

Adjudicating Resource Use and Conservation in India: The National Green Tribunal

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How do we recognize and indeed reconcile the conflicting interests of multiple publics in resource use and conservation? Who speaks for and decides the interests of humans and nonhumans in the natural environment?

The American philosopher John Dewey declared that conflict was “a sine qua non of reflection and ingenuity,” not altogether undesirable.¹ Neither the notion that determining the public interest is a utilitarian matter of totaling individual choices nor the notion that it is an objective representation from the outside, without politics as it were, does justice to the processes by which the public interest in resource use and conservation is constituted in practice.

While much is known and written about India’s sometimes rigid political stance at international environmental summits, there is less awareness of the dynamism of its juridical interventions in the environmental public interest and the pursuit of them by activists and civil society organizations. In the course of this research project, I want to focus on the construction of public interest in environmental resources and conservation as it is litigated before and adjudicated by the National Green Tribunal in India that was set up four years ago.

¹ John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York: Henry Holt, 1922), 300.