performance by Rachaprolu Lakshya, an accomplished dancer who is also a student of Space Engineering. Her graceful performance provided a beautiful cultural contrast to the day's academic rigour, significantly enhancing the overall experience of the seminar for all delegates, guests, and participants.

Day Two: Society Report and Academic Sessions (16 September 2025)

The second day commenced with an important administrative segment, during which Professor Sahara Ahmed, Secretary, SHSK, presented the Society's Report for the past two years. This report provided an overview of its activities and membership growth over the past years, setting the context for the academic proceedings to follow.

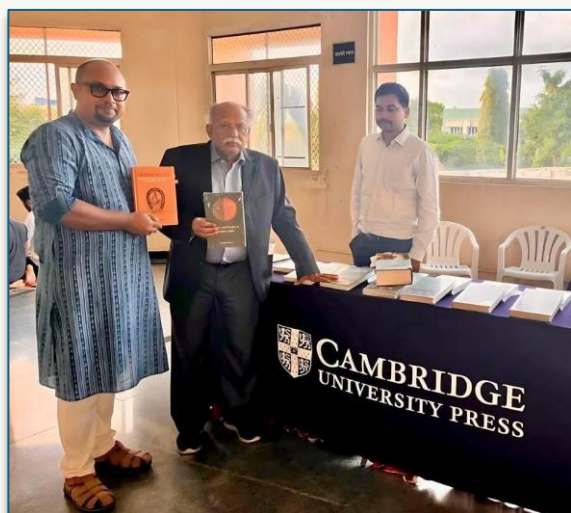
Academic and Technical Sessions

The seminar's academic framework included two special lectures and nine technical sessions, with contributions from 25 speakers throughout the three days. Distinguished academics chaired both the special lectures. The first Special Lecture, delivered by Prof. Nupur Dasgupta (Former Professor of the Department of History, Jadavpur University, Kolkata), was chaired by Prof. Suchandra Ghosh (Head of the Department of History, University of Hyderabad).

The second Special Lecture, delivered by Dr. Aparajith Ramnath (Associate Professor, Humanities & Languages, School of Arts & Sciences, Ahmedabad University, Gujarat), was chaired by Prof. Smriti Kumar Sarkar (Former Vice Chancellor, University of Burdwan).

The nine technical sessions were expertly presided over by a diverse panel of senior scholars and faculty. The chairs and presiders for these sessions included Prof. Arun Bandopadhyay (Vice President, SHSK, and Former Nurul Hasan Chair Professor, Department of History, University of Calcutta), Prof. P.H. Mohammad (Dean, School of Arts & Social Sciences, MANUU), Prof. Rafiullah Azmi (Head, Department of History, MANUU), Prof. Syed Najamul Hasan (Professor, MANUU), Prof. Ishrat Alam (Professor, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University),

3rd Annual Seminar Report.. contd.

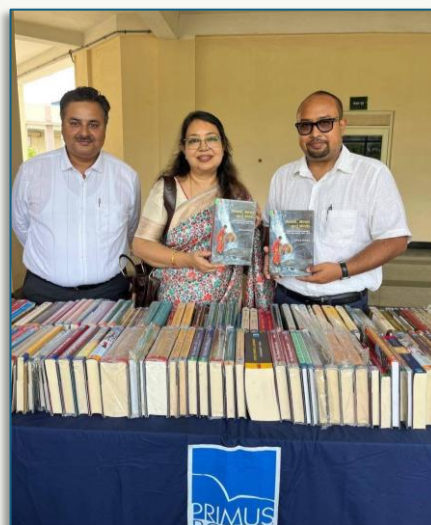


Book Display



Award ceremony

Prof. Danish Moin (Professor, Department of History, MANUU), Prof. Dhrub Kumar Singh (Professor, Department of History, BHU), Prof. Suprakash C Roy (Former Chairman, Department of Physics, Bose Institute), Dr. Abdul Adil Paray (Assistant Professor, Department of History, MANUU), Dr. Shahid Jamal (Assistant Professor, H.K. Sherwani Centre for Deccan Studies, MANUU), along with several other senior scholars from across the country who contributed to the discussions. The seminar's extensive academic sessions featured a broad spectrum of research in the history of science and medicine, with numerous presenters illuminating the Deccan's unique scholarly heritage. The medical field received substantial attention, covering healthcare from ancient times through Amol Saghar (epigraphical evidence) to medieval practices by Mr. Salil Kader, and later institutional history with Dr. T. Prasad Rao (medical education) and Mr. Shiva Rajwar (Hyderabad Medical School). Specific health crises and



colonial interventions were explored by Dr. Shivani Singh & Prof. Shekhar C. Mande (smallpox), Ms. Firdaus Jabin (Lock Hospitals), and Mr. Mainak Ghosh (prisoner health care in Bombay Presidency). The history of medical breakthroughs and key figures included papers Prof. B. Eswara Rao (Hyderabad chloroform experiment) and Ms Pratima Yadav (Plague in the Madras Presidency). Furthermore, Dr. Satheesh Palanki analyzed the decisive trajectories of Dr. Marry Poonnan Lukkose, integrating themes of caste and gender. Beyond medicine, the focus shifted to technology, development, and environment: Prof. Prem Prakash Solanki tracked the evolution of chemical science, Dr. Sridhar Modugu covered agricultural science and research, Dr. Rajeshwari Roy discussed postcolonial development and the Western Ghats, and Ms. Shaik Sana explored technology and the making of modern Hyderabad under the Nizam's Rule.

Executive Committee Meeting (15 September 2025)

The third Executive Committee (EC) Meeting of the Society for the History of Science Kolkata (SHSK) was convened on the evening of Day One, September 15, 2025, at 5:00 PM. The meeting included seven EC members and focused on discussing key policy decisions as well as developing strategic academic and financial plans for the future direction of the society. Dr. Suvobrata Sarkar, Treasurer, provided a comprehensive financial report.

3rd Annual Seminar Report.. contd.

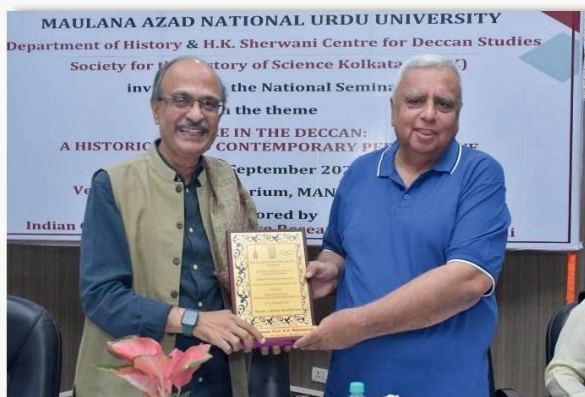


Professor Smriti Kumar Sarkar (Former Vice Chancellor, University of Burdwan) and Dr. Aparajith Ramnath (Associate Professor, Humanities & Languages, School of Arts & Sciences, Ahmedabad University, Gujarat) (left), Professor Nupur Dasgupta (Former Professor of the Department of History, Jadavpur University, Kolkata), and Professor Suchandra Ghosh Head of the Department of History, University of Hyderabad (right)

Valedictory and Conclusion

The three-day intellectual marathon concluded with the Valedictory Session on September 17, 2025, chaired by Prof. Farhat Hasan (University of Delhi). Prof. Shakeel Ahmed (Visiting Professor, Islamic University of Science & Technology, Kashmir) served as the Chief Guest, and Prof. P.H. Mohammad (Dean, School of Arts & Social Sciences, MANUU) was the Guest of Honour.

The Valedictory Address was delivered by Dr. Dinesh C. Sharma, an Eminent Science Journalist and Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow, who provided a compelling synthesis of the seminar's outcomes and their relevance to contemporary scientific discourse. The event was expertly compered by Dr. Khalid Ponnulathodi (Assistant Professor, Department of History, MANUU) and concluded with the Vote of Thanks by Dr. Shahid Jamal (Assistant Professor, H.K. Sherwani Centre for Deccan Studies, MANUU).



Professor Arun Badopadhyay, Vice-President, SHSK (Left), Prof. Farhat Hasan (University of Delhi) and Dr. Dinesh C. Sharma, Journalist (Right)

3rd Annual Seminar Report.. contd.

The subsequent General Body Meeting of the Society for the History of Science Kolkata was then convened. The meeting was presided over by Prof. Deepak Kumar (President, SHSK), and Prof. Arun Bandopadhyay (Vice President, SHSK). The meeting was well-attended by the annual and life members of the Society, and the General Body resolution was thoroughly discussed after being introduced by Prof. Sahara Ahmed (Secretary, SHSK). A key decision of the GB meeting was that the Fourth Annual Seminar of the Society will be held at Calicut in collaboration with the Department of History, Calicut University. The Society for the History of Science Kolkata (SHSK) expresses its deepest gratitude to the Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU), particularly to the Department of History. Their unwavering commitment, exceptional organizational acumen, and boundless hospitality transformed the seminar into a resounding, monumental success.

The seamless collaboration and scrupulous effort invested by the host department were absolutely indispensable in crafting an environment that elevated the intellectual exchange of this national event.

The Society expresses its gratitude to the ICSSR and INSA for their generous financial support, as well as to the sponsors whose contributions were essential for the publication of the annual SHSK Newsletter, Volume 2 (September 2025). We also acknowledge the enriching presence of display-cum-sale counters by leading publication houses, Cambridge University Press, and Primus Books, which significantly enhanced the scholarly atmosphere for all delegates. The seminar effectively enhanced scholarly engagement with the history of science and medicine in the Deccan region, establishing a high standard for future research in this important field.



Organizing Team

International Conference on Science, Technology and Medicine in Modern South Asia

17-18 July, 2026

Organised by

Gour Mahavidyalaya

In collaboration with

Society for the History of Science Kolkata

The International Conference on the "History of Science, Medicine and Technology in Modern South Asia: Knowledge Systems, Institutions and Society in Historical Perspective" took place on the 17th and 18th of July 2026, marking a highly successful gathering of minds. Hosted by Gour Mahavidyalaya in close collaboration with the Society for the History of Science Kolkata, the event was made possible through the generous funding of the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), New Delhi. It brought together a vibrant community of global experts, dedicated researchers, and engaged students to explore vital historical perspectives on science, medicine, and the environment.

Key Highlights

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

Driven by a shared vision to strengthen academic ties and cross-pollinate ideas, the Society for the History of Science Kolkata and Gour Mahavidyalaya officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the 17th of July. This landmark new partnership aims to provide lasting academic and institutional support for students and researchers navigating this interdisciplinary landscape. The dignitaries who championed this collaborative effort included Professor Arun Bandopadhyay, Vice-President of the Society for the History of Science Kolkata; Professor Sahara Ahmed, Secretary of the Society for the History of Science Kolkata; Dr. Suvobrata Sarkar, Treasurer of the Society for the History of Science Kolkata; and Dr. Ashim Kumar Sarkar, Principal of Gour Mahavidyalaya.

The Society remains grateful to the inspiring leadership of Principal Dr. Ashim Kumar Sarkar and the tireless work of his faculty; the institution, already highly regarded for its modern conference facilities and excellent library and studio, ensured the entire programme ran seamlessly.



Inaugural Session



The MoU



The Book Launch Event

Report on: International Conference on Science.... (cntd.)

Book Launch

A standout moment of the conference was the official launch of the Bengali translation of Professor Deepak Kumar's highly acclaimed book. Originally published in English as *Science and Society in Modern India* by Cambridge University Press, this new Bengali edition, titled 'আধুনিক ভারতের বিজ্ঞান ও সমাজ', was masterfully translated by Arkadeep Goswami and Asim Chattopadhyay and brought to print by Setu Prakashani.

Day I: 17 July 2026

The opening day set a strong intellectual foundation for the event, filled with rich academic discourse.

Inauguration Session: The day began warmly with a formal inauguration ceremony, during which Dr. Ashim Kumar Sarkar delivered a welcoming address that elegantly framed the event's central themes. Following that, Professor Sahara Ahmed introduced both the conference and the Society's vision. As the highlight of the inauguration, Professor Smritikumar Sarkar delivered a deeply insightful keynote speech titled "Rice in Indian Civilizational Continuum."

Invited Panel I: Steered by Professor Sajal Nag, this panel sparked rigorous debates on environmental history and the social contract of science. Standout moments included Professor Arun Bandhyopadhyay's compelling talk on environmental history and Dr Shiju Sam Varughese's thought-provoking online address exploring science and democracy in India, and Professor Madhumita Sengupta's fascinating presentation, "Scaling the Everest: Radhanath Sikdar and His Contributions to Mathematical Computing".

Invited Panel II: Guiding the afternoon session, Professor Sahara Ahmed led the room through fascinating technological and medical histories. The audience enjoyed Professor Syamal Chakrabarti's reflective look at the 150-year history of the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science.

Parallel Presentation Sessions: As the late afternoon approached, the conference broke into five concurrent sessions, blending in-person and online presentations. Researchers showcased a brilliant array of technical papers, touching on vital subjects.

Day II: 18 July 2026

The second day effortlessly carried the momentum forward, featuring highly specialised thematic talks and focused academic panels.

Special Theme Talk: The morning began with a distinguished address by Professor Sajal Nag, expertly moderated by Professor Arabinda Samanta. His talk, "Our Disease Our Cure, Their Disease Their Medicine: Medical Encounter in Colonial North East India," left a lasting impression on the attendees.

Invited Panel III: This panel delved into the complex intersections of colonialism, natural science, and medical education. It featured Dr Jayanta Bhattacharya tracing the roots of early Indian medical education from the Calcutta Medical College, Dr Dipanwita Dasgupta shedding light on natural science in the Darjeeling Himalaya, and Dr Nirmala Shah sharing profound insights into science and national education.

Academic Session IV (Online): Curated by Professor Syamal Chakrabarti, this virtual session broadened the scope of environmental and medical themes. Presenters explored environmentalism in the Jatakas, the evolution and adaptations of Ayurveda amidst colonial medical modernity, and critical interventions in paediatric healthcare.

Valedictory Session: This remarkable two-day intellectual gathering drew to a close with a rousing Valedictory Address from Professor Ranjan Chakrabarti, culminating in the joyful, formal distribution of certificates to all participants and presenters.



Valedictory Session

Global Conferences & Seminars on HISTEM

[illegible]

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY IN ASIA

HARVARD UNIVERSITY ASIA CENTER | FALL 2025 ONLINE SEMINAR SERIES

ORAL HEALTH, DISEASE, AND MEDICINE IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY BENGAL

SAHARA AHMED

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 10:30–11:45 ET

One of the greatest barriers to oral and health care in India has long been the lack of accessible dental services. Many people experience poor oral health because dental care was not successfully integrated into existing or traditional health care systems. As a result, dental care developed separately from other forms of medical care. This separation led to fragmented service, long waiting times, and a lack of continuity of dental diagnostic codes, and distinct unexamined, prevention, and treatment systems. Oral health remained a completely unregulated domain in India through the late eighteenth century, even though dental surgery was an integral part of traditional medicine. Although dentistry is commonly understood as *doctors* only (with tooth, in fact) or *dentists* (with the structure of the mouth, pain, face, and even the forehead, Bhattacharya et al. "modern" medicine was first introduced at India for employees of the East India Company and later for the rest of the expanding British administration. Medical efforts were mixed – and often occurred directly from the United Kingdom. Over time, British medical doctors expanded their private practices to the broader public, and by the mid and nineteenth centuries the colonial government established dental colleges in India to train South Asian doctors who could supplement the work of British physicians. What this system, denied care to hospitals was largely restricted to tooth extraction performed by traditional practitioners or their assistants. For a long period, dentistry remained predominantly in the hands of unqualified practitioners. A major turning point came in 1920 with the establishment of the first dental college in Kolkata – the first of its kind in Asia – which marked a significant milestone in the history of dental care in India.



Sahara Ahmed is a Professor at the Department of History, Kolkata School of Education, Kolkata, India. She teaches in the areas of Indian history of ecology, environment, and sustainable development, health and medicine in colonial and postcolonial contexts. She is the author of *Plagues and Politics of Survival in Hyderabad and the Nippy Epidemic, 1869–1979* (Princeton, 2013).

This seminar series is sponsored by the Harvard University Asia Center and co-organized by Vito Soe Soe, Department of the History of Science, Harvard University. We meet on Tuesdays, 10:30–11:45 ET, on most Tuesdays during the term. For more information and registration, visit <https://www.harvard.edu/asia/online-seminar-series>.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
ASIA CENTER

The Society for the Study of Archives
&
Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

cordially invites you to the Annual Lecture of the Journal
Reading the Archive

**Empire and India's Forests:
Towards a Longer View**



Prof. Mahesh Rangarajan
Professor of History and Environmental Studies
Ashoka University

Chair: **Prof. Prathama Banerjee, CCSDS**
Discussant: **Prof. Dhirendra Datt Dangwal, AUD**

IT September 2026 • Friday • 3:30-6:00 PM
Seminar Room, CCSDS; 29 Rajpur Road, Civil Lines, Delhi- 110054



**FAS Young Scholars'
Online Seminar Series**
July- November 2026



INDIA
100TH ANNIVERSARY
1947-2026

Scheduled Seminars

Brick Kiln Industry in India: Enterprise Dynamics, Industrial Relations, and Workers' Livelihoods <i>Mridulajyoti Basu, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, New Delhi</i>	July 30, 2026
Vulnerability and Agrarian Differentiation: A Forward-Looking Perspective <i>Aparna Bhow, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram</i>	August 20, 2026
Agro-Ecological Heterogeneity and Income Diversification: Evidence from Agricultural Households in India* <i>S. Sampath Reddy, Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad</i>	September 24, 2026
The Role of Agronometeorological Advisory Services in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals in Rural India* <i>Savithi Narayanan, Energy, Environment, and Climate Change Programme, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Udaipur Campus</i>	October 29, 2026



**REGISTER FOR THE
SERIES**

Series Chair:
Prof. Barbara Harris-White
Emeritus Professor of Development Studies, University of Oxford

Seminar on Environmental and Agricultural History (SEAH)

Speaker



Prakash Kumar
Associate Professor of History
PENN STATE

Speaker



Sigrid Schmalzer
UMASS AMHERST

Speaker



Micah Muscolino
Professor of History
UC SAN DIEGO

Invited Discussions



Benjamin Siegel
Associate Professor of History
BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Invited Discussions



Heather Roller
COLGATE UNIVERSITY

📅 February 27, 2025

🕒 2:00 - 5:00 PM

📍 The Nexus
Building 14S, Room 100
MIT Campus

For more information, contact kalopesi@mit.edu.

History
Society

Program in Science,
Technology, and Society























































































































































The Grammar of Body Perspectives in Medical Humanities

Dr. Apalak Das
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
RANI BIRLA GIRLS' COLLEGE
CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY

**The Problem with the 'Lepers':
Empire, Medical Surveillance and
Leprosy in British India**

Date: 28th August, 2026
Time: 5:00PM - 6:30 PM



Chair
Prof. Kanika K Ahuja
Principal, LSR

Course Convener
Dr. Sridhi Dash
Faculty, LSR

Course Coordinators
Dr. Lizashree Hazarika
Dr. Kalpana Negi
Faculty, LSR

For queries : medhum.lsr@gmail.com

SHSK NEWSLETTER | VOL. 3 | 2026

Mentorship
Opportunities:
FHHMLS Article
Development Prize
2026

Funding Opportunities:
Consortium for History
of Science, Technology,
and Medicine (CHSTM)

Fellowship Categories & Deadlines

Research Fellowships

Objective: Facilitates comprehensive research utilizing the distinct collections of two or more CHSTM member institutions.

Eligibility: Open to academic scholars at any career stage.

Deadlines: 1 October & 1 April

Dissertation Completion Fellowships

Objective: Provides US\$15,000 in funding to sustain three months of dedicated dissertation completion, encompassing optional research travel support.

Eligibility: Advanced Ph.D. candidates in the final stages of their doctoral work.

Deadlines: 1 October & 1 April

Emanuel Fellowships

Objective: Allocates US\$10,000–30,000 to underwrite comprehensive research and manuscript development outside of traditional tenure-track frameworks.

Eligibility: Eligible independent scholars.

Deadline: 1 October

Application link:

<https://www.chstm.org/fellowships>

Award Details & Eligibility

Forum for the History of Health, Medicine, and Life Sciences (FHHMLS)

The Opportunity:

The inaugural Article Development Prize is dedicated to early-career scholars actively working in the history of health, medicine, and life sciences.

The Award:

Winners will receive two one-to-one consultation sessions with established FHHMLS members. These sessions offer expert feedback and strategic mentoring to prepare the manuscript for formal journal submission by Spring 2027.

Eligibility:

Applicants must **not** have previously published in an academic journal. Candidates must submit a draft manuscript demonstrating clear publication potential.

Submission Deadline: 23 July 2026

Submit your complete application dossier directly to the Forum for the History of Health, Medicine, and Life Sciences (FHHMLS) via email at: fhhmls.hss@gmail.com

Link:

<https://fhhmls.wordpress.com/>.

Bridging Innovation: Imperial College London & Science Gallery Bengaluru

Imperial College London has officially partnered with Science Gallery Bengaluru (SGB) to ignite a powerful new era of scientific collaboration, talent exchange, and public engagement between the UK and India.

A Vision for Collaborative Discovery: Announced alongside the UK Prime Minister's official visit to India, with Imperial's President, Professor Hugh Brady, and SGB Founding Director, Dr. Jahnvi Phalkey, leading the initiative, this partnership serves as a launchpad for cross-continental research and innovation. By combining Imperial's world-class academic and incubation expertise with Science Gallery Bengaluru's cutting-edge public engagement model, the collaboration is designed to discover, design, and deliver practical solutions to global challenges.

Key Pillars of the Partnership:

State-of-the-Art Research Facilities: Co-developing open, cutting-edge laboratories directly on-site at SGB to foster breakthrough interdisciplinary research.

Global Talent Exchange: Launching a joint fellowship programme to train, mentor, and empower the next generation of international innovators and scientists.

Public Engagement & Discovery: Creating dynamic public-facing initiatives that bridge the gap between science, technology, and society.

Link:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/articles/2025/imperial-and-science-gallery-bengaluru-unite-to-accelerate-uk-india-innovation/>

INSA History of Science Young Associate 2026 – Call for Nominations

Organiser: Indian National Science Academy (INSA) – History of Science Programme.

Award: INSA History of Science Young Associate 2026, instituted to recognise and encourage outstanding young researchers working in the History of Science in India.

Eligibility: Researchers born on or after 1 January 1986 (for the 2026 cycle). OCI/PIO card holders working in India for at least 5 years are also eligible.

Number of Awards: Two Young Associates will be selected annually.

Nominators: Nominations may be submitted by INSA Fellows, Vice-Chancellors, Heads of Institutions, or the nominee's Departmental Head.

Nomination Deadline: 20 July 2026

Submission Email: ijhs@insa.nic.in

Benefits: Selected Young Associates will receive travel support of up to ₹1.5 lakh to attend a flagship international conference (within two years), along with induction and presentation of the INSA Young Associate Scroll at the Annual General Meeting.

Announcement of Results: During the INSA Annual General Meeting (September 2026).

Information Brochure & Nomination Form: <https://www.insaindia.res.in>



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**4TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE
SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE
KOLKATA (SHSK)**

**ORGANIZED BY
THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY,
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

**REFLECTIONS
ON ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY
IN INDIA**



17-19 September, 2026



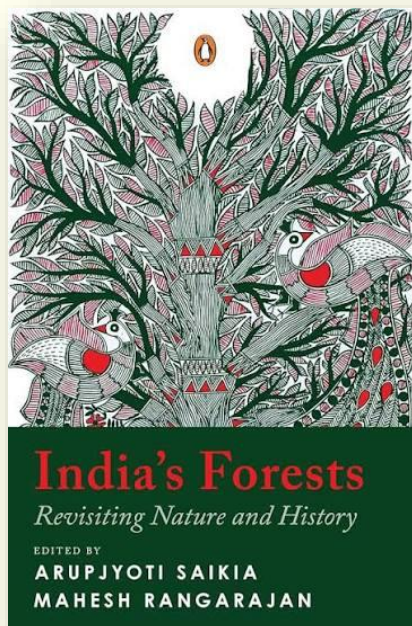
University of Calicut, Calicut, Kerala

Arupjyoti Saikia and Mahesh Rangarajan (eds.).
India's Forests: Revisiting Nature and History.

India: Penguin, 2026. pp. 1–343.

ISBN: 9780143473206. 999 INR.

Sahara Ahmed



Nuances of a multiplicity of forest lives, trajectories and struggles are familiar images that conjure up a history of forests in the subcontinent. In myriad conjunctures of time their implications were discrete but often connected. Forest lives are defined by rights over forest space, resources and regimes of control that involved culture and power. They have been reoriented and redefined in the context of memory, regimes of control and scientific knowledge. Imageries are further invoked by remnants of both plant and animal lives that are constituents of ecological lifelines and literary imaginations.

The significance of this natural bounty was the cynosure of the poet's imagination and the litterateur's fascination, capturing memory, legend and conflict in a canvas that resonated in *mentalites* and found expression in writings, both literary and academic. India's Forests, an anthology of essays by Arupjyoti Saikia and Mahesh Rangarajan perceives the forest in its diverse hues as sources of, reminisces, prosperity, tradition, wisdom and nature's diversity that has bequeathed life on earth. The foreword likens forests to green glaciers with their retreating features harping on the significant role of forests in moderating earth's climate and inducing the South Asian monsoons. Forest space was increasingly being appropriated by burgeoning civilisations exemplified in agricultural expansion, industrialisation, expanding railway networks, ship building and land grabbing unleashed by a slew of liberalising policies.

The essays in the volume showcase forests as contested spaces. The process of commodification of forests catapulted competitive forces, which induced regulatory regimes for controlling access to and rights over forest space and resources at different junctures. The anthology traces the roots of human intervention in forests in India, weaving its own narratives incorporating commercial and industrial initiatives in ancient texts and evincing archaeological records is its forte. Shibani Bose questions the very premise of the existence of unbroken mature tree cover in the Indo-Ganga plain, which challenges the notion of pristine forests; the transformation of forests and commons to managed landscapes is reminiscent of Guha's seminal work, which influenced and unravelled a plethora of many more innovative research on the theme. She also gives a perspective of long-distance procurement of deodar sites and uses rock art paintings to substantiate her arguments. Kumkum Roy reads the Arthasastra as maxim and praxis; it was a veritable catalogue and manual for its taxable yield-hides, tasks, roots, flowers, herbs- two millennia before the forest department came into being. As a masterpiece on statecraft, it harps on the autonomy of the forest chiefs and the forest dwellers rather than sedentary cultivators. Upinder Singh states emphatically that forests were not on the margins of the state but within its ambit and that both the Manusmriti and the Arthasastra attest that legible spaces and people were to be brought under state control. Aloka Parasher Sen peruses the *upavanam*, a medicinal plant and herbarium that housed plants having medicinal values, and questions its existence as an innovation. She illuminates the complex dynamics at work that reduce forest environments to be tamed, domesticated, or controlled. The multi-layered process of interaction between specific animals, spaces, places, or parts of the forests requires comprehension.

Book review: Arupjyoti Saikia and Mahesh Rangarajan (eds.).
India's Forests: Revisiting Nature and History... contd.

Hunting by rulers was not only a practice but also a passion, from hunting caracals, the cheetah and then trapping elephants. The prowess of the human kind found expression in taming and conquering the wild. Maya Ratnam's essay traces long-term continuities as well as changes in the forest-state interface and argues that the idea of exclusive 'community control' may be far-fetched as she elucidates the present context of the Baigas and their changing perspectives of the forest. In a similar vein, Mukul Sharma peruses the politics of the sacred groves and in the process unravels the indigenous faith of Jharkhand's Adivasi communities, harping on the uneasy coexistence of the sacred and the political. He, however, cautions against reducing the significance of the sacred groves. Vasudha Pande's essay further illuminates the Chipko Movement as it interrogates the larger socio-historical context of the peasant movements in the region.

The book is a melange of essays that revisit India's forests, and its scholarly success lies not only in turning a full circle since the publication of Ramachandra Guha's seminal contribution, *Unquiet Woods*, but also in reviving the dialogue and debate with India's woodlands that it once evoked. Despite some obtruse areas and explicated issues engendering several queries that enliven the debate, several significant woodlands have not come under the purview of this work. Large parts of forests of North East India and the Andamans could have contributed to a more holistic assessment of India's forests. The anthology is informative and a stimulating contribution to the understanding of forest lifecycles.



Professor Sahara Ahmed

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Secretary, Society for the History of Science Kolkata

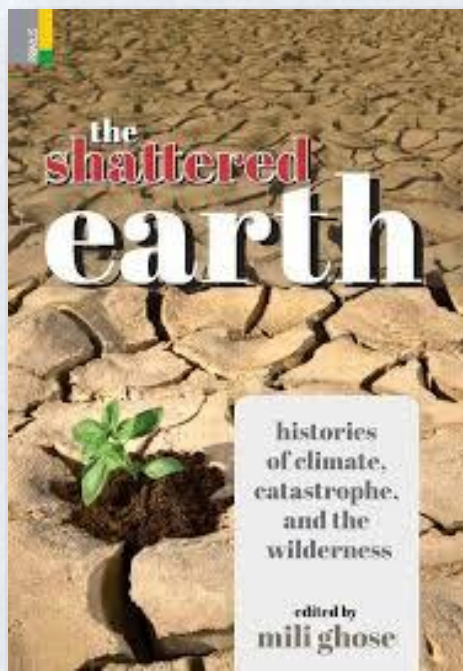
Email: sahara.ahmed@rbu.ac.in



Mili Ghose, (ed.). *The Shattered Earth: Histories of Climate, Catastrophe and the Wilderness.*

Delhi: Primus Books, 2024. pp. 349.
ISBN: 978-93-5852-903-6. 1750 INR.

SUVOBRATA SARKAR



In an era defined by the anxieties of the Anthropocene, environmental historians are increasingly tasked with contextualizing contemporary ecological crises within longer trajectories of human-nature interactions. Mili Ghose's edited volume, *The Shattered Earth: Histories of Climate, Catastrophe and the Wilderness*, emerges as a timely and vital intervention in this domain. The foreword is penned by none other than Deepak Kumar, the pioneer historian of science in South Asia, who popularizes the acronym HISTEM—history of science, technology, environment, and medicine. Spanning 349 pages of rigorous, archival-driven scholarship, this book brings together a diverse cohort of international and national scholars to map the historical fractures that have led to our current global ecological precarity.

The central thesis of the volume hinges on the concept of fragmentation—both literal and metaphorical. Ghose and her contributors successfully argue that the "shattering" of the Earth is not merely a contemporary phenomenon but the cumulative result of historical systems of exploitation, capital accumulation, and colonial-modern resource management. By examining the intersections of climate fluctuations, state-led forestry, and catastrophic weather events, the volume interrogates how human institutions have systematically alienated themselves from the natural world, transforming dynamic ecosystems into commodified or hazardous landscapes.

Structural and Thematic Overview

The book is thoughtfully organized into three distinct thematic sections, each tackling a critical dimension of environmental history:

Part I: Climate and History features five chapters that trace long-term climate timelines. These essays demonstrate how fluctuating weather patterns have historically shaped political economies, agricultural practices, and state formation. The contributors push past simple environmental determinism, showing instead how human societies adapt to—or fail to withstand—climatic shifts.

Part II: Ecology, Forests, and the Wild pivots toward the material transformation of physical landscapes. The chapters in this section critically analyze the modern nation-state's and colonial regimes' aggressive drives for profit, detailing how commercial forestry, rapid road construction, and infrastructure projects have depleted natural habitats and accelerated biodiversity loss.

Part III: Catastrophes deals with the sudden, violent disruptions of the ecological order. Reflecting the editor's own scholarly expertise, this section offers a granular look at extreme weather events, notably in South Asia. A standout contribution is a meticulously researched case study of the catastrophic 1876 cyclone in the Bay of Bengal, framing disasters not as isolated "acts of God" but as socio-environmental events exacerbated by human vulnerability and structural administrative failures.

Book review: Mili Ghose, (ed.). *The Shattered Earth: Histories of Climate, Catastrophe and the Wilderness...* (contd..)

Methodological and Scholarly Contributions

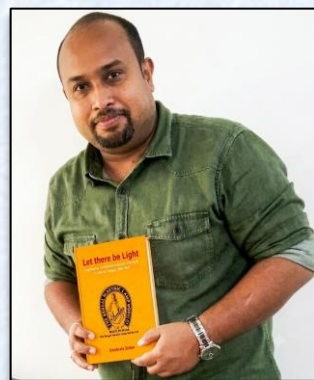
Methodologically, *The Shattered Earth* shines in its ability to bridge global environmental frameworks with deeply localized historical narratives. Rather than viewing climate change strictly through a macro-level, planetary lens, the contributors anchor their arguments in specific regional archives. This dual-lens approach allows readers to observe how sweeping global forces—such as industrialization and imperial capitalism—manifest as acute, destructive realities for local ecologies and marginalized communities.

Furthermore, the volume avoids the trap of viewing nature as a passive backdrop to human history. Across the chapters, forests, weather systems, and wild animals are treated as active historical agents that push back against, disrupt, and reshape human ambitions.

Critical Reflections and Readership

If there is a minor limitation to the volume, it is the geographic concentration on South Asian contexts in its latter half. While these chapters offer incredibly rich empirical data, a slightly broader comparative framework that includes other Global South regions might have further strengthened the book's overarching theoretical claims. Nevertheless, this concentration makes the book an indispensable resource for scholars of Asian environmental history.

Ultimately, Mili Ghose has curated a deeply necessary text that balances historical rigor with contemporary urgency. *The Shattered Earth* successfully demonstrates that understanding past catastrophes is vital to surviving future ones. This book is highly recommended for academic libraries, advanced researchers in environmental history, historical geography, and disaster management, as well as policymakers seeking to understand the deep-rooted historical dimensions of modern climate vulnerability.



Dr. Suvabrata Sarkar

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Global Departments & Centres on Environmental History

University-Affiliated Institutes & Programmes

Centre for Environmental History – Australian National University (Australia): An interdisciplinary centre researching Australian and global environmental history, sustainability, and human–environment interactions. Official Website: <https://history.cass.anu.edu.au/centres/ceh>.

Centre for World Environmental History – University of Sussex (UK): An interdisciplinary research centre specializing in the environmental history of the tropics and the Global South, examining the historical relationships between environment, society, climate, and colonialism through global perspectives. Official Website: <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/cweh/research>.

Environmental History Programme – University of Augsburg (Germany): An interdisciplinary programme exploring global environmental history and human–nature interactions through research on environmental change and sustainability. Official Website: <https://www.uniaugsburg.de/en/fakultaet/philhist/professuren/geschichte/umweltgeschichte/>.

Oxford Environmental History Network – University of Oxford (UK): A scholarly network that supports research and collaboration on environmental history across different regions and historical periods. Official Website: <https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/environmental-history>.

Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society (Germany): An internationally renowned research centre promoting interdisciplinary studies on environment, society, and sustainability from historical and contemporary perspectives. Official Website: <https://www.carsoncenter.uni-muenchen.de/>.

Yale Environmental Humanities (USA): An interdisciplinary initiative advancing research and education on environmental challenges through the humanities, arts, and social sciences. Official Website: <https://environmentalhumanities.yale.edu>.

Independent Societies, Networks, & Consortia

American Society for Environmental History (ASEH): Founded in 1977, ASEH is an international scholarly organization that promotes research, teaching, and collaboration in environmental history. Official Website: <https://aseh.org/>

European Society for Environmental History (ESEH): A leading academic organization dedicated to advancing environmental history research and fostering international scholarly exchange in Europe. Official Website: <https://eseh.org/>

International Consortium of Environmental History Organizations (ICEHO): A global network promoting collaboration, research, and communication among environmental history organizations worldwide. Official Website: <https://www.iceho.org>



Environmental History & Ecology Centers Across India

University-Affiliated Institutes

Official Website: <https://ces.iisc.ac.in/>. **Centre for Ecological Sciences – Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru:** A premier research centre advancing ecology, biodiversity conservation, and environmental sustainability.

Autonomous Organizations & Research Institutes

Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Bengaluru: A premier research organization dedicated to biodiversity conservation, ecology, and sustainable development. Official Website: <https://www.atree.org/>.

Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Mumbai: One of India's oldest conservation organizations, dedicated to biodiversity research, wildlife conservation, and environmental education. Official Website: <https://www.bnhs.org/>

Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Ahmedabad: Promotes environmental awareness and education through research, training, and community outreach programmes. Official Website: <https://www.cceindia.org/>

Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), New Delhi: A leading public policy and research institution working on environmental protection, sustainable development, and climate issues. Official Website: <https://www.cseindia.org/>

G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment: An autonomous research institute dedicated to environmental conservation, sustainable development, and research on the Himalayan ecosystem. Official Website: <https://gbpihed.gov.in/>

Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), Dehradun: An autonomous organization promoting forestry research, education, and sustainable forest management in India. Official Website: <https://icfre.gov.in/>

Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS), Bengaluru: A national institution advancing research on sustainable urban development, climate resilience, and environmental governance. Official Website: <https://iihs.co.in>

Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), Coimbatore: A national research institute dedicated to ornithology, biodiversity conservation, and ecological research. Official Website: <https://www.sacon.in>

The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi: A leading research institute advancing sustainable development through environmental, energy, and climate research—Official Website: <https://www.teriin.org>

Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun: A premier national institute dedicated to wildlife research, conservation, and training in biodiversity management. Official Website: <https://wii.gov.in/>



Academic Journals in Environmental History & Allied Fields

Journal	Publisher	Official Website
Agricultural History	Duke University Press	read.dukeupress.edu/agricultural-history
Climates and Cultures in History	Bielefeld University Press	whp-journals.co.uk/CCH
Environment and History	White Horse Press	https://www.whpress.co.uk/EH.html
Environmental History	Oxford University Press	https://academic.oup.com/envhis?login=false
Global Environment: A Journal of Transdisciplinary History	The White Horse Press	whp-journals.co.uk/GE
Global Environmental Change	Elsevier	https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/global-environmental-change
Indian Journal of Ecology	Indian Ecological Society	https://www.indianjeco.org/
Journal of Historical Geography	Elsevier	sciencedirect.com/journal/journal-of-historical-geography
The Holocene	SAGE Publications	https://journals.sagepub.com/home/hol



Primus Series on HISTORY OF SCIENCE IN INDIA

About the Series: -

This book series brings together scholars from different disciplines to showcase the recent trends in the history of science in India. Here, the term "science" also includes technology, the environment, and medicine. The term "history" encompasses all possible dimensions of history, i.e., multiple histories. Scholars are increasingly focusing on non-Western scientific traditions and knowledge systems by challenging the notion that "modern science" is solely Western. The trend also emphasizes science as a global enterprise, shaped by politics, empire, and mobility. This series interrogates conventional narratives regarding scientific advancement and underscores the significance of embracing diverse historical perspectives by acknowledging and valuing local knowledge practices. It identifies transnational networks and the circulation of ideas, instruments, and texts across regions, and examines how colonial, trade, and diplomatic routes shaped scientific exchange.

The series also connects scientific knowledge to bureaucracy, capitalism, and government policy by exploring institutional histories, funding, and political power structures and ethical and societal implications of "big science and technology." It acknowledges that connecting scholarly history with public awareness and understanding is significant. The series aims to showcase the relationship between public memory and scientific heritage while also examining the role of science communication in popular media. Thus, the key objective of the series is to welcome monographs and edited collections addressing these areas. The series will appeal to scholars and students across various disciplines, including history, sociology, economics, politics, anthropology, and Science, Technology, and Society (STS). This also encompasses fields such as basic sciences, medicine, and engineering.

Series Editor: -

Society for the History of Science Kolkata (SHSK)

Managing Editors: -

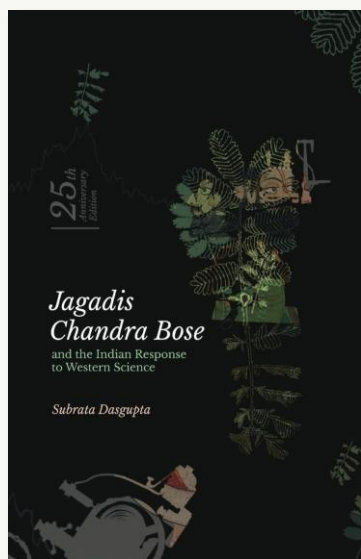
Sahara Ahmed, Rabindra Bharati University
Suvabrata Sarkar, Rabindra Bharati University

Book proposals can be sent to:

pchatterjee@primusbooks.com
 and shsk.bookproposal@gmail.com

New Publications

Dasgupta, Subrata. *Jagadis Chandra Bose and the Indian Response to Western Science*. Kolkata: Jadavpur University Press, 2024



About the Book

Jagadis Chandra Bose and the Indian Response to Western Science is a comprehensive, critical study of the life, science, and philosophy of Sir Jagadis Chandra Bose. The book explores his complex genius, his intricate relationship with the British Raj, and his pioneering role as the first Indian scientist to achieve international recognition in both physics and plant physiology. It delves into his invention of exceptionally delicate scientific instruments and his often-controversial hypotheses regarding the relationship between living and non-living entities. The 25th-anniversary edition updates the original text with new insights and reflections pertaining to Bose's scientific legacy.

About the Author

Subrata Dasgupta is a bi-cultural, multidisciplinary scholar, scientist, and writer. Born in Calcutta in 1944, his education spans India, England, and Canada. He is a Professor Emeritus at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, where he previously held the Computer Science Trust Fund Eminent Scholar Chair and served as the Director of the Institute of Cognitive Science. His extensive body of work covers a wide array of disciplines, including computer science, the cognitive-historical studies of creativity, intellectual history, and creative writing.

Mandal, Bipul, and Ritabrata Goswami, eds. *Diseases, Medicine and Healthcare in Colonial Bengal*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2026

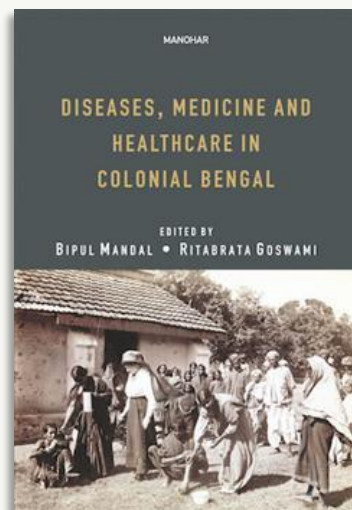
About the book

This volume explores the history of disease and healthcare in colonial Bengal, analyzing the complex interactions between Western medicine and indigenous traditions like Ayurveda and Unani. It examines how epidemics shaped colonial governance and everyday life, with a special focus on marginalized communities such as laborers, tribal groups, and women. By connecting health to issues of labor, environment, gender, and nationalism, the book offers valuable insights for historians and social scientists.

About the Editors

Bipul Mandal is an academic and historian currently serving as the Principal of Munshi Premchand Mahavidyalaya in Darjeeling, West Bengal. With a teaching career spanning over two decades, he has authored multiple books and research papers focusing on caste, class, tribal studies, and socio-political histories. He also serves as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Historical Studies and Research*.

Ritabrata Goswami is an Associate Professor who collaborates extensively on the historical intersections of society and healthcare within colonial frameworks.



New Publications

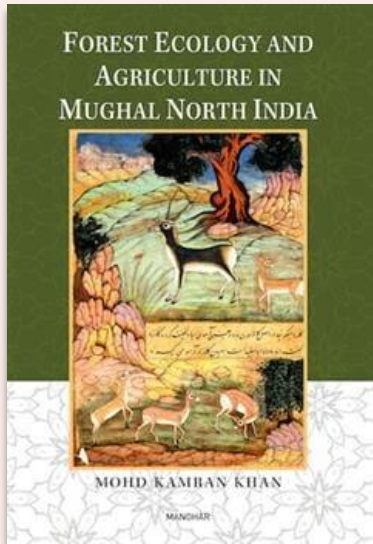
Khan, Mohd Kamran. *Forest Ecology and Agriculture in Mughal North India*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2026

About the Book

Forest Ecology and Agriculture in Mughal North India investigates the complex ecological landscape of early modern India by exploring the vital interplay between forest ecology and agrarian expansion. Utilizing an in-depth analysis of historical sources, the book examines how Mughal land-use patterns, state-driven irrigation facilities, and forest management practices actively shaped the region's natural environment. By juxtaposing agricultural studies with environmental history, the volume offers a nuanced understanding of the sustainable interdependencies between the state, agricultural communities, fauna, and forest ecology.

About the Author

Mohd Kamran Khan is an academic and historian. He teaches history at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels within the Department of History and Culture at Jamia Millia Islamia. His scholarly work focuses heavily on the intersections of environmental history, agrarian studies, and the ecological impact of state power in the context of early modern India.



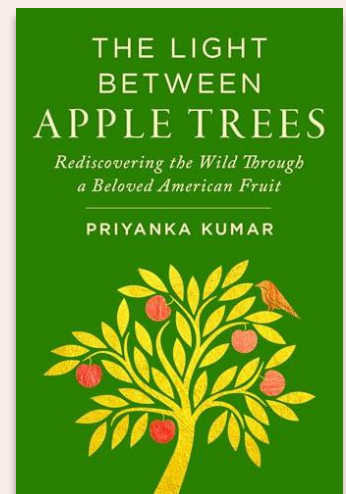
Kumar, Priyanka. *The Light Between Apple Trees: Rediscovering the Wild Through a Beloved American Fruit*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2025

About the Book

The Light Between Apple Trees: Rediscovering the Wild Through a Beloved American Fruit is an intricate blend of memoir, history, and ecology that explores the storied past and scientific wonder of the apple tree. Sparked by the discovery of a feral apple tree near her home in Santa Fe and rooted in her childhood memories of the Himalayan foothills, Priyanka Kumar embarks on a journey to trace the apple's lineage from its wild origins in Kazakhstan to historic American landscapes, such as Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. The book serves as a lament for the thousands of lost heirloom varieties driven to extinction by industrial agriculture, while also offering a hopeful, lyrical meditation on how engaging with the "micro-wilds" of our neighborhoods can help us restore biodiversity and deeply reconnect with the natural world.

About the Author

Priyanka Kumar is a critically acclaimed naturalist, essayist, filmmaker, and author. Growing up in the foothills of the Himalayas, she developed a deep, early connection to biodiverse environments, which profoundly influences her writing. She holds an MFA from the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts and has taught at both USC and the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her essays on nature and ecology have been widely published in prominent outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Orion*, and *Sierra* magazine.



New Publications

Boccaletti, Giulio. *The Environmental Republic: Why Citizens Will Save the World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2026.

About the Book

The Environmental Republic: Why Citizens Will Save the World reframes the global climate crisis through the lens of republicanism, arguing that popular sovereignty and civic responsibility are the true keys to a sustainable future. Moving away from apocalyptic environmental narratives and a blind reliance on technocratic management, the book proposes treating our ecosystems as essential civic infrastructure—much like public transit or water systems. Boccaletti asserts that nature should not be viewed as a distant, exotic entity that simply needs to be "saved," but rather as a functional part of modernity. The book offers a hopeful framework where human well-being and ecological health coexist, driven by active citizenship and democratic governance.

About the Author

Giulio Boccaletti is an internationally recognized scientist, author, and expert on natural resource security and transition economics. He serves as the scientific director of the Euro-Mediterranean Center on Climate Change (CMCC) and is the co-founder of Chloris Geospatial, a space-tech company specializing in Earth observations. Boccaletti has extensive experience in both the private and non-profit sectors, including holding senior leadership roles at The Nature Conservancy. He is also the author of the acclaimed book *Water: A Biography*, and his work has been prominently featured in PBS documentary series such as *H₂O: The Molecule That Made Us* and *The Future of Nature*.

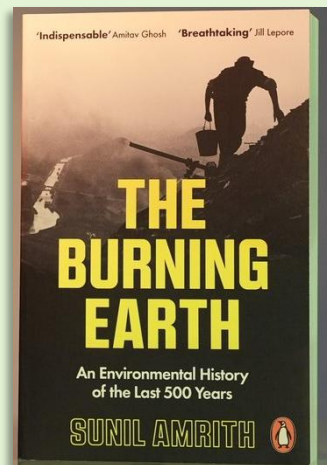
Amrith, Sunil. *The Burning Earth: An Environmental History of the Last 500 Years*. New York: Random House, 2024

About the Book

The Burning Earth: An Environmental History of the Last 500 Years is a sweeping, global account of how human actions have radically reshaped the planet over the past half-millennium. Amrith intricately connects the exploitation of the natural world to the rise of empires, colonialism, and global capitalism. Shifting the focus away from traditional Eurocentric environmental narratives, the book highlights how the relentless extraction of resources and the suffering of marginalized populations have been fundamentally intertwined. It provides a profound, deeply researched historical context for understanding the roots of today's escalating climate crisis.

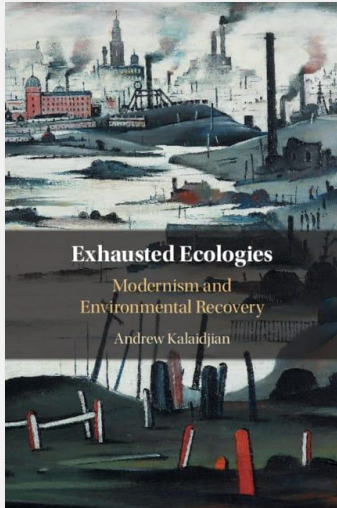
About the Author

Sunil Amrith is a highly acclaimed historian and the Renu and Anand Wadhwa Professor of History at Yale University. His research specializes in the environmental, transregional, and global history of South and Southeast Asia. He is a recipient of the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship (often referred to as the "Genius Grant") and the Dr. A.H. Heineken Prize for History. His previous, widely celebrated works include *Unruly Waters: How Rains, Rivers, Coasts, and Seas Have Shaped Asia's History* and *Crossing the Bay of Bengal*.



New Publications

Kalaidjian, Andrew. *Exhausted Ecologies: Modernism and Environmental Recovery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2026



About the Book

Exhausted Ecologies: Modernism and Environmental Recovery evaluates twentieth-century British and Global Anglophone literature in relation to the growth of ecological thinking. The book explores how restless modernist authors—such as D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, and Djuna Barnes—developed an aesthetic of slowness and immediacy to critique the exhausting, exploitative, and dehumanizing aspects of modern urban and industrial life. Kalaidjian argues that these narrative experimentations played a crucial role in shifting the public's understanding of nature, positioning it as a vital site of rest, recovery, and regeneration that helped lay the cultural groundwork for contemporary environmental activism.

About the Author

Andrew Kalaidjian is an Associate Professor of English at California State University, Dominguez Hills. His research and teaching focus on the intersections of modernist literature, media studies, and the environment. In addition to *Exhausted Ecologies*, he is also the author of *Spectacle Earth: Media for Planetary Change*, which examines early works of climate fiction and media theory in relation to anthropogenic environmental shifts.

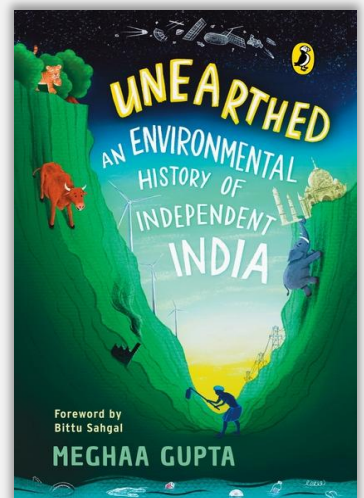
Gupta, Meghaa. *Unearthed: The Environmental History of Independent India*. New Delhi: Puffin Books, 2020

About the Book

Unearthed: The Environmental History of Independent India offers a compelling and accessible chronicle of India's ecological journey from 1947 to the present. While geared toward younger readers and young adults, the book provides a thorough overview of the country's most significant environmental movements, policies, and crises. It details pivotal milestones such as the Chipko movement, the launch of Project Tiger, the devastation of the Bhopal gas tragedy, and the Narmada Bachao Andolan. Through engaging narratives, the volume maps out the complex intersections of post-colonial industrial development, political decision-making, and conservation, highlighting the vital roles played by grassroots activists, scientists, and local communities in safeguarding the subcontinent's natural heritage.

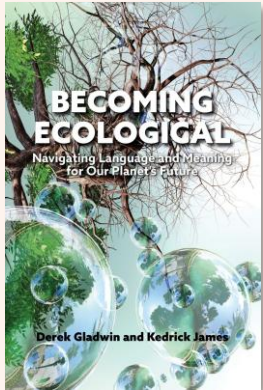
About the Author

Meghaa Gupta is an author and publishing professional specializing in children's and young adult literature. She has a strong focus on writing about ecology, the environment, and Indian history, working to make complex socio-ecological issues accessible to younger audiences. With extensive experience in the Indian publishing industry, she has actively curated and edited environmentally themed books, aiming to cultivate a deeper understanding of nature and climate awareness among the next generation of readers.



New Publications

Gladwin, Derek, and Kedrick James. *Becoming Ecological: Navigating Language and Meaning for Our Planet's Future*. Toronto: Aevo UTP, 2026



About the Book

Becoming Ecological: Navigating Language and Meaning for Our Planet's Future explores the vital intersection between ecolinguistics, communication, and the global environmental crisis. The book posits that the specific words, metaphors, and narratives we use to describe nature and climate change fundamentally shape our planetary reality and our capacity to enact meaningful environmental solutions. By analyzing how language constructs our understanding of ecology, the authors provide a framework for redefining our relationship with the natural world. It serves as a crucial guide for educators, communicators, and citizens looking to cultivate a deeply ecologically conscious mindset through intentional and transformative language use.

About the Authors

Derek Gladwin is an academic whose research resides at the intersection of environmental humanities, language, and education. He is a faculty member at the University of British Columbia (UBC), where his work focuses on environmental literacy, narrative, and social change.

Kedrick James is a researcher and educator, also affiliated with the University of British Columbia, specializing in language and literacy education. His scholarly work focuses heavily on ecolinguistics, digital literacies, and environmental education

Saikia, Arupjyoti, and Mahesh Rangarajan. *India's Forests: Revisiting Nature and History. Environmental History of India, Ecology, Colonial Impact and Forest Communities*. New Delhi: Vintage Books, 2026

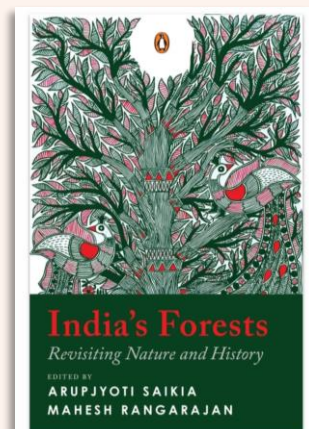
About the Book

India's Forests offers a sweeping and critical examination of the ecological history of the Indian subcontinent. The volume explores the profound environmental transformations driven by colonial state interventions, commercial forestry, and changing land-use practices. By centering the historical experiences of indigenous and forest-dependent communities, the book highlights the enduring conflicts over resource extraction, conservation policies, and forest rights. It provides a vital context for understanding how the legacy of colonial forestry continues to shape contemporary ecological challenges and the ongoing struggle for environmental justice in modern India.

About the Authors

Arupjyoti Saikia is a distinguished historian and Professor of History in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati. His research focuses predominantly on the economic, social, and environmental history of modern Assam and Northeast India. He is widely celebrated for his deeply researched environmental histories, including the acclaimed book *The Unquiet River: A Biography of the Brahmaputra*.

Mahesh Rangarajan is an eminent environmental historian, author, and Professor of History and Environmental Studies at Ashoka University. A leading voice in South Asian ecological history, his extensive body of work examines the intersections of colonial statecraft, wildlife conservation, and agrarian history. He has authored and edited numerous foundational texts in the field, including *India's Wildlife History* and *Nature and Nation*.



New Publications

Erlanson, Erik, Nicolai Skiveren, and Jacob Wamberg, eds. *Grotesque Anthropocene: Disfigured Environments Across Media*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2026

About the Book

Grotesque Anthropocene: Disfigured Environments Across Media provides an incisive, interdisciplinary examination of how the ecological crises of the current epoch are represented and conceptualized through the aesthetic category of the grotesque. Moving beyond conventional paradigms of ecological lamentation, the volume investigates how various forms of media articulate the profound disfigurements and hybrid monstrosities engendered by advanced industrialism and climate collapse. By foregrounding the grotesque, the text offers a robust theoretical framework for confronting the visceral, often repulsive entanglements of human and non-human actors in a rapidly transforming biosphere, challenging sanitized narratives of environmental preservation.



About the Editors

Erik Erlanson is a scholar whose research intersects literary studies, media theory, and the environmental humanities, examining how contemporary narratives negotiate ecological devastation and structural transitions.

Nicolai Skiveren focuses on ecocriticism and affect theory, investigating the complex emotional and aesthetic registers through which modern societies process ecological derangement and more-than-human entanglements.

Jacob Wamberg is a distinguished art historian whose extensive body of work explores the evolutionary trajectories of visual culture, particularly the philosophical and aesthetic dimensions of the relationship between nature, technology, and art.

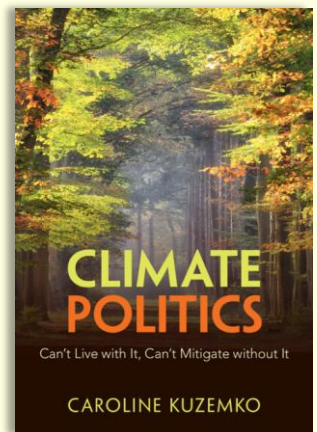
Kuzemko, Caroline. *Climate Politics: Can't Live with It, Can't Mitigate without It*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2026

About the Book

Climate Politics: Can't Live with It, Can't Mitigate without It explores the central paradox at the heart of the global environmental crisis: political systems and entrenched institutional interests are frequently the greatest barriers to decisive climate action, yet state power and political coordination remain the only mechanisms capable of driving the massive, systemic transformations necessary for effective mitigation. The book critically examines the dynamics of power, sustainable energy transitions, and international governance, offering a nuanced look at how current political frameworks both hinder and facilitate the urgent structural shifts required to address planetary warming.

About the Author

Caroline Kuzemko is a prominent academic in the field of international political economy, with a focus on energy transitions, climate governance, and the politics of sustainability. She is a Reader in International Political Economy at the University of Warwick in the UK. Her research extensively investigates how political power, institutions, and policy frameworks shape global and local responses to the climate crisis.



New Publications

Rangarajan, Mahesh, Ravi Agarwal, and Rinki Sarkar, eds. *Nature Contested: Ecology, Society, and Environment in Contemporary India*. Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan, 2026



About the Book

Nature Contested: Ecology, Society, and Environment in Contemporary India provides a multifaceted examination of the ongoing environmental debates and socio-ecological transformations across the subcontinent. The volume brings together diverse interdisciplinary perspectives to analyze how rapid economic development, urbanization, and state policies intersect with ecological conservation and grassroots environmental movements. Through rigorous analysis, the book sheds light on the fierce contestations over land, water, forests, and resources, highlighting the profound implications for both regional biodiversity and the marginalized, resource-dependent communities whose livelihoods are at stake.

About the Editors

•**Mahesh Rangarajan** is an eminent environmental historian, author, and Professor of History and Environmental Studies at Ashoka University. A leading voice in South Asian ecological history, his work extensively examines the intersections of colonial and post-colonial statecraft, wildlife conservation, and agrarian history.

•**Ravi Agarwal** is an environmental activist, photographer, and writer. He is the founder and director of Toxics Link, an influential Indian environmental NGO campaigning for systemic change in waste management. His multifaceted work seamlessly bridges contemporary art, ecological sustainability, and social justice, with a strong focus on urban ecologies and toxicity.

•**Rinki Sarkar** is a researcher and academic specializing in environmental economics, decentralized governance, and community-based natural resource management. Her scholarly work frequently explores grassroots conservation strategies, the socio-economic dynamics of environmental policies, and the intersection of local livelihoods with ecological sustainability in India.

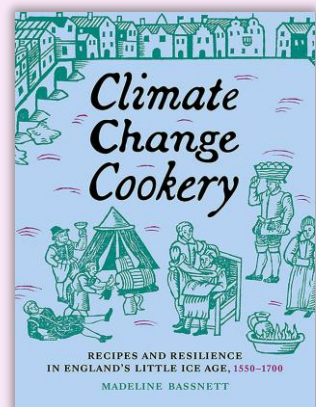
Bassnett, Madeline. *Climate Change Cookery: Recipes and Resilience in England's Little Ice Age, 1550–1700*. Montreal: Concordia University Press, 2026

About the Book

Climate Change Cookery: Recipes and Resilience in England's Little Ice Age, 1550–1700 explores how early modern households adapted to the unpredictable weather and crop failures of the Little Ice Age. By analyzing historical recipe books and preservation methods, Bassnett reveals how women cultivated grassroots culinary resilience, offering historical insights into food security that parallel modern climate challenges.

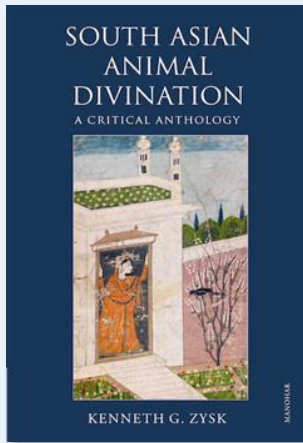
About the Author

Madeline Bassnett is an author, poet, and Associate Professor of English at Western University in Canada. Her research focuses on early modern literature, food studies, and ecocriticism, specifically examining historical domestic responses to climate and weather instability.



New Publications

Zysk, Kenneth G. *South Asian Animal Divination: A Critical Anthology*. Leiden: Brill, 2026



About the Book

South Asian Animal Divination: A Critical Anthology explores the history and practice of interpreting animal omens in ancient South Asia, drawing comparisons to similar divinatory practices found in Mesopotamia and classical antiquity. The volume provides critical editions and first-time translations of original Buddhist and Hindu texts, with a strong focus on analyzing bird calls and terrestrial animal behavior. By integrating natural history and ornithological data, the study illuminates the regional origins of these omens and highlights how knowledge of divination was transmitted across cultures and time periods.

About the Author

Kenneth G. Zysk is an Emeritus Professor of Indology and Indian Science at the University of Copenhagen and a renowned scholar of ancient Indian languages, culture, and the history of early South Asian medicine and science. He founded the Centre for the Study of Indian Science, which is currently housed under the Zysk Indic Manuscript Collection at the University of Copenhagen. A founding member of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Asian Medicine, Zysk was awarded the prestigious Basham Medal in 2024 for his extensive academic contributions.

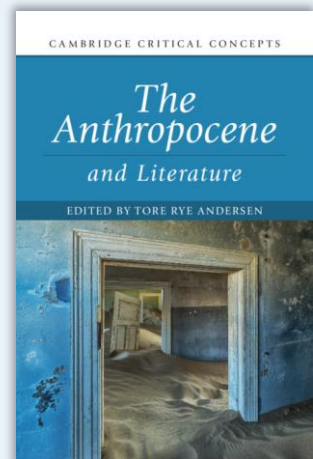
Andersen, Tore Rye, ed. *The Anthropocene and Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2026

About the Book

The Anthropocene and Literature explores how the Anthropocene has become a vital concept for understanding climate change, extinction, and planetary crisis, positioning literature as a crucial arena for reflection and imagination. Drawing together both emerging and leading scholars, the volume examines how stories, genres, and critical debates illuminate humanity's profound impact on Earth. It traces literary responses from Romantic precursors to contemporary climate fiction, delving into complex topics such as deep time, scale, ethics, colonialism, and extractivism. Ultimately, the book investigates whether literature can alter human behavior and help us envision more sustainable ways of living.

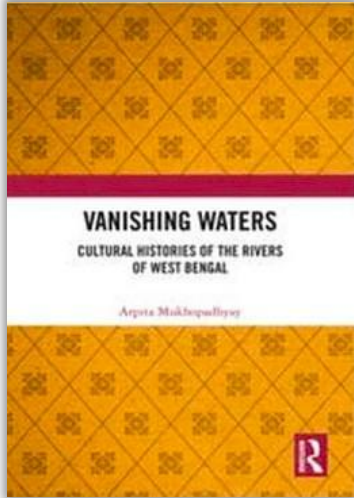
About the Editor

Tore Rye Andersen is an Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at Aarhus University in Denmark. His scholarly work focuses on contemporary literature and environmental crises, and he has published numerous essays on literary fiction in prominent academic journals such as *Critique*, *Narrative*, and *American Literary History*. He is also the author of the 2023 book *Planetary Pynchon: History, Modernity, and the Anthropocene*.



New Publications

Mukhopadhyay, Arpita. *Vanishing Waters: Cultural Histories of the Rivers of West Bengal*. London: Routledge, 2026



About the Book

Vanishing Waters: Cultural Histories of the Rivers of West Bengal explores the deep and intricate relationship between the riverine landscapes of Bengal and the cultural identity of its people. As many of the region's rivers face severe ecological threats—drying up, shifting courses, or suffering from human intervention—the book examines how these waterways have historically shaped local literature, folklore, livelihoods, and societal structures. It provides a poignant environmental and cultural history, shedding light on the ecological crisis of these vanishing waters and its profound impact on the heritage, memory, and everyday lives of riverine communities in the region.

About the Author

Arpita Mukhopadhyay (also known as Arpita Chattaraj Mukhopadhyay) is an academic and scholar whose research bridges cultural studies, literature, and the environmental humanities. Her work frequently focuses on the intersections of ecology, geography, and cultural memory in the Indian subcontinent, with a special emphasis on Bengal. Through her research, she seeks to document and critically analyze the socio-cultural impacts of environmental transformation and ecological degradation on regional communities.

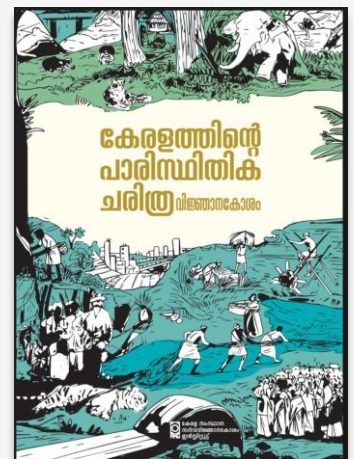
Kerala State Institute of Encyclopaedic Publications. *Keralathinte Paristhithika Charithra Vijnanakosham* [Encyclopedia of the Ecological History of Kerala]. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala State Institute of Encyclopaedic Publications.

About the Book

The Malayalam-language volume, *Keralathinte Paristhithika Charithra Vijnanakosham* (which translates to the *Encyclopedia of the Ecological History of Kerala*), offers an exhaustive and scholarly compilation of Kerala's environmental past and present. As vividly illustrated by the cover art—which juxtaposes wildlife like elephants and tigers with traditional agriculture, fishing, rubber tapping, mass protests, and modern urbanization—the book explores the shifting ecological landscape of the region. It covers the rich biodiversity of the Western Ghats, traditional ecological knowledge, the historical impacts of agrarian expansion and colonialism on land use, and contemporary environmental challenges, serving as a critical reference point for the region's socio-ecological evolution.

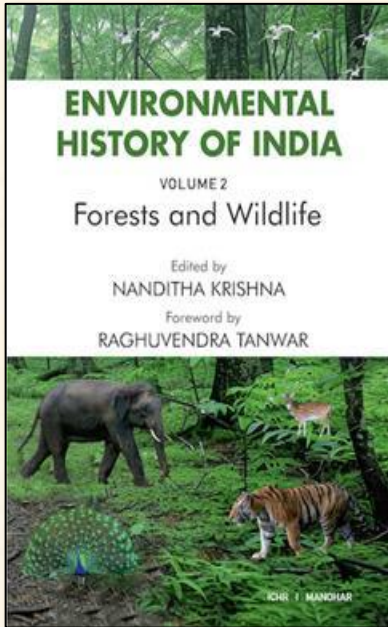
About the Publisher

Because this is a comprehensive encyclopedia rather than a single-author monograph, it was compiled and published by the **Kerala State Institute of Encyclopaedic Publications** (കേരള സംസ്ഥാന സർവ്വവിജ്ഞാനകോശ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട്). Based in Thiruvananthapuram, this is a specialized undertaking by the Government of Kerala dedicated to producing high-quality, scholarly encyclopedias in the Malayalam language. The institute's primary mission is to democratize knowledge across various disciplines—ranging from world history and science to regional ecology—ensuring that complex academic research is preserved and made accessible to the local Malayalam-speaking public.



New Publications

Krishna, Nanditha, ed. *Environmental History of India: Volume 2: Forests and Wildlife*. ICHR / Manohar



About the Book

Environmental History of India: Volume 2 Forests and Wildlife is part of a multi-volume project initiated by the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) aimed at providing a comprehensive understanding of environmental history in India. Recognizing that forests, land use, and wildlife are consistent and critical themes in the region's environmental history, this volume incorporates chapters addressing major issues related to these topics. The book brings together leading scholars sharing a common interest in environmental history to explore broad areas of environmental concern in the Indian context and to enquire into the complex patterns of human-nature interaction.

About the Editor

Dr. Nanditha Krishna is a historian, environmentalist, and author based in Chennai. She holds a PhD in Ancient Indian Culture from Bombay University and currently serves as the President of the C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation. As the founder of many of the foundation's constituents—including the CPR Institute of Indological Research—she has spent much of her career documenting India's ecological heritage traditions. Dr. Krishna has authored numerous publications, including *Hinduism and Nature*, *Sacred Plants of India*, and *Sacred Animals of India*.

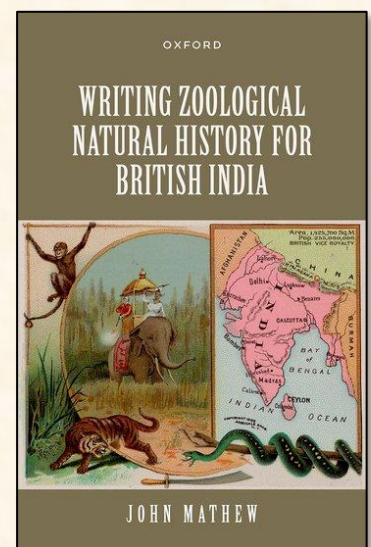
Mathew, John. *Writing Zoological Natural History for British India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

About the Book

Writing Zoological Natural History for British India investigates the epistemological and structural mechanisms through which zoological knowledge was codified within the colonial framework of the subcontinent. The text critically unpacks the imperial networks of naturalists, administrators, and indigenous informants, interrogating how faunal taxonomy and ecological documentation were mobilized alongside colonial administrative imperatives. By examining the dynamic interplay between European scientific ambitions and localized practices, the volume offers a robust historiographical analysis of how natural history served both as a global scientific enterprise and an instrument of colonial legibility, making it a critical addition to the discourse on South Asian environmental history.

About the Author

John Mathew is a historian of science whose scholarly research predominantly focuses on the history of zoology, evolutionary biology, and imperial science within the context of British India. His academic work investigates the complex intersections of colonial power, knowledge production, and ecological documentation. By critically analyzing the socio-political dimensions of scientific pursuit in the subcontinent, his contributions significantly advance the broader fields of the history of science and the environmental humanities.



New Publications

Shutzer, Matthew. *Until the Last Ton: Fossil Fuels in India from Empire to the Climate Crisis*. Princeton University Press



About the Book

Until the Last Ton: Fossil Fuels in India from Empire to the Climate Crisis traces the historical roots of India's dependence on fossil fuels, examining how nineteenth-century European imperialism and global capitalism reshaped eastern India's forest frontiers into major coal-mining hubs. The book demonstrates how colonial legal frameworks around property and land extraction laid the foundation for long-term ecological damage and the displacement of Adivasi (Indigenous) communities. By connecting these historical practices to contemporary energy politics, the text explores how colonial-era patterns of resource exploitation continue to influence modern climate policies, industrial growth, and ongoing land rights struggles in India today.

About the Author

Matthew Shutzer is an Assistant Professor of Environmental History at the University of California, Berkeley. He holds a PhD from New York University and specializes in modern South Asian history, environmental political economy, and the global history of energy and capitalism. His research has been supported by fellowships at Harvard University and UC Berkeley, and he has previously served as an Assistant Professor at Duke University. In addition to his academic work, Dr. Shutzer has conducted extensive fieldwork in India, including researching the implementation of the Forest Rights Act in western Odisha, and has received the Jack Goody Prize for his publications on the political ecology of coal extraction.

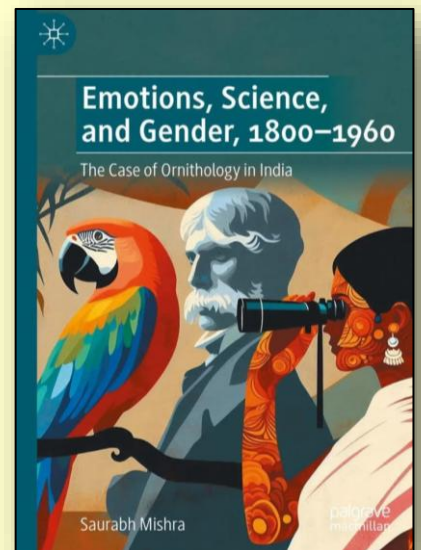
Mishra, Saurabh. *Emotions, Science, and Gender, 1800–1960: The Case of Ornithology in India*. Palgrave Macmillan

About the Book

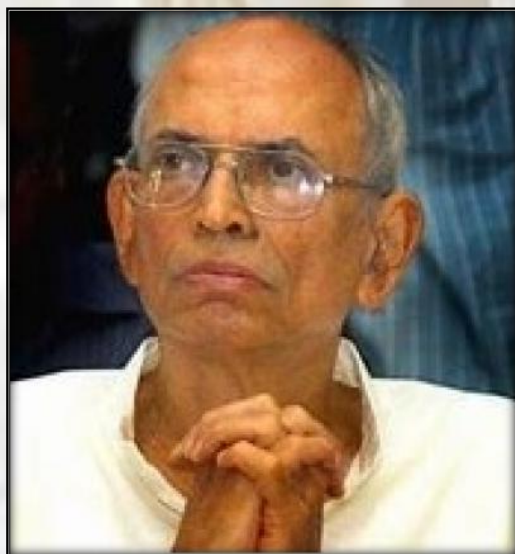
Emotions, Science, and Gender, 1800–1960: The Case of Ornithology in India presents a novel approach to the history of science by moving beyond the traditional focus on scientific authorities, institutional frameworks, and formal field informants. The volume explores how emotional investments and gender dynamics shaped the development of ornithological study in South Asia from the nineteenth century into the post-independence era. By centering the role of femininity and highlighting the work of "women of science," the book uncovers vital contributions that have received limited attention in standard colonial histories. In doing so, it illuminates the complex intersections between scientific practice, affect, and gender roles within the broader context of colonial and modern Indian history.

About the Author

Dr. Saurabh Mishra is a Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Sheffield. He completed his DPhil at the University of Oxford and specializes in the social history of modern South Asia, focusing on medicine, science, and veterinary health. A former Wellcome Trust Research Fellow, he is the author of *Pilgrimage, Politics, and Pestilence* and *Beastly Encounters of the Raj*.



Obituary



Professor Madhav Gadgil

The Society for the History of Science Kolkata deeply mourns the passing of Professor Madhav Gadgil, an eminent ecologist, foundational scholar of Indian environmental history, and respected mentor. Professor Gadgil passed away in Pune on January 7, 2026, at the age of 83.

As the founder of the Centre for Ecological Sciences and the chair of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel, his pioneering contributions to the fields of ecology and democratic conservation will be remembered with profound gratitude and admiration. His legacy in integrating human communities into ecological preservation continues to inspire.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, students, and loved ones.

May his soul rest in peace.

Obituary



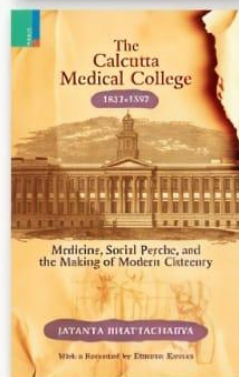
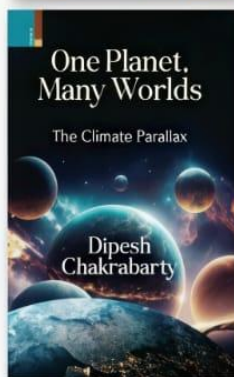
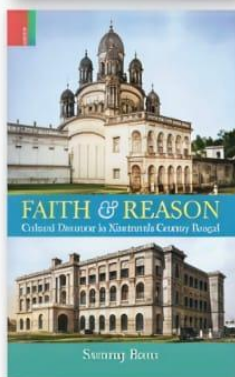
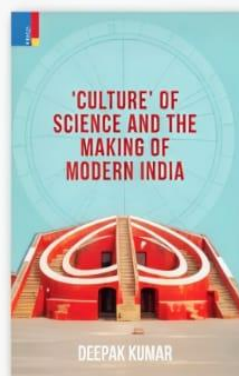
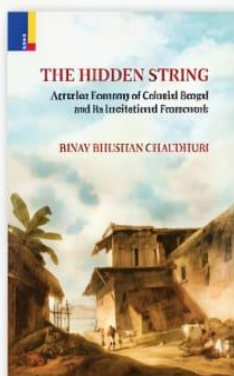
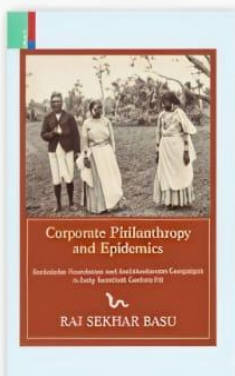
Professor Sumit Sarkar

The Society for the History of Science Kolkata deeply mourns the passing of Professor Sumit Sarkar, an eminent historian of modern India and respected mentor. Professor Sarkar passed away in New Delhi on August 13, 2026, at the age of 87.

*As a pioneering scholar of anti-colonial resistance and the author of foundational works such as *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903–1908* and *Modern India: 1885–1947*, his profound insights into socio-economic processes and non-elite history transformed South Asian historiography. His unparalleled commitment to rigorous empirical research and his dedication to giving voice to the marginalized leave an indelible mark on the discipline.*

Our deepest sympathies go out to his family, colleagues, and the countless students he inspired.

May his soul rest in peace.



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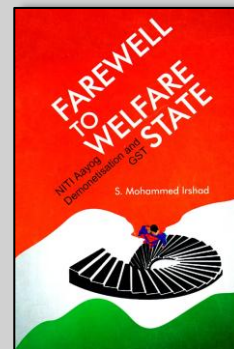
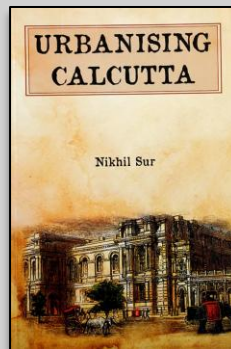
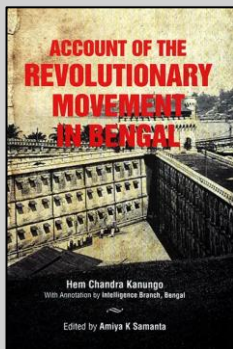
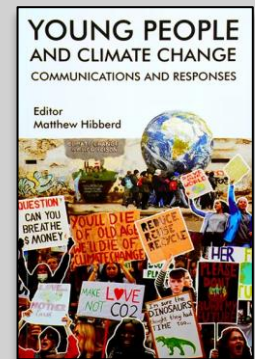
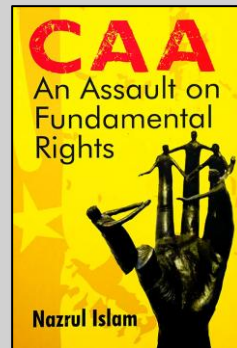
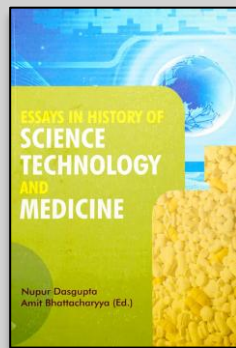
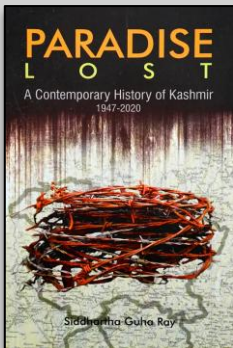
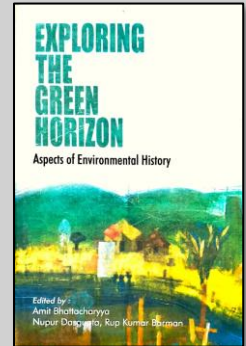
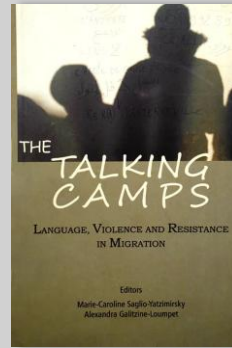
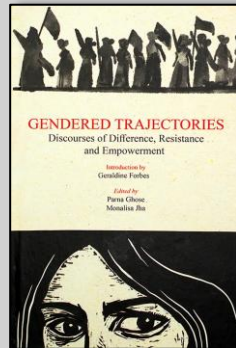
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