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Politics Of Environmental Fragility: The Aravalli Hills in Haryana

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Abstract:

The Aravalli hills act as a significant ecological system in Haryana, particularly in the districts of Gurugram, Faridabad and Nuh; they play an essential role in maintaining ecological stability preventing desertification and supporting the recharge of groundwater supplies. However, Over the past few years, increasing numbers of political, legal and environmental debates surrounding the Aravalli have shown their growth ecological instability. Ongoing policy discussions and legal interpretations regarding the classification of the Aravalli and the extent to which they are protected are a cause for concern among environmental groups, who argue that if the officially recognised areas are redefined or limited then the existing environmental protections will undermined and that the Aravalli will be put at greater risk of construction, mining and changes undermined and that the Aravalli will be put at greater risk of construction, mining and construction without permission and urban sprawl that have highlighted various flaws in the environmental governance and enforcement of regulations. Courts and environmental activists have repeatedly questioned the lack of action from state authorities to prevent ecological harm, and how the gap between environmental laws and how those laws are applied has resulted in a lack of effective enforcement. In recent years or times, the controversy has intensified over the interpretation and legal definition on how to define “Aravalli land”. The changes have been seen in land classification and environmental rules interpretation which created confusion over how the Aravalli Hills should define and protected legally.

Keywords: environment, Aravalli hills, resources, political accountability, ecological crisis, regulation, conservation.

1. Introduction:

The Aravalli Hills are an essential ecological region in northwestern India - the oldest mountain range in the world. The Aravalli hills provide a range of ecological services (protecting biodiversity by limiting the spread of desertification, providing water through groundwater replenishment, creating climate stability in the region) and function as a barrier to air pollution, thereby providing adjacent communities with some protection from extreme environmental conditions. While critical to the

ecology of the region, the Aravalli Hills are under extreme ecological pressure, primarily driven by rapid urbanisation, unregulated land use, infrastructure development, and illegal (eg. Mining, and construction) activities. These pressures have resulted in significant ecological degradation and increased risks to the environment. The Aravalli hills represent a critical case of the relationship between environmental and politics in contemporary India.

1.1 Understanding of concepts:

This explains the main concepts and kind of theories used to understand the Aravalli hills of Haryana. The concept is analysis from the politics and environmental perspective. We study this topic to understand the relationship between environment and politics in deeply so that the problem of Aravalli will be addressed without any barriers, for better results the study is conducted from the perspective of environment and politics.

1.2 Political Ecology Approach to Understanding Environmental Fragility in the Aravalli Hills:

The Aravalli Hills in Haryana are a clear example of environmental fragility. Ecological systems are vulnerable due to ongoing human activity and political and economic pressures. Environmental fragility means ecosystems struggle to maintain their natural functions because of overuse and poor governance. The Aravallis, extending through Gurugram, Faridabad, and Nuh, are crucial for biodiversity conservation, desertification control, and groundwater replenishment. However, their ecological stability has considerably deteriorated. Political Ecology offers a valuable framework for comprehending this situation, illustrating the intricate links between environmental issues, political power, economic interests, and governance structures. Within this framework, environmental degradation is attributed not only to natural factors but also to overuse and poor governance. The Aravallis, extending through Gurugram, Faridabad, and Nuh, are crucial for biodiversity conservation, desertification control, and groundwater replenishment. However, their ecological stability has considerably deteriorated. Political Ecology offers a valuable framework for comprehending this situation, illustrating the intricate links between environmental issues, political power, economic interests, and governance structures. Within this framework, environmental degradation is attributed not only to natural factors but also to decisions made by governmental bodies, corporations, and institutions. In the case of Haryana's Aravalli Hills, environmental harm relates closely to urbanisation policies, land-use choices, and weak environmental governance.

1.3 Environmental politics the debate of development and conservation:

Environmental politics played an important role and always tried to study the case from the perspective of political interests or policies and actions taken by them which shapes the environmental outcomes. Government tries to build or promotes the policies like which helps in the economy development, infrastructure and real estate expansion. This creates pressure to convert forests land into construction zones.

1.4 Research Propositions:

1. Weak environmental governance contributes significantly to ecological degradation in the Aravalli Hills of Haryana.
2. Economic and developmental interests often influence political decision-making regarding land use in the Aravalli region.
3. Judicial intervention has emerged as an important mechanism for protecting the Aravalli ecosystem in the absence of effective administrative enforcement.
4. Rapid urbanisation in the National Capital Region has intensified pressure on the fragile ecosystem of the Aravalli Hills.

1.5 Methodology:

The method used in this research is qualitative with references to the use of secondary data. The data used in this study was obtained from government reports, scholars' articles, policy documents, newspaper articles. This research will look at recent and past events to gain an understanding of political, legal, and governance elements that have led to the fragility of the environment in the Aravalli hills. For this paper research is conducted in a way that it relies more on diverse secondary sources.

2. Study of the political ecological perspective:

If we talk about Haryana, the prices of the land in Aravalli region have high commercial values due to its rise of population to live in urban areas. The expansion of real estate, corporate interests, mining groups etc played an important role in influencing political decision in their interests. At the same time, the poor, common people and local communities who live near the regions have limiting power at the same time, the poor, common people and local communities who live near the regions have limiting power in decision making. This unequal distribution of power shows that the powerful have more power than the weakest ones which shapes the environmental outcomes and contributes to ecological fragility. Another important concept within political ecology is environmental justice which questions whether environmental benefits and burdens are distributed fairly or not.

2.1 Legal protection and recent policy decisions:

One of the most important recent developments related to the Aravalli Hills is the new elevation-based definition for identifying areas that qualify as part of the Aravalli range. This decision connects directly to the research question: In what ways have recent legal and policy decisions affected the ecological protection of the Aravalli Hills? From the perspective of environmental and governance theory laws and policies are important for the conservation. However, the success depends on how they defined and implemented. The elevation-based definition has sparked significant concern among environmental experts and activists, as it risks excluding numerous low-lying yet ecologically vital areas from legal protection. This situation can be understood through how political priorities and

economic interests shape the decisions on environment.

2.2 Mining regulations and enforcement in the Aravalli Hills:

If we talk about mining, hills contain one of the most valuable minerals like stone, sands which helps in the construction. So, we can say that mining has one of the greatest reasons for environmental damages in the Aravalli Hills of the state. Because around the hills the cities are expanding to meet the needs, the demand for these minerals is increasing rapidly. This creates pressure on the hills to allow mining in and around the region so that the state tries to make policies and rules for meeting the needs by neglecting the needs of environmental protection. Mining causes serious problems such as loss of habitat, lowering of the levels of groundwater, soil erosion and desertification, increase in dust and air pollution. To control such issues government must take important and immediate steps to regulate mining in the Aravalli hills. There are several laws introduced important are like Forest conservation act, 1980, Environmental protection act, 1986 etc. In addition to these such laws the judiciary of the country also plays an important role in protecting environment over short term economic benefits.

2.3 Actions taken by the government of Haryana:

The state government played important role in protecting the Aravalli hills and government is taking steps to conserve the hills like declaring parts of the Aravalli region as a protected forest. Government tries to bring large areas under legal protection so that the distraction activities like construction, mining, land levelling etc cannot happen without permission. When the land came under protection private construction becomes restricted, environmental damages cause people into legal action against them, private construction becomes restricted without government permission etc. This helps in reduction and misuse of ecological damages. In Haryana, much of the Aravalli land came under the protection of Punjab land protection Act 1900. However, this land protection acts also cause debate whether this law should be amended or interpreted differently.

3. Environmental Governance and future of the Aravalli Hills:

Environmental Governance in India performs at multiple levels as we have federal government, so, country operates at different levels such as centre, state, and local. If we talk about the Aravalli hills governance includes various legal frameworks, tribunals and supreme courts orders. Because of different responsibilities and overloading of work leads to confusion, weak coordination, and selective enforcement. Understanding this perspective helps in understanding why environmental degradation continues despite legal protections and public awareness. The sustainable development needs reforms in legal regulations, and reforms in governance accountability and power distribution.

3.1 Role of environmental governance:

This concept asks about in what ways current governance and enforcement practices influence both environmental and implementation in the Aravalli region? The Aravalli hills clearly show how the environmental governance, policies, laws and institutions responsible for protecting the

environment. In Haryana various agencies, including forest departments, pollution control boards, and urban planning authorities, oversee conservation.

3.2 The need for conservation of Aravalli Hills:

The conservation of Aravalli hills needs to protect the natural resources where it plays an important role in ecological functions such as reduction of air pollution, recharging groundwater etc by acting as a natural barrier to promote sustainable development. Many scholars, environmentalists, civil society groups have raised concerns that short term economic development cannot replace ecological stability so government should adopt such methods which reduces the destruction to ecological. Conversationalists emphasise on promoting sustainable development so that with present needs the future generations also get resources to enjoy or live their lives efficiently and effectively.

4. Urbanisation and Crisis:

Reports says that Urbanisation is increasing rapidly in India over the last three decades, particularly after the introduction of economic reforms of 1991. Cities expanding rapidly due to the increasing needs for urbanisation people were moving to cities for better opportunities leaving their traditional villages, farming lands in their villages. In Haryana the expansion of urbancentres causing fragility to the ecosystem of the Aravalli hills. This chapter will be helpful in studying how the expansion of urbanisation causes the environment crisis in the Aravalli region.

4.1 Urban expansion and change in the pattern of land use in the Aravalli:

The Aravalli hills in Haryana fall largely within districts like Guru gram, Faridabad, Nuh. These areas are those which witnessed intense change in the pattern of land use due to increasing demand for urbanisation. Forest areas changed for real estate projects, commercial complexes, road widening and infrastructure projects etc. Urbanisation leads to fragmentation of wildlife habitats. The Aravalli hills are homes to many wild animals such as leopards, jackals, and various bird species. Construction of roads and buildings disrupts the ecosystem, increasing human wildlife conflicts.

4.2 Socio-Ecological Consequences: Impact on Environment and Society:

The Aravalli Hills are particularly important for recharging groundwater. Environmental damage cause decreases in the function, leading to water shortages. In recent years, groundwater levels in Gurugram and surrounding areas have dropped significantly. This impacts agriculture, drinking water supply, and overall environmental health. The Aravalli ecosystem is home to many plants and animal species. However, environmental damage cause decreased in natural habitats. The loss of biodiversity weakens the stability of ecosystems and makes them more vulnerable. The Aravalli Hills serve as a natural barrier in reduction of dust and pollution. Environmental damage diminishes this protective role. This worsens air quality in Haryana and the National Capital Region. If the quality of air remains poor it can cause harm to public health and increased many problems such as one of the main causes to health will be respiratory diseases. Impact on Local Communities results in Environmental

degradation and affects local communities that mostly rely on natural resources. Farmers who depend on these natural resources experience many problems like water shortages. Local residents not only face health risks due to pollution but also degradation of resources. This creates environmental inequality.

5. Judicial Role and Legal Activism: How judiciary played important role in Environmental Protection:

The judiciary has emerged one of the crucial guardians and played a prominent role in safeguarding the Aravalli Hills, frequently employing judicial interventions that principles of environmental justice to protect ecological rights. Through judiciary interventions, courts often uphold the principles of environmental justice, judiciary recognised ecological rights as fundamental rights and ensuring that development is important but not at the cost of environmental destruction. These legal actions highlighted the power of judicial activism and holding both the government and private sector accountable. In our construction there are several fundamental rights which are provided, the judiciary also drives their rights from the constitution of India. Originally constitution did not mention directly about the environmental protection as a fundamental right, but judiciary interpretation expanded its scope.

Conclusion:

The Aravalli hills which also known as an important mountain range which helps in battling the challenges related to ecological as they act as natural barriers. The government defines definition for Aravalli 100 meters which had been accepted by the topmost court of the country earlier, without any questions which caused the rise of questions on both government and the supreme court decisions. The three bench of the supreme court has accepted this definition for Aravalli hills. Communities or environmentalist raises questions and asking them whether short term economic growth is more important than the long-term ecology. They raised concerns that Aravalli hills are precious and need supreme courts shield. The governments are seeing their ownprofits over the environment protection; at least supreme court should make steps forward protect the environment and redefine the definition for Aravallis. The illegal activities should be stopped to protect the environment and maintain ecology balance. After the supreme court revised its decision centre clarifies that government also taking steps in protecting hills and also made policies and rules accordingly. The centre says that the misconceptions that reports are showing that mining is being promoting in major parts of the Aravalli hills which is not true. The also arises how is the aravalli hills or ranged to be protected as government are making policies and rules, but they are not fully or transparently implemented and the destruction of aravalli hills is one of the important big issues to deal with. We all know the Aravalli hills played an important role in protect Delhi NCR from pollution, if the hills were made open for the mining, then will cause pollution which will cause leading problems like respiratory diseases, distraction

biodiversity etc. Environmentalists arguing that atleast protect the left over Aravallis with equally balance the present needs with future generations. They say that government needs to take immediate actions to preserve what remains of two- billionyear-old aravalli range. They emphasised that government should set up responsible committees to protect the ecology. The government says that government is involved fully in protecting Aravallis but its not true as them decisions are influenced by the powerful interest's groups.

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