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Book Review

**Living with Degrading Environment: Social
Life Around a Thermal Power Plant**

Ananta Kumar Biswas

**New Delhi, Mittal Publications, 2025, Page 200 (All
Inclusive), Rs. 800, ISBN - 13: 978-9359992181
ISBN – 10: 9359992186, Genre - Environmental Sociology**

Reviewed By

Anusmita Biswas

Ananta Kumar Biswas's *Living with Degrading Environment; Social Life Around a Thermal Power Plant* provides a nuanced understanding of socio - environmental consequence of industrial expansion and pollution in and around Kolaghat Thermal Power Plant (KTPP) in west Bengal from a ethnographic lens and first-hand narratives. The book explores the interplay between environmental degradation, economic precarity, and social dislocation, offering a nuanced account of how industrialization disproportionately affects marginalized communities near thermal power plant. This study is particularly relevant to scholars engaged in environmental sociology, political ecology, and development studies. Implying the Life

Cycle Analysis (LCA) approach he advocates for sustainable development without compromising with growth in terms of GNP. He argues that a nation can achieve their desired growth or GNP circumventing current environmental constraints in a sustainable way. While Industries promise Economic growth, the author shows how the social and ecological costs are often borne by the most vulnerable making this book a vital read for anyone interested in Environmental Justice, Rural Sociology, Sustainable Development especially for undergraduate, postgraduate and Research scholars.

At its core, the book examines how input related problems such as using land for industrial purposes and consumption of water and coal for electricity production and output related problems such as emission, air pollution, coal ash, effluents and solid waste disposal by KTPP reshape everyday life for those residing near a thermal power plant which was revealed through an in-depth survey of 200 village people close to KTPP. Families struggle with failing crops, contaminated water, and deteriorating health, while economic insecurity deepens as traditional livelihoods become unsustainable. The author emphasizes that industrial development is rarely a shared prosperity instead, it often reinforces existing inequalities. The benefits of power generation rarely reach the communities affected by its by-products. Despite these challenges, the book also highlights acts of resistance and resilience, from migration and alternative livelihoods to self-help grassroots movements on micro levels demanding accountability.

One of the book's greatest strengths is its rich, ground-level storytelling. The author doesn't just present statistics; he brings readers into the homes and lives of people who must make impossible choices between health, livelihood, and survival. His

ethnographic approach ensures that the voices of affected communities are central to the narrative. With strong theoretical anchor deriving from Ecological Dialogue the author advocates not to ignore the twin objective A) affordable access to basic energy by all, and B) its sustainability. He suggests practical involving **choices** of making deliberate changes in **how we live (CHWL)** in order to rationalize best practices appropriate to our own as well as planetary lives on earth.

In this book the author is successful in portraying environmental degradation and its consequence through the physical, social, economic and living aspects. *Living with Degrading Environment* is a powerful and necessary book. It reminds us that industrial progress, often celebrated in economic terms, comes with real and often devastating consequences for those left to live with its aftermath. Biswas's work is a crucial contribution to environmental sociology, bringing to light the human dimensions of pollution, displacement, and survival. The storytelling makes it a compelling read for scholars, policymakers, Researcher, industry stakeholders & anyone interested in the intersection of Development and environmental justice.

Anusmita Biswas is currently pursuing MA in Sociology from Jawaharlal Nehru University, CSSS. She is also working on GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite Systems) application in social contexts and exploring the interface between deep-tech innovations and societal transformation in India with a special focus on AI Driven Precision Agriculture in India

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