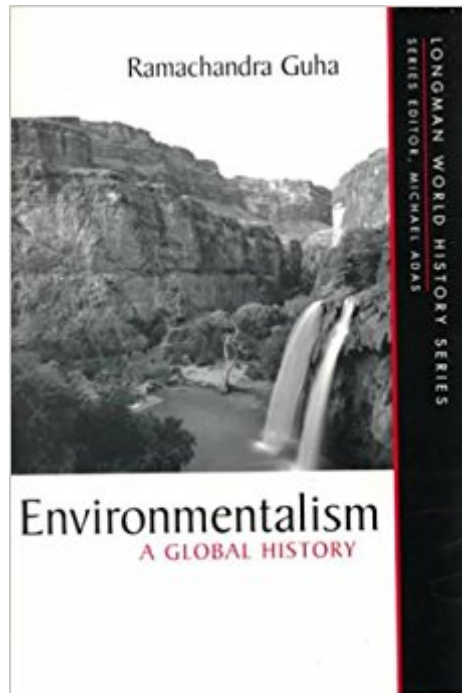




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# Environmentalism: A Global History



## Synopsis

A new entry in the Longman World History Series, *Environmentalism: A Global History* is perfect for professors who want to assign short topical paperbacks which explore global issues and movements in their world history classes. This volume will fit into the second half of World History courses which typically cover the period from 1500 to the present century. *Environmentalism: A Global History* is the first genuinely global history of environmentalism. Written by one of the foremost thinkers on ecological issues relating to South Africa, Guha has become one of the more provocative and perceptive commentators on environmentalism in its cross-cultural and global dimensions. Students will find this new text to be a lively and engaging study of ideas and debates that are central to our lives in the twentieth-first century.

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## Customer Reviews

**Author's Preface** The roots of this book go back to two gloriously happy years I spent working at Yale University in the mid 1980s. On the basis of my own work in India I had imagined environmentalism to be principally a question of social justice, of allowing the poor to have as much claim on the fruits of nature as the powerful. But living and teaching in the United States I was to come face-to-face with a rather different kind of environmentalism, which shifted attention away from humans towards the rights of plants, animals and wild habitats. I have ever since been fascinated by the diversity within the global environmental movement. This book explores the part played by different cultural and national traditions in the making and shaping of that diversity. I

returned to India from the USA in 1987, but have gone back several times since, to renew acquaintance with and deepen my understanding of American environmentalism. More recently, I spent the academic year 1994-95 in Germany, a country that is unquestionably the leader within Europe in matters environmental, and is home also to the German Greens, the protest movement which became a political party. Briefer trips to Latin America in 1994, to Russia in 1996, and to Southern Africa in 1997, allowed a glimpse of the problems and possibilities of environmentalism in those territories. These forays, short and long, have been paid for by hospitable universities and indulgent foundations who have helped me challenge one of the unacknowledged taboos of international scholarship. For the way that the world is structured, Brazilians may write about Brazil, Nigerians about Nigeria, Bangladeshis about Bangladesh. But broader works of contrast and comparison, books that are not restricted to one country but which take the world as their oyster, are written from the comfortable citadels of a great and prosperous university in Europe or the United States. This prejudice is not cultural or racial, but merely geographical. Global histories, be they of environmentalism, feminism, liberalism or fundamentalism, are generally the handiwork of people working and teaching in the northern half of the globe. It is as difficult for a scholar of British origin to write a global history living in Bogota as it is easy for an Indian while based in Indianapolis. My thanks then, first of all, to the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University. Two colleagues at Yale, Bill Burch and Joe Miller, and two students, Mike Bell and Joel Seton, encouraged me to move beyond what had been; until then, a near-obsessive concern with the history and politics of my own country. Next in chronological order comes the University of California at Santa Barbara, whose invitation in 1989 to deliver the Ninth Steven Manley Memorial Lecture forced me to think more seriously about the comparative aspects of the environmental question. The arguments of that lecture were given a firmer empirical basis in the year I spent at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, whose magnificently efficient library staff chased and procured dozens of obscure references and out-of-print books. Other institutions that have helped materially include the University of California at Berkeley; the Harry and Frank Guggenheim Foundation, New York; the Social Science Research Council, New York; and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi: my thanks to all of them. The themes and arguments of this book have been shaped by numerous conversations across the continents. I have learnt much from three scholars whose interests exemplify the cross-cultural character of the environmental movement: from Juan Martinez-Alier, a Spaniard most at home in Ecuador and Cuba; from Mike Bell, a Rhode Islander who happily mixes with Little Englanders; and from Wolfgang Sachs, a Bavarian radical with a keenly developed insight into the practice of the Gujarati Mahatma, Gandhi. There are other friends

in Europe and American with whom I have argued fiercely or gently but always (to me, at any rate) productively, and yet others who have passed on valuable tips and sources. I thank here William Beinart, David Brokensha, J. Peter Brosius, Louise Fortmann, Andrew Hurrell, Arne Kalland, Margit Mayer, Arne Naess, Paul Richards, David Rothenberg, Katherine Snyder, Carol Warren and Donald Worster. I owe a particular debt to K. Sivaramakrishnan ( of Yale, again), the source of a steady stream of books and articles impossible to get hold of in India. To come home now, to the students and scholars of the Indian environmental movement, the college of colleagues to whom I perhaps owe most of all. Discussions over many years with Anjan Ghosh, Madhav Gadgil and Shiv Visvanathan have helped me more clearly see India in the cold light of the world, and the world through the warm glow of India. I have also been challenged and inspired by the verve and zest of younger colleagues such as Amita Baviskar, Ashish Kothari, Mahesh Rangarajan and Nandini Sundar. Andre Beteille, a distinguished senior scholar, and Keshav Desiraju, an experienced environmental administrator, read and helpfully commented on an earlier draft. For valuable comments on the manuscript I am indebted to the following reviewers: Randall Dodgen (Sonoma State University); Robert Entenmann (St. Olaf College); Vera Reben (Shippensburg University); Cathy Skidmore-Hess (Georgia Southern University); Tracey Steele (Sam Houston State University). I would also to thank my editors, Pam Gordon at Addison Wesley Longman (New York) and Rukun Advani at Oxford University Press (New Delhi) for their critical support to the project. But it is, of course, the editor of this series who made the book possible, who gently nudged all that talking and listening towards the more reliable medium of print. Michael Adas invited me to write on global environmentalism, waited trustingly as I missed one deadline after another, and then, when the draft chapters finally began to arrive, sent them back with meticulously detailed comments. It is a pleasure to thank him for all this, and a delight to remember those happy days at Yale when Michael and I first met.

Environmentalism: A Global History is an addition to the popular Longman World History Series, edited by Michael Adas. Written by one of the foremost thinkers on ecological issues relating to South Africa, this new text offers a cross-cultural and global survey of environmental thinking and the movements it has spawned. In this brief text, Ramachandra Guha identifies commonalities and differences in environmental thinking and activism through case studies. The experiences of areas as diverse as the United States, the former Soviet Union, China, India, Africa, and Brazil provide an excellent overview of each country's strengths and contributions. Students will find Environmentalism: A Global History to be a lively and engaging study of ideas and debates on a

topic that is central to our lives in the twenty-first century.

School

Very interesting!

As advertised

Ramachandra Guha's *Environmentalism: A Global History* provides an overview of the history of environmentalism from the dawn of the Industrial Revolution to movements in the modern era. What makes this book so unique is that Guha focuses not only on Western environmental movements, but also discusses various strands of environmentalism across the globe. Influential figures such as John Muir, Mahatma Gandhi, Chico Mendes, Aldo Leopold, Radhakamal Mukerjee and Rachel Carlson are all discussed in the book. Guha divides the text into two parts. Part one focuses on environmentalism's first wave, which "proceeded step-by-step with the Industrial Revolution." The second wave of environmentalism is the modern movement, which often traces its roots back to Rachel Carlson's 1962 publication of *Silent Spring*. In part one, Guha focuses on three early strands of environmentalism: the back-to-the land-movement, the ideology of scientific conservation and the promotion of the wilderness idea. The back-to-the-land movement was in a sense a response to urbanization and industrialization. Guha finds back-to-the-land thinking present in the poems of William Wordsworth, whose work was "a defense of the organic union with nature of the peasant and shepherd" as well as the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, who was highly critical of the urban lifestyle. Guha traces the ideology of scientific conservation and the development of scientific forestry, which has its roots in medieval Europe. The concept of the wilderness idea became most popular in the United States and was epitomized by the nature writing of John Muir and the creation of Yellowstone, the world's first national park. Guha begins part two discussing the significance of *Silent Spring*, the environmental debate it triggered and the rise of the modern environmental movement. He follows this with a section on how the Global South helped shape the modern environmental movement and a discussion on socialism, democracy and environmentalism. Guha concludes the text discussing the different strands of environmentalism and the "common future" of the environmental movement.

Environmentalism: A Global History attempts to provide an overview of the two waves of environmentalism while documenting the flow of ideas across cultures. Guha does an excellent job of showing that environmentalism is not strictly a Western movement, demonstrating the significance that people across the world have had on the environmental movement. Guha also examines the United States, Brazil, India, Germany, China, Australia and many other nations and their connections with the two waves of environmentalism. There are definitely aspects of the environmental movement Guha left out in the text. The author omits some of the most significant environmental disasters in the United States that triggered strong public outcry, such as the Cuyahoga River catching on fire in Cleveland, Ohio in 1969 or the Exxon-Valdez oil spill in Prince William Sound, Alaska in 1989. In addition, little is mentioned of Wendell Berry's writings and their relevance to the back-to-the-land ideology. Furthermore, there is very little written on Spanish-speaking Latin America in the text. For example, there is no discussion of the Via Campesina organization, which has a strong Latin American base, although the significance of the organization has grown steadily since the publication of Environmentalism: A Global History. Despite these omissions, Guha does a commendable job presenting a concise history of environmentalism in only 145 pages.

Guha's book is a short, but very well written book about the history of the Environmentalism movement. The Industrial Revolution, which began in England, soon brought writers and intellectuals to speak out against what they saw as the destruction of the world around them and the abuse of the natural resources of the land. Guha writes about the beginnings of American environmentalism and the need for national parks and even argues that American parks were built more for nationalistic reasons than for really wanting to preserve the lands in the United States. The book also takes on the growing problems of "South" nations who want to grow economically and technologically while "North" nations (typically very industrialized nations) fear this since it will mean more pollution and more problems in the world. The book is a good primer on the history of Environmentalism and the difficulty that nations face as the populations continue to increase while the earth's resources continue to be depleted.

This book covers first wave and second wave of environmentalism. First wave is the initial response to the industrialisation. It is expressed first by poets and writers such as Wordsworth, Ruskin, Morris and Carpenter. They gave message of simple life. Saint Gandhi gave the best known aphorism 'the world has enough for everybody's need but not enough for everybody's

greed'. It is expressed secondly by ideology of scientific conservation. Here George Perkins, Marsh and Dietrich Brandis were forefront for scientific movement. Thirdly there is wilderness idea. It is the conservation of wild species and wild animals. John Muir is of the opinion that 'nature had a right to be cared for regardless of anybody's bank balance and any countries gross national product. Aldo Leopold was in favour of maintaining diverse flora and fauna. There are three other environmentalists as Patrick Geddes who gave a phrase 'carboniferous capitalism' for the dependence of industrial city on fossil fuels and tremendous pollution. Lewis Mumford, American historian wished that society would restore three disturbed equilibrium: equilibrium between city and village; the equilibrium in population by balancing birth and death rates; the equilibrium between humans and nature. Radhakrishnan Mukherjee social scientist insisted that any social group must be considered in relation to the interwoven chain of biotic communities. Second wave of environmentalism was started from 1962. After world war II America was known as 'affluent society' the period was known as 'development decade' but here ecological constraint to economical growth was regarded irrelevant so the period was known as 'ecological innocence'. After this phase, there is actual mass movement took place. It was stimulated by the book 'Silent Spring' by Rachel Carson. It explained that there are intimate and essential relations between plants and plants; between plants and other plants; between plants and animals, that nature was in sum, an intricate web of life whose interwoven strands lead from microbes to man. In America there is wilderness movement known as 'Deep Ecology', then there is German green movement, Narmada Bachao Andolan and Chipko 'hug a tree' movement in India. In Thailand, there is ordination ceremony to protest forests. In Nigeria, movement for survival of Ogoni people and territories. In Kenya, Green Belt movement. In Brazil, AGAPAN environmental initiative and Chico Mendes labour organiser promoted ecology and justice. Lastly it gives about international organisation such as World Wildlife Fund [WWF] in Assisi and UNCED held at Stockholm in 1972 and at Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

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