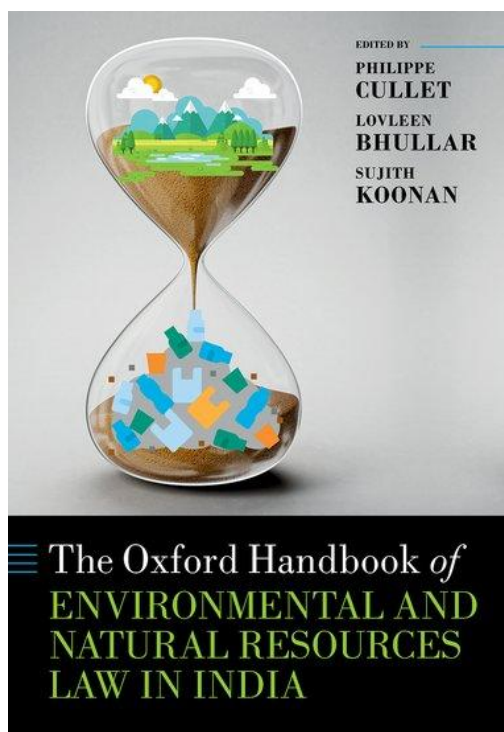


BOOK REVIEW

Natural Resources Management Law: A Referencer

M. K. Ramesh *

Philippe Cullet, Lovleen Bhullar, and Sujith Koonan (eds.). 2024. *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental and Natural Resources Law in India*. Oxford University Press. 880. ISBN: 9780198884682.



The Oxford Handbook of Environmental and Natural Resources Law in India (2024), edited by Philippe Cullet, Lovleen Bhullar, and Sujith Koonan, is a welcome addition to the growing literature on the subject. While several publications have addressed various aspects of environmental and natural resource laws, this work is perhaps the most significant effort in this regard. *Environmental Policy and Law in India* by Armin Rosencranz and Shyam Divan—published over three decades ago—is the gold standard on the subject, serving the needs of

* Formerly, Professor of Law, National Law School of India University, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560072; 799, 'Surabhi', IV Block, Sir M. V. Layout, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560110; mkramesh@nls.ac.in

Copyright © Ramesh 2025. Released under Creative Commons Attribution © NonCommercial 4.0 International licence (CC BY-NC 4.0) by the author.

Published by Indian Society for Ecological Economics (INSEE), c/o Institute of Economic Growth, University Enclave, North Campus, Delhi 110007.

ISSN: 2581–6152 (print); 2581–6101 (web).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37773/eecs.v8i8.1722>

academics, law professionals, policymakers, and activists; no other definitive work on the subject has been published by any other scholar in India. This volume, to a large extent, fills that void. Notably, over 60 research scholars from across various disciplines, not confined to the field of law, have contributed to the 42 chapters of this volume. Furthermore, the handbook provides an analysis of the legal frameworks governing environmental and natural resource management in India. The compilation, therefore, is a significant resource for academics, practitioners, and policymakers interested in India's environmental and natural resources law.

The volume is organized thematically and covers a wide range of topics, including constitutional and regulatory frameworks as well as specific sectors such as water, forests, wildlife, pollution, and biodiversity. The contributors offer not only descriptive insights into the laws but also critical reflections on their effectiveness and the interplay between them and social justice. They also delve into the ongoing challenges faced by communities, the environment, and development processes. Each chapter reflects upon an area and presents its arguments, tracing the historical, political, ecological, and economic roots of each issue, environmental and social justice concerns, and legal and institutional arrangements and their challenges. It also addresses emerging global problems, as well as matters related to sustainability and development. By ensuring that the contributions integrate environmental and natural resources law, the editors have created a seamless and unified discourse. This novel approach has hardly been attempted in other works, let alone in legal pedagogy.

Pooling together all the contributions into a single well-knit volume is indeed a herculean task. The editors deserve praise for ensuring a relatively high level of uniformity in the approach to and treatment of the areas covered by the authors. Nonetheless, the following critical comments and observations have been provided so that the editors and authors can address them in the next edition of their work.

The major limitation of the volume is that it is neither comprehensive nor cohesive in its coverage of the various issues, despite its claims. For instance, certain major areas of enquiry have either been left out or are glossed over, such as the environmental impact assessment process, regulations governing wetlands, water pollution control, coastal zones, and cases concerning mineral royalties. Furthermore, there appears to be more breadth than depth in various areas of enquiry. While this makes the book accessible to a wide audience, experts may find that some sections lack detailed legal analysis or practical solutions to complex challenges. For example, the chapter "Forests and Wildlife" could have included an analysis of the content, feel, and texture of the legal framework governing the sector

as well as how institutional arrangements are shackled by traditional revenue, land administration, and agricultural processes. Similarly, the “Biodiversity” chapter would benefit from exploring the need to deepen the democratic spirit and prescriptions to do so, while the “Water Resource Management” chapter could include the draft legislative efforts of several expert bodies.

The book frequently highlights the gaps in India’s environmental and natural resource laws. However, the chapters are limited to describing these issues rather than offering concrete policy recommendations. Considering the book’s academic nature, this is not entirely unexpected. However, readers seeking actionable solutions may feel that the book’s critical reflections could be more prescriptive in terms of reforms.

While the book showcases the struggles faced by Adivasis and other local communities, as well as the importance of protecting their rights, the chapters fall short of exploring how local knowledge and customary law can be more effectively integrated into legal frameworks. Such perspectives on Adivasi traditions and homespun wisdom are essential, especially in the context of resource management and conservation.

Notwithstanding these minor issues, the book is a salutary contribution to jurisprudence on the subject. It is a valuable resource for anyone looking to understand the legal context surrounding India’s environmental challenges. It is more appropriate to consider this work as a reference book on the subject. The volume has the potential to become an excellent resource base for further study, providing a comprehensive analysis of the legal, social, and political dynamics that shape India’s approach to environmental protection and resource management.

Data Availability Statement: The data used in this paper is not provided in a repository. This is a book review, which does not have any original primary data included in the work

Conflict of Interest Statement: No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.