BSOE 143: ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY

Tutor Marked Assignment

Course Code: BSOE 143
Assignment Code: BSOE-143/ASST/TMA/2026-27
Total Marks: 100

There are three Sections in the Assignment. You have to answer all the questions.

Section I

Answer the following Descriptive Category questions in about 500 words each.

1. Explain the context for the emergence of treadmill theory. 20

2. Discuss the contribution sociologist in the understanding of 'risk society'. 20

Section II

Answer the following Middle Category questions in about 250 words each.

3. Examine the nature of *Narmada Bachao Andolan* movement in India. 10

4. Critically evaluate the relationship between modernity and nature. 10

5. Trace the development of social ecology perspective in the Indian context. 10

Section III

Answer the following Short Category questions in about 100 words each.

6. Green politics 06

7. Baba Amte 06

8. Climate change 06

9. Anthropocene 06

10. Climate refugees 06

1. Explain the context for the emergence of treadmill theory. (20)

Answer

The treadmill of production theory emerged when sociologists began to question the belief that continuous economic growth automatically produces social progress. In the decades after the Second World War, industrial countries experienced rapid expansion of factories, transport, chemical industries and energy consumption. Living standards improved for many people, but the same development also increased air pollution, resource depletion, hazardous waste and ecological damage. Environmental sociology developed partly because conventional sociology concentrated on social institutions while treating the natural environment as an almost unlimited background. Treadmill theory offered a structural explanation of why advanced societies continued to damage nature even after environmental problems had become widely recognised.

Historical and intellectual background

The environmental debate became prominent during the 1960s and 1970s. Rachel Carson's discussion of pesticides, public concern over industrial pollution, the 1970 Earth Day mobilisation and debates about the limits to growth challenged the idea that technology and markets could endlessly overcome ecological limits. The 1973 oil crisis also demonstrated the dependence of industrial economies on energy resources. These events made sociologists ask why environmental damage was not merely an unfortunate accident but a regular feature of economic organisation. Allan Schnaiberg systematically developed the treadmill of production argument in his 1980 book, The Environment: From Surplus to Scarcity.

The theory draws on political economy, especially the significance of capital accumulation, the organisation of production and unequal control over resources. It rejects the assumption that environmental degradation results simply from individual carelessness or excessive population. Individual behaviour matters, but the larger pressure comes from institutions that must continuously increase output to remain economically competitive. The term 'treadmill' is meaningful: an economy has to keep running faster to maintain employment, profits, public revenue and political support, even though this movement may not produce equivalent improvements in human well-being.