



## PREFACE

The study of Environmental History has become important as a natural and inevitable result of a perceived 'environmental crisis'. This perception has resulted in the development of a broad and rich area called Environmental Studies. In fact, environment and geography have been always a part of history. Historians since Herodotus and Thucydides had understood the value of geography and surrounding environment in the understanding of the human societies. Thucydides description of the plague and its origin may be considered to be a beginning of environmental history. Environmental history shares a perennial border with economic and social history and it is being acknowledged now that the recent environmental crisis calls for an active and independent role of historian to develop new paradigms in the future.

I opted for conducting the research in the field of environmental history, as it has emerged as an arena with lots of potential for further exploration. Growing concerns arriving due to environmental changes have by now gripped the world. The phenomena of global Warming, depletion of the Ozone layer, scarcity of the non renewable resources like water, destruction of the forests on a large scale, have changed the pattern of human thinking, which so far was neglected by them. The root causes of all these problems go back into the past when industrial revolution and commercialization in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century brought tremendous changes in the history of environment.

My thesis traces the processes of environmental changes that had been triggered in South and Central Gujarat as a part of a larger design of the colonial governments to change the ecological landscapes of their empires. My emphasis is on studying the impact of various forms of colonial environmental interventions such as forestry, agriculture,

irrigation and, others; conflicts between colonial forest management and traditional forest resource use; and finally examining the resistance put up by the tribal people during the colonial rule in India.

**Objectives:**

Following are the principal objectives of my study:

1. To attempt the survey of the ecological History of South and Central Gujarat.
2. To study the impact of environmental policy on the flora, fauna and the people.
3. To study that how from the inception of the organized forestry in India and the state forestry practices have impinged on the habitat of the local communities which had contained the richest forest and mineral resources.
4. To analyze popular protests in form of a series of forest based movements in response of state intervention and linking up of the above with the national freedom struggle.
5. To examine how the intrusion of the commercialization has led to substantial deforestation and allied ecological degradation.
6. To analyze how the symbiotic relationship between ecology and humans is manifested in culture, tradition and every day life.

My thesis is divided into five chapters, namely, Introduction; Colonialism and the Forest Resources; Water Availability and its Uses; Changing Relationship of the Tribals to their Environment; and Conclusion.

The first chapter **Introduction** is divided into two sections. The first section throws light on the definitions of environment, ecology and their assimilation into the discipline of history. It further outlines how the cultural, political and economic changes in the past have measurably altered the global ecology. An attempt has also been made to study the

effects of climatic changes (man made or natural) on the histories of human societies of South Asia. The Second Section describes the geographical features and the natural resources of South and Central Gujarat. The history of Gujarat has been shaped by its geo-ecological features. Thus the study is made of its rivers, mountains, flora, fauna and the other physical features. The South and Central Gujarat comprise of Ahmedabad, Kaira (Kheda), Bharuch, the Baroda district, Surat and Navsari (part of the former Baroda State).

The second chapter ***Colonialism and Forest Resources*** throws light on how India's forests were denuded to supply timber to England (for ship building) during its war with Napoleon. During the colonial period began the process of economic imperialism. It translated into demands for rapid railway extension which led to the destruction of the forests on a large scale. The English on the basis of their superior negotiable skills and the military might were able to obtain the forests on leases from the chiefs of the Dangs. The forests of Dharampur, Rajpipla and Surat were also destroyed to meet the demands of the railway lines. These railway lines in turn opened the timber rich interiors in the British Gujarat and the Baroda State for further exploitation. The analysis is made on the basis of various Forest Working Plans in the region. These were based on the 'Scientific Management' and the principles of 'dessicationism'. There are evidences of adverse ecological impacts when these plans were put into operation.

The third chapter ***Water Availability and Its Uses*** traces the causes of growing scarcity of water in the present day Gujarat. The water harvesting structures of the State were neglected by the British and the heavy rate of revenue taxation did not allow the village communities to maintain the withering tanks, *kunds*, *vavs* etc. Agriculture in Gujarat depended heavily upon rains. The British with the aim of enhancing

revenues and to meet the demand for ever increasing irrigation (due to commercialization of agriculture) decided to partially fund the sinking of wells and pump installations. Intensive farming along with deforestation and destruction of water harvesting structures rapidly lowered the water table in various regions which had long term adverse effects.

The fourth chapter ***Changing Relationship- Tribals and their Environment*** reviews changing relationship of the tribals to their environment due to external interferences. British colonial foresters had adopted the attitudes of their continental ancestors, especially of the German and French foresters to the other or indigenous forest resource users. The British foresters in India considered the forest communities to be 'ignorant, environmentally profligate and wasteful'. Then began two simultaneous processes: First, defining scientific management of forests and second alienation of the tribal population from their natural environment. The first step was a ban on shifting cultivation: the second was the introduction of the protected forest and the third, its complete isolation from its original inhabitants (tribal people) as reserved forest. In other words, it was a breakdown of a sustainable symbiotic relationship with nature.

The last chapter ***Conclusion*** is divided into three parts. First, review of the relevance of the environmental historiography to the study of civilizations. Second deals with summarizing of the entire process of ecological change that took place in Gujarat during the colonial rule. The third section deals with the ecology of the present day Gujarat. Further efforts are made to link the past and the present through changes in environmental policies. Lastly, the conclusion discusses the accelerated pace of the ecological degradation due to increasing scarcity of water, depletion of forest cover, pollution of air and water due to industrial toxic

wastes and the displacement of marginalized people in the name of development through various national and state policies.