

"ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES"

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Abstract

Marginalized communities across the globe disproportionately bear the burden of environmental degradation, despite contributing the least to its causes. This paper explores the intersection of environmental issues and social inequality, with a focus on how pollution, deforestation, climate change, and resource exploitation adversely affect vulnerable populations such as indigenous peoples, Dalits, rural poor, coastal dwellers, and urban slum residents. Lacking political power, legal protection, and access to resources, these groups often reside in ecologically fragile or hazardous zones—such as floodplains, mining belts, and industrial peripheries—where environmental hazards are most concentrated. Drawing on case studies from India and other developing regions, the study reveals how environmental injustice manifests through forced displacement, loss of traditional livelihoods, exposure to toxic pollutants, and restricted access to clean water, air, and land. Additionally, climate change-induced events such as droughts, floods, and rising sea levels further exacerbate their socio-economic vulnerability. Women and children in these communities face even higher health and safety risks due to intersecting inequalities. While the challenges are immense, the paper also highlights emerging environmental justice movements led by marginalized groups themselves. From tribal forest rights campaigns to grassroots climate activism, these communities are asserting their right to a safe and sustainable environment. The paper calls for inclusive environmental governance, recognition of community-based knowledge systems, and stronger legal frameworks to protect ecological rights. In conclusion, addressing environmental problems in marginalized communities is not only an ecological imperative but also a matter of social justice. Sustainable development must prioritize equity and empowerment alongside conservation.

Keywords: Environmental justice, marginalized communities, pollution, displacement, sustainability, social inequality