



National Alliance for Climate and Ecological Justice

राष्ट्रीय जलवायु और पर्यावरणीय न्याय मंच



A pan-Indian initiative of the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) to address Climate Crisis, through an Ecological and Social Justice Approach, upholding human rights and co-existence of all species.

NAPM and NACEJ Salute the Distinguished Lifelong Contributions of People's Ecologist Prof. Madhav Gadgil

Resolve to Carry Forward his Legacy through Action for Ecological and Social Justice

16th Jan, 2026: Even a week after the sad demise of unparalleled people's ecologist, Prof. Madhav Gadgil (1942-2026), many of us are yet to come to terms with his loss, which is irreplaceable in today's times of ecological turmoil. Prof. Gadgil remains one of India's foremost ecological scientists, renowned for blending rigorous academic and fieldwork with community empowerment. He championed sustainable ecology that prioritized people's rights alongside nature's preservation. His passing marks the end of an era for Indian environmentalism, where science served grassroots democracy and biodiversity. Even though our beloved Prof Gadgil, who passed away at 83 after a brief illness at his home in Pune, is physically no more, he has left behind a profound legacy in ecological science and conservation in India. His lasting contributions to India's ecological studies and praxis, grounded in integrity, shall serve as a beacon of light for current and future generations.

Prof. Gadgil founded the Centre for Ecological Sciences at the Indian Institute of Science in 1982, pioneering models that integrated human communities into conservation. His early 1980s research identified the Nilgiris as India's first biosphere reserve in 1986, involving extensive surveys across Western Ghats states, treks through forests, and immersion with forest dwellers to document traditional knowledge. He was one of the main architects of the Biological Diversity Act of 2002 and the process of People's Biodiversity Registers, enabling gram panchayats to protect local resources and knowledge equitably. His commitment to democratization of forest governance, the historic Forest Rights Act, 2006 and upholding community forest rights have also been significant and lasting.

One of his most distinguished contributions is the landmark Western Ghats Report. As chairman of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEPP), popularly known as the Gadgil Commission, in 2010-2011, he delivered a transformative report recommending 64% of the Ghats as Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESA) with curbs on mining, dams, and construction. The Report emphasized decentralized governance, granting gram sabhas veto power over destructive projects, organic farming, and forest restoration to avert disasters like floods and landslides.

Though contested by development lobbies and diluted by the Kasturirangan panel, the WGEPP prophetically warned of crises such as Kerala's 2018 floods, fueling ongoing Supreme Court battles. Prof. Gadgil was a pro-people conservation advocate-par-excellence and consistently took positions empowering marginalized communities, opposing top-down policies like aspects of the Wildlife Protection Act, to center democracy in ecology. He led the building of networks of 27 science institutions and NGOs across 150,000 sq km of Western Ghats for community-led monitoring and biodiversity-friendly development. His vision spoke for voiceless forests, rivers, and communities, influencing the just implementation of the Forest Rights Act and advising prime ministers on policy.

National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) and the National Alliance for Climate and Ecological Justice (NACEJ), joins all of India's ecological and nature-dependent communities and environmental, grassroots movements in mourning the passing away of a scientist-mentor who refused binaries between people and ecology, ensuring his ideas endure in the fight for resilient ecosystems. We firmly resolve to carry forward his distinguished legacy through effective action for ecological and social justice, across the country.

Issued by: National Alliance of People's Movements and National Alliance for Climate and Ecological Justice

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