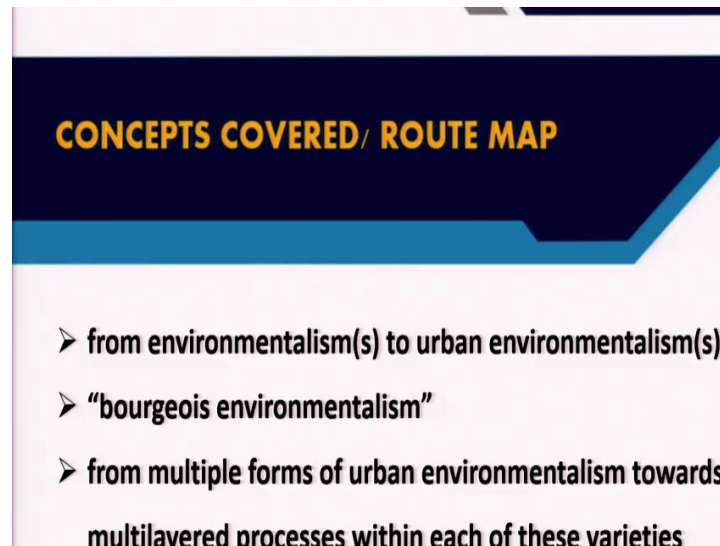


**Urbanization and Environment**  
**Prof. Jenia Mukherjee**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur**

**Module - 04**  
**Urban environmental social sciences frameworks**  
**Lecture - 34**  
**Urban Environmentalisms**

So, hello, everyone. With this, now, I would be entering into the topic or the domain of Urban Environmentalism or rather environmentalisms, I will explain why environmentalisms.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:27)



And, I will be covering the journey from environmentalism to urban environmentalisms and what this environmentalism is actually all about. So, you know when I was going through literature on environmentalism in general, but more specifically urban environmentalism, then I could not really you know, kind of trace or identify or find a single definition or a single set of definition you know so far as urban environmentalism is concerned.

So, for example, you know in, I mean in some literature it is mentioned or it is specified as like, environmental understanding or the different activities in terms of environmental protection within urban settings and, but I came across one particular article a very, I

mean not a very recent one, but quite recent one because it was published in 2013 in Urban Studies journal.

And, here Mark Whitehead, he talks about you know neoliberal urban environmentalism and the adaptive city. So, he basically discusses the role of the city or the relationship of the of city with climate change or the larger discourse and debate of the contemporary climate change, but you know he also, he I think talks about like urban politics and he talks about urban policies and tries to kind of shed light on the overlap between urban politics and urban policies, which he then says to a great extent shape you know this environmentalism.

But, whether this environmentalism is specifically activism or not, I think till date I have not come across any literature you know, kind of attesting to this particular notion, but this is not the case. So, far as you know environmentalism is concerned, environmentalism or environmental activism, environmental movement that gave birth to different social sciences approaches of frameworks like environmental history, environmental sociology, which I think we are already discussed in our previous lectures.

So, I would be you know discussing about environmentalism and from environmentalism to urban environmentalism and what do I mean by this and how you know this understanding can, to an extent enable us to conceptualize you know the different types or different varieties of environmentalism that you know to a great extent make or shape urban environment.

So, from there I will be taking up this particular paradigm which is the bourgeois environmentalism paradigm and this is the most dominant, this is the predominant you know approach or paradigm that I mean, so far as urban environmental social sciences in India is actually concerned.

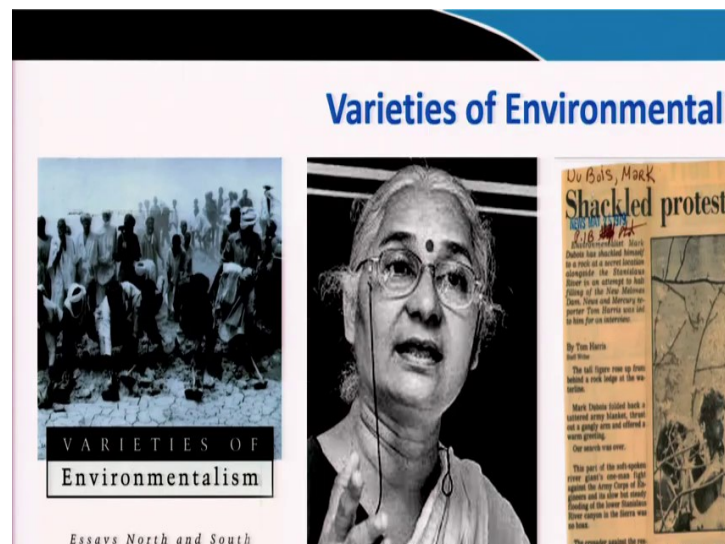
So, and we will discuss like why and how and why is this the or why has it remain the most predominant paradigm and then I will also be in the last part of this presentation I will also be discussing the limits you know, the limits of this particular discourse of bourgeois environmentalism.

And, also try to explain why it is important for us to kind of you know , move beyond this singular you know paradigm of bourgeois environmentalism and so that we are able to kind of trace not only multiple forms of urban environmentalism, but also multilayered processes, you know realities, equations that are there that exist within each of these varieties, within each variety of urban environmentalism or urban environmental activism.

Now, just before I begin you know this, I mean before I move into the core of this particular topic. I think it is important for me to just clarify that to me environmentalism or urban environmentalism is actually environmental activism. So, when I use urban environmentalism you have to keep in mind that I am basically talking about urban environmental activism or environmental movement.

In that sense which actually comprise like several actors, stakeholders, processes and this enable us to trace the different kinds of negotiations, bargains, mediations, conflicts, and collaborations, in terms of access to resource, in terms of you know several other components. So far as urban environment is concerned like you know the several restoration projects, beautification initiatives, housing schemes and programs, etcetera.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:27)



So, again I would start with my favorite example or this, you know the vivid example which Guha and Juan Martinez – Alier talked about in their seminal volume, the path breaking book on environmental history, varieties of environmentalism essays north and

south and you know, I just, I read this book in 2007 and from then on, I you know I kept on going back and referring back to this book time and again, time and again.

And, this book like it has really crafted a very strong and powerful influence, I think on many of us. And, so, sometimes we had kind of countered you know some of the arguments that are there in the book. But I mean time and again, at least from 2007 till date. So, it is now like more than two decades, yes not two decades , yeah it is like almost one and one and half decade now.

So, we kept on going back to this book to kind of sometimes complicate his theories or sometimes kind of I mean further validate what Guha and grove discuss like 10 years before, I actually access this book that is in 1997. So, the book was published in 1997 and then I accessed it in 2007 and so, now it is 2021 already, but you know the significance of this book and the kind of illustrations that Guha and Juan Martinez – Alier provided. It is it till date, it is so very significant and relevant.

So, I definitely I would now like to talk about again the major example that they use to kind of flesh out you know these two varieties that they discussed in this book. So, varieties of environmentalism where they try to talk about you know the distinction between the particular variety of environmentalism so far as global north is concerned, which they try to explain in terms of ecology of affluence versus the kind of active activism or environmental environmentalism or environmental activism in shaping Global South which they explain in terms of environmentalism of the poor.

And, they talked about you know Medha Patkar and Mark Dubois. So, Medha Patkar who is one of the protagonists so far as the Narmada Bachao Andolan is concerned. So, of course, she and her team they started protesting against the, against the implementation of the Sardar Sarovar project so through which a major dam was supposed to get created to, I mean to be constructed on the river Narmada.

So, Medha Patkar you know she protested. So, she started protesting against this major drive this major initiative of the central government and on the other hand almost during the same time Mark Dubois was protesting against interventions on the Stanislaus river in California. So, both of them were interviewed by different media channels, newspapers, dailies, etcetera.

So, when Medha Patkar was, when Mark Dubois was actually interviewed, then the when a, when the you know when he was asked that why did he take such a risky step. So, what he did was that he changed himself to a boulder almost in the middle of the Stanislaus River where the current was quite high and in that way he exerted pressure on the government and then the government was compelled you know to kind of abandon, take off the project.

So, and when he was, I mean in the interview when he was asked that you know why did he take such a risky step. So, he said that the Stanislaus River he considered to be the last patch or the last I mean, it was the last symbol or icon of American virginity. So, and that is why you know he did not mind to you know kind of, even put his life in risk. So, that was his response to this question.

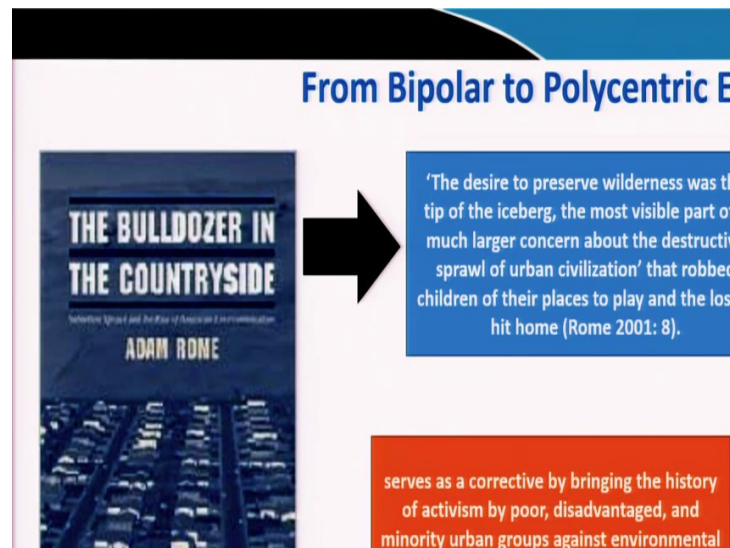
On the other hand, with the similar question was asked to Medha Patkar by the media journalist who I mean who interviewed her. So, and Medha Patkar say I mean in the response which Medha Patkar gave, not even a single time in her address she actually talked about the Narmada River, because she was mainly bothered and concerned about the people, lacks of people who would or who were on the brink of losing their livelihoods, their occupation, their survival everything you know during the pre-implementation, implementation and post implementation phases of the Sardar Sarovar project.

So, she was worried about those villages and the villagers and through this example then Ramachandra Guha and Juan Martinez – Alier, they show the distinction between ecology of affluence, the fundamental paradigm within the variety of environmentalism in the Global North versus environmentalism of the poor which actually talks about or which is mainly bothered about livelihood provisions of the people because these people, these communities they are ecologically dependent communities.

So, like ecological degradation or environmental challenges actually imply loss of livelihoods for them. So, here basic survivor provisions and environmental protection , these two are absolutely interrelated, they are enmeshed. But, on the other hand in Global North it still epitomizes you know the to an extent you know the elite dreams and desires of environmental protection where the elite dreamt of you know kind of fading through the clean blue water of canals and breathing you know like non polluted air, etcetera.

So, in this way they talked about these two varieties and that is why the name of this book is Varieties of Environmentalism where they basically talk about these two varieties of environmentalism or environmental activism you know, or you know environmental idea or ideology of the Global North and the Global South.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:38)



Now, when we focus on the urban setting immediately the discussion gets complicated because we immediately, we have, we are compelled actually to transform or to move to make a move, make a shift, from bipolar or this two single variety of or two varieties of environmentalism to its polycentric edges.

So, I will explain why. So, for example, there is now a rich scholarship, there is rich scholarship or there are like works which show that even within the single variety of ecology of affluence you know or rather the single variety of environmentalism of the global north there are different varieties. So, the edge of the distinction actually now you know had got kind of blunt.

So, no more should we actually be making these binaries between an environmentalism of the north and environmentalism of the south; because even within the north you will see multiple varieties within the umbrella domain of or umbrella ideology of environmentalism.

So, for example, this is a particular book by Adam Rome the Bulldozer in the Countryside, where he has actually talked about you know grassroots environmentalism in parts of America mainly the suburban area and also in the ghettos of different cities of the US. And, Adam Rome actually he to an extent he actually countered the argument of David Harvey, because David Harvey pointed out that American environmental movement was actually supported by the affluent suburban suburbanites.

So, Adam Rome says yes, that is true, but at the same time there are multiple layers in this and it not only it I mean this function of affluence, is it is not only the single thing or the single variable that actually determine you know American environmental or more specifically, American urban environmental movement. And, that is why Adam Rome writes you see the quotes here which is from this particular book he says that the desire to preserve wilderness was the tip of the iceberg.

The most visible part of a much larger concern about the destructive sprawl of urban civilization that robbed children of the places to play and the losses hit home. Similarly, Robert Gioielli in his book where he had you know kind of studied environmentalism or environmental activism in the three cities three American cities Baltimore, Saint Louis and Chicago and Robert Gioielli, says that you know classifying this particular activism as environmental justice activism and not linking it to the overarching framework of environmentalism is actually extremely problematic.

So, this book actually serves as a corrective by bringing the history of activism, by poor, disadvantaged and minority urban groups against environmental inequalities under the broad conceptualize the conceptual umbrella of environmentalism. And, so, we see here you know this environmentalism of the poor or you know, the of the disadvantaged groups.

So, this literature shedding light on or exploring grassroots environmentalism which is certainly related to environmental justice movement, but also kind of associated and linked to the larger ambit of environmentalism, is something on which the scholars are focusing or you know they are, these kind of discussions they are bringing to the limelight during the contemporary times.

So, that is why you know I would say that this scholarship on urban environmentalism or urban environmental activism, it has actually moved from the bipolar to polycentric edges.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:03)

**Urban Environmentalism in India**

- **"bourgeois environmentalism"** (Baviskar 2002, 2003, 2006, 2011)
- **alliance between the state, real-estate promoters, and politicians in characterizing the 'green' as the dream of the city**
- **directly threatens the survival interests of the urban subaltern**

Baviskar (2003) traces elements of both "ecology of affluence" and "environmental justice" in the process of expediting 'a complex interrelationship between two forms of environmentalism: the rich leading to greater social and economic marginalization of the poor and the poor leading to the distribution of resources and safe working conditions' (8)

So, coming to the Indian context now, which you know and I will be talking about two case studies in the next two lectures and so, if we see the situational scenario so far as the Indian context is concerned, as I mentioned at the beginning that bourgeois environmentalism seems to be the predominant or the most dominant paradigm or the framework which Baviskar actually formulated and deployed and you know so far as, so far as her studies on Delhi you know are concerned.

And, then people researching on urban environmentalism, they also found this approach or the framework to be extremely significant and they deployed it and they also I mean came up with their own empirical findings so far as other cities are concerned. So, what is this bourgeois environmentalism all about? So, this bourgeois environmentalism, through this particular concept Baviskar actually highlights the alliance between the state real estate promoters and politicians.

So, and you can see this that all these group, they are the powerful groups they are the powerful minority actually. So, these powerful groups when they come together they align with each other – the state, real estate promoters and politicians, and they



channelize the bourgeois dream of the city and the middle class of course, there is a very important role in this.

Because the urban environmental projects or urban development projects, unfortunately which are actually I mean kind of garbed within the I mean, how do I say in the veil of environment, but their actually development projects in the name of restoration, in the name of beautification schemes and housing projects, etcetera.

So, and in these projects the middle class aspirations, dreams and desires get manifested and unfortunately the dreams, desires, aspirations, interest of the middle class who are you know, who are absolutely they are, they do not like ugliness in cities. So, and that is why they want to beautify the city.

So, these middle class people, their aspirations and their desires is to get away from the ugliness of the city and to kind of beautify the city so that they can leave and they can inhabit a beautiful city, unfortunately it absolutely clashes and it is inversely proportional to the needs and interest of the urban poor or the urban subaltern.

And, that is why unfortunately you know in order to retain or in order to make way to this middle class dreams and desires, evictions, displacements, quarter clearances you know have been the norm in these in several metropolitan cities of India in the last three four decades , of that matter if not more.

So, of course, you know this notion of bourgeois environmentalism, it is about the protection to and maintenance of this middle class aesthetics at the cost of the survival interest of the urban subaltern. And Baviskar has traced elements of both ecology of affluence and environmentalism of the poor, expediting a complex interrelationship between two forms of environmentalism with the green agenda of the rich leading to greater social and economic marginalization of the poor and their concerns over fair distribution of resources and safe working conditions.

So, what we find in Indian cities is that as Amita Baviskar shows and traces is that you know these two forms of environmentalism. So, again Guha and Grove talked about ecology of affluence versus environmentalism of the poor so far as the global north and global south were concerned or are concerned respectively.

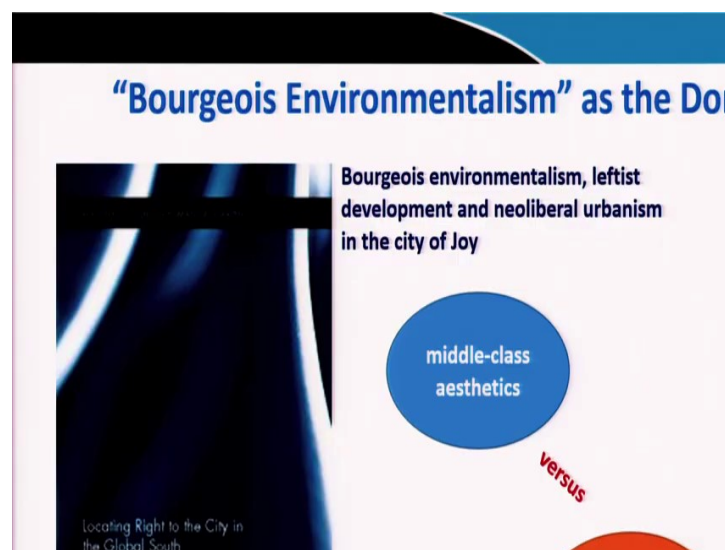
But, here we see you know that both these varieties seem to kind of you know, an occupy the urban environmental scene of our contemporary times when the rich people was interest aligning with the state real estate promoters, politicians are actually channelizing the bourgeois dream of the city, on other hand the poor they are protesting against their basic you know livelihood provisions, safe drinking waters or access to urban utilities, employment opportunities, working conditions, etcetera.

And, I am again quoting from Baviskar 2002 article, and I find this you know this quote to be very powerful. So, where Baviskar says that “commerce and leisure are fused together in the new shopping malls, amusement parks, cineplexes and other developments sprouting across the city, frequently on land vacated through some demolitions.”

So, yes you can see that, how you know this beautification programs and this mall development and construction of cineplexes, etcetera they actually. So, this had occurred or this is still occurring at the cost of demolition of shanties. So, that this ordered landscape is underwritten by an ugly real estate mafia with links to politicians and city authorities is another inconvenient fact that is conveniently forgotten, right.

So, this is what or this is how a Baviskar actually explains or she explained bourgeois environmentalism.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:02)



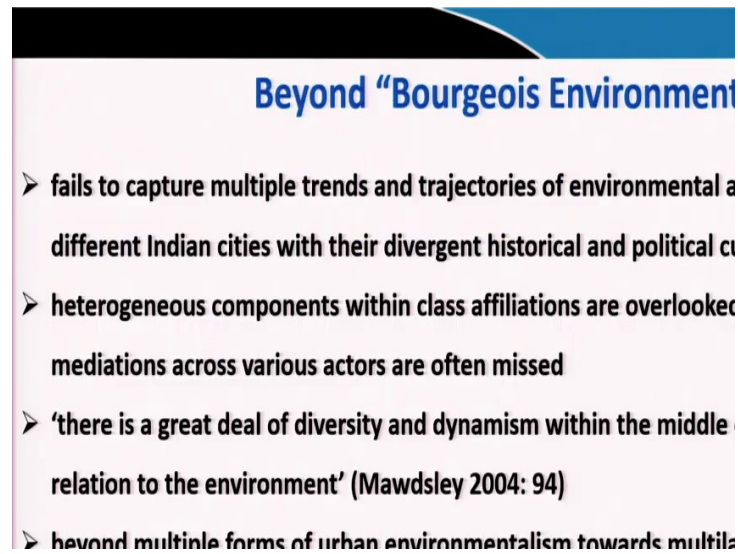
So, as I mentioned that you know this conceptualization or theorization it remains so powerful that other scholars working on urban environment for example, this urban geographer Pablo Bose also applied you know bourgeois environmentalism using other cities. For example, Pablo Bose use Kolkata as the empirical point or frame of reference.

And similarly you know Pablo Bose so, this is a book called, *Locating Cight to the city in the Global South*. So, in this particular book Pablo Bose there is a chapter by Pablo Bose and the name of the chapter is this one *Bourgeois environmentalism, leftist development and neoliberal urbanism in the city of joy*. So, this is one article which is part of this particular book which came out in 2013 and then Pablo Bose wrote his full monograph which is called, *Urban Development in India, Global Indians in the Remaking of Kolkata*.

So, the title itself is quite, I mean the title itself says what he tries to convey that the message that he tries to convey in this particular book and this book came out in 2015, 2 years after the publication of this article. And, like using bourgeois environmentalism as the lens of analysis, Pablo Bose also talks about how middle class aesthetics actually you know it works against or work against servable strategies of the poor.

So, he basically focused on the upscale housing projects and also Asian development bank funded KEIP project which is Kolkata Environment Improvement Project and showed that you know how Kolkata during the communist times also that is in the first half or from the last part of the 20th century to the first decade of the 21st century how Kolkata also or Kolkata's urban so called environmental, but actually development project kind of were implemented to channelize or to make way to middle class desires and dreams.

(Refer Slide Time: 25:22)



So, yes so, coming to the final part of this presentation I would like to say that I find this conceptualization or formulation or theoretical traction rather of bourgeois environmentalism to be extremely significant, but at the same time to an extent problematic because to my understanding it actually fails to capture multiple trends and trajectories of environmental activism in different Indian cities with a divergent historical and political cultures.

This is something you know which we historians would actually bring to the table. This is what we can contribute to you know to the urban literature as a whole or to the larger understanding of you know of different discourses and notions like urban sustainability, urban resilience, etcetera.

And, this is what I am continuously emphasizing throughout this course that is every city has its own narrative. So, if you cannot really you cannot really provide same size fits all kind of straight jacketed solution, so far as any city or every cities are concerned. So, you have to definitely do a very detailed discussion or rather you know detail propping and robust analysis of historical, political, you know cultural snippets that you know kind of comprise, urban environmental trajectories of specific cities, right.

So, like different if we probe into what is going on or how things are today the way they are and how these things actually carry the imprints and legacies of their past. So, this is something which should definitely occupy a major chunk of the discussion. We cannot

afford to miss you know this particular historical and cultural sensitivity to these discussions on urban sustainability for that matter.

And, I would like to argue, which I had also argued in my book *Blue Infrastructures of Kolkata* that there are heterogeneous components within class affiliations and unfortunately in this conceptualization of bourgeois environmentalism this heterogeneous these heterogeneous components within class affiliations are overlooked. And, that is why complex mediations across various actors are often missed.

So, I think I am quite inspired by Mawdsleys work, where Mawdsley says that there is a great deal of diversity. So, the middle class itself is also you know it is not a sacrosanct class or category, but they are also diverse, it is a plural class in that sense. So, there is a great deal of diversity and dynamism within the middle classes in relation to the environment.

So, it is important for us to move beyond multiple forms of urban environmentalism towards multi layered processes, equations, realities within each of these varieties. And, I think you know in the last, in the last two – three lectures where I talked about, I talked in detail you know about urban political ecology, so, I discuss how presently you know the urban political ecology they are really taking this up.

So, they are trying to understand city not as a site, but as a process and even like within I think environmental activism so far as cityscapes are concerned, it is important for us to not only pay attention to you know a particular kind of environmental activism because there are different shades, numerous shades you know within this urban environmentalism or urban environmental activism and there are so many classes different actors, networks you know who contribute to this complexities to this urban environmental complexity.

And, even within each class you know this class it is impossible to kind of classify or categorize a class as a homogeneous class. And, we will when we will discuss two case studies so, I will be shedding light in detail on two case studies. So, two case studies relating to urban environmental activism in Kolkata; so, I think I will be able to validate and clarify all these points that are there in this particular slide.

And, then I will be able to establish that why it is important for us to rather if not absolutely countered, but at least complicate you know the notion of bourgeois environmentalism so far as environmental activists or environmental , urban environmental activism across different cities of India you know are concerned.

(Refer Slide Time: 30:36)



## REFERENCES

- Baviskar, A. (2002). The politics of the city. *Seminar*, 516. Retrieved May 23, 2019, [www.india-seminar.com/2002/516/516%20amita%20baviskar.htm](http://www.india-seminar.com/2002/516/516%20amita%20baviskar.htm). Accessed on 1
- Baviskar, A. (2003). Between violence and desire: Space, power and identity in the metropolitan Delhi. *International Social Science Journal*, 5(175), 89–98.
- Baviskar, A. (2006). Demolishing Delhi: World-class city in the making. *Mute*, 2(3),

So, these are some of the references. Of course, you have to go through Baviskar's works.

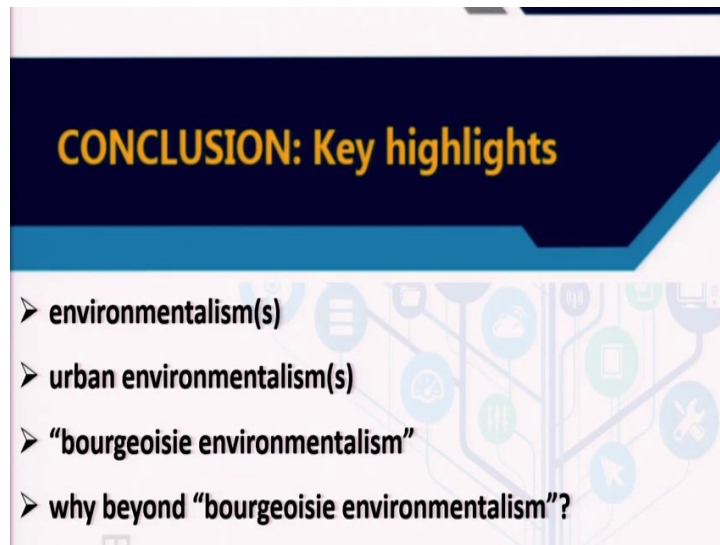
(Refer Slide Time: 30:41)



## REFERENCES

- Bose, P. (2013). Bourgeois environmentalism, leftist development and neoliberalism in the city of Joy. In T. S. Samara, H. Shenjing, & C. Guo (Eds.), *Locating Right to the City in the Global South*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Bose, P. (2015). *Urban Development in India: Global Indians in the Remaking of Kolkata*. London: Routledge.
- Gioielli, R. R. (2014). *Environmental Activism and the Urban Crisis: Baltimore, St. Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Mawdsley, E. (2004). India's middle classes and the environment. *Development and Change*, 35(1), 79–103.
- Mukherjee, J. 2020. *Blue Infrastructures of Kolkata: Natural History, Political Ecology and Development in Kolkata*. Singapore: Springer Nature.

(Refer Slide Time: 30:43)



And, yes, so, here I discussed or talked about environmentalism and also said that I and that you know there is no single set of definition so far as environmentalism is concerned and I also clarified that by environmentalism here I actually try to mean activism.

So, here environmentalism or urban environmentalism imply environmental movement and environmental activism, shaping urban nature. And, then I talked about bourgeois environmentalism – what it is the significance you know of this particular framework and how this particular framework has been also deployed by other scholars.

So, I mainly focused here on the work by Pablo Shiladitya Bose on Kolkata and then I finally, you know I finally, discussed why it is important for us to move beyond go beyond bourgeois environmentalism and I finally, pointed out and I finally, you know mentioned that in the next two lectures through two case studies, two case studies of urban environmentalisms in Kolkata. I would be able to validate further that why it is important to go beyond the Baviskarian notion or this conceptualization of bourgeois environmentalism.

Thank you.