# Fourth Annual International Conference of the SHSK

## "Reflections on Environmental History in India"

## 17-19 September 2026

## Notice

This is for your kind information that due to repeated requests from different quarters, we hereby extend the last date of abstract submission for our upcoming annual conference at Calicut University.

Please see the previous circular available on the Scoiety's website for the technical details.

Scholars and students interested in environemntal issues are encouraged to submit their abstract.

The last date for abstract submission : 30th April 2026

Announcement of the list of selected abstracts: 15th May 2026

Last date for submission of full papers: 15th July 2026

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## Department of History,
## University of Calicut, Kerala
## in collaboration with
## Society for the History of Science Kolkata(SHSK)
# Fourth Annual International Conference of the SHSK
# "Reflections on Environmental History in India"
**17-19 September 2026**

## Concept note:

Globalization has opened a pandora's box by unleashing an unbridled competition for resources, labour, coupled with an incessant thirst for expanding the ideological frontiers of a domineering spirit interspersed with a clamour for justice. Social movements arose like a phoenix amidst the contested domains, devoid of any unifying philosophies but with a caveat for community rights. In the absence of any manifestos the ubiquitous cry unravelled the search for alternative livelihood strategies. An enduring creed in environmental histories of India is the idea that modernity bequeathed an imperial attitude toward the natural world. Primarily focusing on British colonial rule for instigating the ecological changes spelling the prognostications of a foreboding environmental crisis in the Indian sub-continent, the first framework — widely referred to as the 'colonial- watershed thesis' — argued that colonialism and European attitudes to Nature profoundly undermined previous traditions that strove for ecological harmony. This engendered a counter argument that, although this constituted the very antithesis of the 'imperial' mindset, it inter alia inquired into the interfaces of a critique of industrial society.

By the late 1990s, however, a stinging critique of the colonial watershed thesis emerged under the broad framework titled 'continuities-with-change'. For the advocates of this new paradigm while the 'pace of change' was undoubtedly 'rapid and epochal' in the colonial period, radical environmental transitions were not entirely new to the Indian sub-continent. In effect, rather than treating British colonial impacts as the only and most decisive ecological encounter, the 'continuities- with-change' view underlined the need for long term histories about human-nature relationships in the subcontinent.

Whilst these two dominant frameworks have over the years dueled, debated and generated a rich and productive scholarship, recent concerns about global warming

and anxieties about climate change are urging us to reconsider many of the conventional plot lines and the standard narratives that have thus far focused on the colonial period. Climate change perused through the prism of a *longue durée* period and its impact on the rise or decline of civilizations, fluctuating temperatures, monsoon behaviour, melting of snow on the mountains, rising sea levels, menacing storms and cyclones in recent times may have a message to convey regarding the interactions of the humans with the natural world. In South Asia and the Asia Pacific in particular, climate had been pivotal to the growth or prosperity of human civilizations. Climate history calls for a profound understanding of the inter connectedness between water resources on the one hand and deforestation, rainfall, river flows, soil erosion, climate change, global warming, draught, famine and myriad natural calamities on the other.

While the earlier writings deliberated upon forest histories, carnivore control and irrigation, in recent decades the emphasis has shifted towards exploring urbanization, animal studies, natural disasters, the spread of diseases and energy as problems of environmental change. Increasingly as well, there have been efforts to explore how regional and local studies on environmental change in the Indian subcontinent could be grasped within a larger planetary context and whether such narratives can address some of the pressing concerns of global warming. They forge a reconstitution and extension of the notions of nature, agency, and materiality, which are ensnared in formulating new theoretical models of environmentality that amalgamate human and nonhuman ecologies. The wounds of the natural world are also social wounds and that the planetary ecological crisis is the material and historical consequence of an anthropocentric and dualistic worldview. Encompassing nature/ culture, human/ nonhuman, power/ gender, East/ West, North/ South, and ecology/ economy binary oppositions, this anthropocentric concept is pivotal in achieving economic growth, political strategies, and technological development—negating Earth's life support systems. What kind of epistemological tools could be used to analyse these phenomena? How could one weigh the intimidating consequences of these that at times appear surreal?

This three-day Conference titled Reflections on Environmental History in India will aim to achieve three main objectives: a) trace the varied thematic shifts in the past few decades within the field of environmental history of India b) deliberate upon the consequences of global warming focusing on the contemporary writings in environmental history and c) attempt a much-needed stock taking of the historiography on the environmental histories of India.

## Sub-themes

### a) From Forest as Timber to Social Forestry and to the contemporary challenges for Carbon Forests

Under this theme we would invite papers that would look at how environmental histories are redirected from previously looking at the colonial exploitation of forests for timber to now conserving forests for Carbon.

### b) From Carnivore Control to Animal Studies

Under this theme papers will be invited to explore the shift from the previous focus on hunting to investigating the present-day complex human-animal interfaces.

### c) From Irrigation to the Hydrosphere

Under this theme we will invite papers to explore the shift from previous concerns with irrigation to now studying how larger weather systems such as the monsoons impact the South Asian sub-continent. Especially the issue of droughts and floods.

### d) The Great Acceleration

Under this theme we will invite papers that will study the history of energy in India. From animal energy to firewood, coal and inevitably oil. In the process locating the dramatic changes in transportation in the 19th century would be an interesting exercise.

### e) Urbanization and Migration

Under this theme papers will look at the how modern cities were assembled in India and how such models not only drew upon past practices but what kinds of environmental impacts were generated from such shifts in settlement patterns.

### f) Climate Change and Environmental Law

Papers under this section will examine regional studies on climate change, disaster management practices, environmental legislations, cross-border diplomacies impacting environmental conditions, international refugee issues and environmental laws enacted to gauge the transitions.

### g) The age of the Athropocene and Environmental Humanities

Under this section papers are invited to address environmental issues that have arisen as a fall- out of the geological aspects stretching to the biological coupled with deep-seated socio-political underpinnings leading to research on subfields like ecocriticism, ecofeminism (also gender studies in environment, fertility cults etc.), environmental philosophy, political ecology, environmental sociology, eco-materialisms.

# Call for Abstracts

**Scholars are invited to submit abstracts related to the broadly defined sub-themes for the 4th annual international conference of the Society, titled "Reflections on Environmental History in India." This conference will take place at Calicut University in Kerala from 17 - 19 September 2026.**

**Membership in the Society is mandatory for consideration of abstracts for presentation. The Annual Membership fee is Rs. One Thousand only (₹1000), and the Life Membership Fee is Rs. Ten Thousand only (₹10,000). Senior scholars are expected to sign up for Life Membership.**

**For membership details, the scholars may visit the website of the society:**
**https://www.societyforthehistoryofscience.com/membership.php**

**The interested scholars should send their abstracts in PDF as an email attachment, clearly mentioning the title of the paper, name of the scholar, designation, institutional affiliation, and contact details (mobile number and email address) to shsk.calicut2026@gmail.com**

**The abstract should be within 500 words. The paper presenters must submit the following, along with their abstracts:**

**(a) Proof of membership of the Society (filled-in membership form of the Society available on the website)**

**(b) A one-page CV in PDF, mentioning the significant publications and conference presentations**

**To be eligible for presentation, one publication in a reputed peer-reviewed journal, such as the *Indian Journal of History of Science*, is required.**

**The full paper, if selected, should adhere to the style guide of the *Indian Journal of History of Science*. For more information, consult the website of the journal. https://link.springer.com/journal/43539**

**A selection of papers will be published in an edited volume by Primus Books, Delhi.**

## Important Dates

**The last date for submission of abstracts: 31 March 2026**

**Intimation of list of selected abstracts: 30 April 2026**

**Submission of full paper: 30 June 2026**

## S.P. Banerjee Memorial Prize for the History of Engineering & Technology

The Society has established the S.P. Banerjee Memorial Prize for the History of Engineering & Technology at its second annual international conference at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, in 2024. The award carries a cash prize of ₹ 10,000 and a certificate. The paper must focus on early modern, modern, and contemporary South Asian history, and it should be presented at the Society's annual international conference. The prospective candidate should be under 40 years of age. They must submit proof of age (Aadhaar Card/PAN/High School Certificate) along with the full paper. If a researcher would like their work to be considered for the award, they need to declare this on both the abstract and the first page of the full paper, along with the appropriate documentation confirming their age.

## Parthapratim Bandopadhyay Memorial Prize for the History of Medicine

The Society has established the Parthapratim Bandopadhyay Memorial Prize for the History of Medicine at its third annual international conference at Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, in 2025. This award carries a cash prize of ₹ 10,000 and a certificate. The paper must focus on early modern, modern, or contemporary South Asian history, and it should be presented at the Society's annual international conference. The prospective candidate should be under 40 years of age. They must submit proof of age (Aadhaar Card/PAN/High School Certificate) along with the full paper. If a researcher would like their work to be considered for the award, they need to declare this on both the abstract and the first page of the full paper, along with the appropriate documentation confirming their age.

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