

## Environmental degradation and conservation issues in the Aravali Hills: A Case Study

Jabez Decastro<sup>1</sup> & Amala T Chacko<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Graduate Student, NISCORT

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, NISCORT

Corresponding Author Email: [amalatheresa95@gmail.com](mailto:amalatheresa95@gmail.com)

**Abstract**—One of the oldest mountain ranges, the Aravali Hills have an important ecological role in maintaining environmental balance as they prevent desertification, provide shelter and habitat for biodiversity, recharge groundwater, and limit air pollution in North India. But the sustainability of this fragile ecosystem is now increasingly being challenged by rapid urbanization, illegal mining, deforestation and unplanned infrastructure development. This case study details the environmental degradation of Aravali Hills and its ecological, socio-economic and communication aspects. The study is secondary in nature, where the study has been done by going through academic papers, environmental reports, newspapers, Government publications, and media content related to the Aravali ecosystem. The analysis shows that illegal mining, encroachments and urban sprawl in areas like Gurugram, Faridabad and Delhi NCR have borne a heavy burden in terms of habitat loss, groundwater depletion, biodiversity loss and air pollution. The results also show that environmental degradation has additional socio-economic impacts such as decline in agriculture, water scarcity, health problems, and impacts on livelihood opportunities. The study also emphasizes the importance of traditional and digital media to influence the public discourse on the Aravali crisis. Investigative journalism, social media activism, visual storytelling and online campaigns have raised awareness and civic engagement among the public. In the case of the media, however, it tends to be event-driven and doesn't always lead to long-term policy action. The study finally suggests the need to strengthen the environmental governance, implement conservation laws effectively, plan sustainable development and involve citizens and media institutions in ecology for long-term sustainability of the Aravali ecosystem.

**Keywords:** Environment, Conservation, Media, Climate Change, social media

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Aravali range is one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world and has a geological history of billions of years. This range runs for about 700 km from Gujarat through Rajasthan as far as up to Haryana and Delhi, and is one of the most important natural features in the North West of India. Even though the Aravali Hills are not that high as other mountain systems, yet they have immense ecological, environmental and geographical importance. They serve as a natural barrier, help shape climate, are rich in biodiversity, and are part of the overall environmental stability of the area.

The most important role of the Aravali range is to stop the spread of the Thar Desert towards the east. The hills prevent the fertile lands in North India from desertification as it acts as a natural barrier. Besides, the Aravalis are important in maintaining the groundwater level as it enables rain water infiltration and recharge. Forests and vegetation in this area supports a large number of flora and fauna species and is an important ecological zone. Additionally, the hills also play a role in mitigating air pollution by acting as a natural filter, particularly beneficial for areas with high population density such as Delhi NCR.

But, in recent decades, due to the rampant growth of urbanization, industrialization and population, the Aravali Hills have been increasingly under pressure. The process of rapid urbanization has taken place in the area of the expanding cities of Gurugram

and Faridabad, which has resulted in the conversion of forest land on a large scale for residential, commercial and industrial purposes. This has led to a substantial loss in green cover and breaches in the ecology of the area. Illegal and uncontrolled mining is another big problem that is plaguing the Aravali Hills. Although the authorities such as the Supreme Court of India have imposed several restrictions on mining, it has been going on in certain regions. These activities have caused hill structures to be destroyed, deforestation and soil erosion. The extraction of natural resources, without taking care of the environment, has led to long-term damage to the ecosystem. The situation has been further aggravated due to deforestation and encroachment. The forest areas have been deforested for agriculture, infrastructure projects and human settlement. This has resulted in loss of wildlife habitats, resulting in reduction of biodiversity and rise in man-animal conflict. The natural water systems have also been altered and it has impacted the water resources in nearby areas. The degradation of Aravali Hills is not only an environment issue but it's a public issue too. Loss of green cover, increase in pollution and deterioration in water resources directly affect the quality of life of people living in neighboring areas. Over the years, especially in recent times, it has been the concern of environmentalists, researchers and institutions like Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) and The Energy and Resources Institute that the future of the Aravali ecosystem is far from bright. Their studies and reports highlight the critical need for conservation and sustainable management.

Additionally, the significance of media in raising issues pertaining to Aravali Hills has also been growing. Illegal activities, environmental degradation, and policy failures have been reported on newspapers, TV and internet. This has contributed to the public awareness and discussion about environmental protection. But despite the increasing awareness, there are still restricted effective actions on the ground.

## **III. ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND THE ARAVALI CRISIS**

Environmental communication has been transformed since the advent of the internet; it now exists in the digital world. Social media platforms like Instagram, X (Twitter) and YouTube are now effective means to raise awareness on issues like degradation of Aravali Hills. These platforms are actively being used by activists, journalists, environmental organizations and even local citizens to share images, videos, reports and real-time updates on illegal mining, deforestation and encroachment. Hashtags and digital campaigns on Aravali conservation have been created to mobilize the public opinion and engage citizens. Citizen-led movements and online petitions, for instance, have highlighted violations of environmental laws and put pressure on the authorities. The use of visual materials like drone videos and before and after photos of mined areas has brought the reality of environmental devastation to home, and, more than that, made it compelling and emotional to viewers. This type of storytelling is very important to help break down difficult environmental topics and make them more approachable and relatable.

Also, there are independent digital journalism and environment blogs that are important sources of information. These platforms may offer detailed analysis, investigative reports, and expert insights that are sometimes overlooked in traditional news outlets. They help in creating an informed public discourse on issues related to Aravali crisis. Influencers and content creators are also involved in their efforts, as they incorporate environmental issues into their content, reaching younger demographics and boosting engagement. Digital environmental communication, however, is also accompanied by some challenges. These efforts can be undermined by a lack of scientific accuracy in some of the material, the spread of misinformation and audiences' short attention spans. Furthermore, online activism can raise awareness, but not necessarily lead to physical action or policy change. This is called "slacktivism," because there is a disconnect between online action and offline results. Even with these difficulties, digital platforms are an important platform for environmental communication. They help to spread information more quickly, to involve the public and to put pressure on authorities and policy makers. As far as the Aravali Hills are concerned, digital media has been instrumental in both raising and sustaining this issue on the map in the era of fast-paced urban sprawl.

Therefore, this case study is intended to investigate the environmental degradation of the Aravali Hills, analyse its causes and consequences and to understand the role of media, especially digital media in creating awareness among the mass. It also emphasizes the need for sustainable development practices, improved environmental policies, and citizen engagement to safeguard this ecological treasure for future generations.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Aravali Hills have been the subject of many studies, research and environmental groups on their ecological value and current degradation. Studies by Centre for Science and Environment (CSE, 2018; CSE, 2020) have proved that the Aravali range is of critical importance in controlling the desertification, ecological balance and maintenance of groundwater recharge system in North India. These studies indicate that the Aravalis, especially due to mining, deforestation and unchecked urban growth, has lost its capacity to act as a natural ecological barrier, more so to the encroaching Thar desert (CSE, 2019). Likewise, studies that have been released by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in 2017 and 2021 highlight the fragility of the Aravali ecosystem. These reports emphasize the loss of biodiversity, wildlife habitats and disruption of ecological processes, due to deforestation and land degradation. Researchers like Singh (2018) and Sharma (2020) have noted that the Aravali Hills were once home to a variety of flora and fauna but proper interactions between humans and nature have led to habitat fragmentation and ecological imbalance. Continuous decline in the forest cover over the years has been observed in the environmental impact assessments and in the satellite based studies (ISRO, 2019; Forest Survey of India, 2021).

There is also a large amount of literature available that talks about illegal mining and how it is one of the worst threats to the Aravali range. Several academic papers and investigative media reports (Kohli, 2019; Gupta, 2021) have reported the profligate destruction of hill structures, soil erosion and air pollution due to mining activities, many of which have not been carried out in accordance with the law. The Supreme Court of India (MC Mehta v. Union of India, 2002 and subsequent orders) have made significant contributions in trying to stem such activities. There are a few landmark judgments, which have banned and restricted mining in the ecologically sensitive areas of the Aravalis. But, according to literature, because of weak enforcement, corruption and administrative loopholes, the efficacy of these measures seems to be constrained and illegal practices are still in existence (Bhattacharya, 2020). Apart from environmental degradation, there have also been studies on the socio-economic aspects of the Aravali crisis. Studies on the effects of environmental changes on the local community, as well as the role of the local community in environmental changes, have been done by researchers like Yadav (2019) and Meena (2021). Mining and urbanizing both give jobs, but also cause long term ecological harm which jeopardizes natural resource dependent livelihoods. This duality poses a complicated challenge for policymakers, as indicated in a number of development and sustainability studies (UNDP India, 2020).

Another significant field of literature is on the role of traditional and mass media in raising environmental consciousness. The media such as newspapers, television channels and radio, has been instrumental in reporting environmental issues associated with the Aravali Hills throughout history. Analysis of the studies conducted by Kumar (2018) and Joshi (2020) suggest that the continuous media coverage about illegal mining, deforestation, and failure of policies have helped in bringing the issue to the public discourse. Investigative reporting in particular has played a key role in uncovering environmental offences and holding the authorities to account. But, some researchers suggest that mainstream media coverage is episodic and lacks continuity, and hence, its long term impact of enhancing public awareness and inducing policy change is limited (Sharma, 2021). The study of environmental communication in the digital era has received more and more attention from scholars in recent years. From Instagram to X (Twitter) and YouTube, the digital revolution has reshaped the landscape of environmental communication and understanding. The study of digital environmental communication (Anderson, 2017; O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2019) clarifies the potential of these platforms to communicate quickly, tell a story, and engage the audience. Digital platforms offer the opportunity to engage individuals and communities in the communication process, providing them with means to present their own experiences, opinions and evidence of environmental degradation.

A number of studies have focused on the ways in which digital environmental activism has become a potent means of mobilizing public opinion and inspiring civic involvement. Hashtags, petitions, and viral content are popular ways to reach a large audience in online campaigns about protecting the environment (Bennett & Segerberg, 2018). Digital activism in the context of the Aravali Hills has contributed to raising awareness about illegal mining activities, deforestation, and other environmental concerns through real-time updates, images, and videos. Such information is considered to inspire emotions as well as provide knowledge,



and to make environmental issues more salient and relevant to the public (Boykoff, 2019). There is also an increasing literature on the part youth play in environmental movements that focus on the digital. Young people are some of the most active social media users who have emerged as a leading force in environmental activism. Research (UNESCO, 2021; Fridays for Future reports, 2020) demonstrates that digital platforms give young people an easy, cheap and accessible opportunity to voice their concerns, mobilize and shape public debate. Youth have become more involved in creating environmental content, engaging in online discussions, and joining digital campaigns, all of which help raise awareness and advocate for the environment. This trend is an indication that people are moving away from just consuming information and towards engaging and participating.

Additionally, the idea of “networked environmentalism” which uses digital platforms to connect people, groups and communities has been discussed (Castells, 2015). Environmental groups, non-governmental organizations and independent activists utilize online networks to coordinate actions, share resources and boost their messages. This interdependent strategy has made the environmental issues such as Aravali crisis more visible and provided opportunities for action together. But the literature indicates also some drawbacks of digital environmental communication. A major concern is the prevalence of misinformation and non-scientific accuracy of some Internet content (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2018). Furthermore, there has been a lot of talk about the “slacktivism” of people who do things only online but not in the real world and thus do not really make any difference (Morozov, 2011). Scholars contend that although digital activism can be useful for raising awareness, it is not necessarily leading to policy and behavioural shifts. Such communication activities are further limited in their reach and inclusiveness by the digital divide and unequal access to technologies (Norris, 2001).

The current literature gives a broad understanding of the environmental issues of the Aravali Hills and how the role of the media has been changing in tackling these environmental issues. It emphasizes the need to combine the traditional environmental knowledge with modern communication strategies in order to foster sustainable development. Overall, the studies highlight the importance of raising awareness, particularly through digital channels, but also point to the need for improved policy enforcement, community involvement, and continued conservation efforts.

### III. METHODOLOGY

Case study is based on Secondary Research methods. The information was gathered from different reliable sources like research papers, environmental report, news papers, government publications etc, related to Aravali Hills. Review of books, academic journals and reports from environmental organizations were conducted to understand the ecological importance of Aravali range. The news media reports were also used to examine the nature of the way the problem has been represented in the news and the impact of the news on the awareness of the problem. The data gathered was meticulously analyzed and presented to gain insights into the factors contributing to the degradation of the Aravali Hills, its consequences, and potential remedies. This approach was useful in building up a holistic perspective on the issues of the Aravali environment.

#### III.I. DATA ANALYSIS



Source: ANI photos

Secondary data analysis, combined with media outlets, shows that the degradation of the Aravali Hills is not just a gradual phenomenon that is playing out through environmental changes, but also through several repeat incidents, all well documented, which spell out governance failures and unchecked human activities. The ecological crisis has been consistently identified in news reports, investigative journalism and environmental documentation as being caused by illegal mining, unplanned urban expansion and deforestation.

Illegal and excessive mining is one of the most common problems reported. In spite of all the regulation and number of bans issued by the Supreme Court of India, there have been various investigations by the media, which have pointed out that the mining is still going on in areas of Haryana and Rajasthan. Reports have been published in different media of the activities of mining mafias in protected zones of the Aravalis, especially in Faridabad and Nuh (formerly Mewat). The illegal stone quarrying and sand mining using heavy machinery including at night time to avoid detection has been reported. Local authorities in some cases were either unable or unwilling to effectively implement the ban. These occurrences illustrate a major disconnect between environmental policies and policy implementation. Mining operators have also been reported to have violent confrontations with police, suggesting that these illegal activities are well organised.

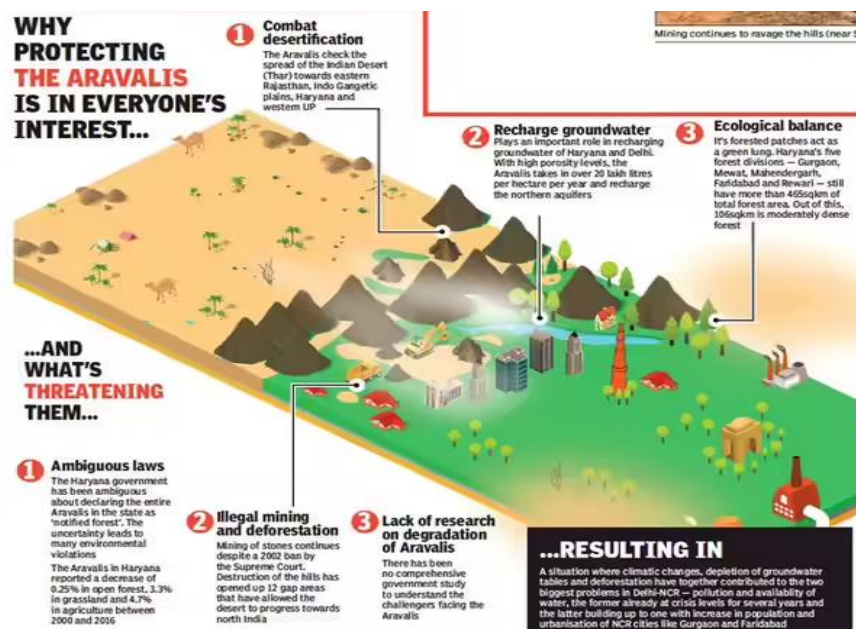
The second significant factor indicated by the media is fast urbanization, and the growth of real estate. The city's metamorphic journey from a small town to a major corporate and residential hub has often been pointed out as an instance of the encroachment of development on the Aravali ecosystem. Investigative reporting has uncovered that a number of building developments – whether residential or commercial, have taken place in sensitive areas and on occasions, at odds with environmental standards. The development of roads, highways and infrastructure development projects in Delhi NCR have further broken the natural landscape of the Aravalis. There have also been media reports of controversial changes in land use such as reclassification of forest land for development, which has led to fears of manipulating policies and limited transparency.

Also related to mining and urbanisation, deforestation is widely reported in the media. There are reports of large scale tree felling for construction activities and fuel requirements in Aravali areas. Environmentalists and local residents have, in some cases, pointed out illegal logging which has subsequently been verified from satellite photography and ground reporting. A direct correlation exists between loss of forest area and soil erosion, decrease in groundwater recharge and loss of biodiversity. The media has been highlighting the effects of the loss of green cover on the surrounding areas, and how the areas have become more vulnerable to dust pollution and rising temperatures, especially urban areas such as Delhi NCR.

There are also news investigations on how unchecked land use and encroachment have further exacerbated the situation. It has been reported that unauthorised farmhouses, resorts and settlements have been found in Protected Forest areas of Aravalis, particularly those that adjoining Delhi and Haryana. These buildings have been constructed without the due environmental clearance and in many cases without following the legal process, as revealed by media reports. They have been sometimes demolished under public pressure or court order, but these are usually short-term solutions. Besides, some of the incidents have captured the attention of the nation due to the high visibility of the Aravali crisis. The media reports on environmental violations during infrastructure projects, illegal land acquisition etc., which has led to public debates and judicial investigations. Some reports have also pointed out cases of environmental impact assessment that have been poorly conducted or neglected, resulting in irreversible damage to the environment.

Media reported incidents confirm evidence of the linkage and supporting mechanisms of the key drivers of degradation: mining, urbanisation, deforestation and encroachment, with weak governance and lack of accountability. These reports not only record environmental harm but also are important for raising awareness and for informing policy debates.

### III.II. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS



Source: Times of India

Environmental degradation of Aravali Hills has resulted in many cascading ecological impacts, many of which have been well documented in the media and environmental investigations. The reported incidents not only corroborate the scientific findings but also offer real-world evidence of the impact of environmental degradation on both nature and human communities in North India.

Among the most important effects, reported in the media, is the increasing risk of desertification associated with the expansion of the Thar Desert. The news articles and environmental reports have been warning of the weakening of the Aravalis' barrier, because of mining and deforestation, and lack of its ability to prevent desert winds. Some of the media investigations have highlighted the rising number of dust storms in some parts of Delhi NCR and its environs. These dust storms which sometimes involve finely ground desert particles have been linked to the degradation of the Aravalis. Media reports have cited experts saying that if this trend continues, the fertile land in the north of the country would slowly turn dry which would endanger food security and climatic stability in the region in the long run.



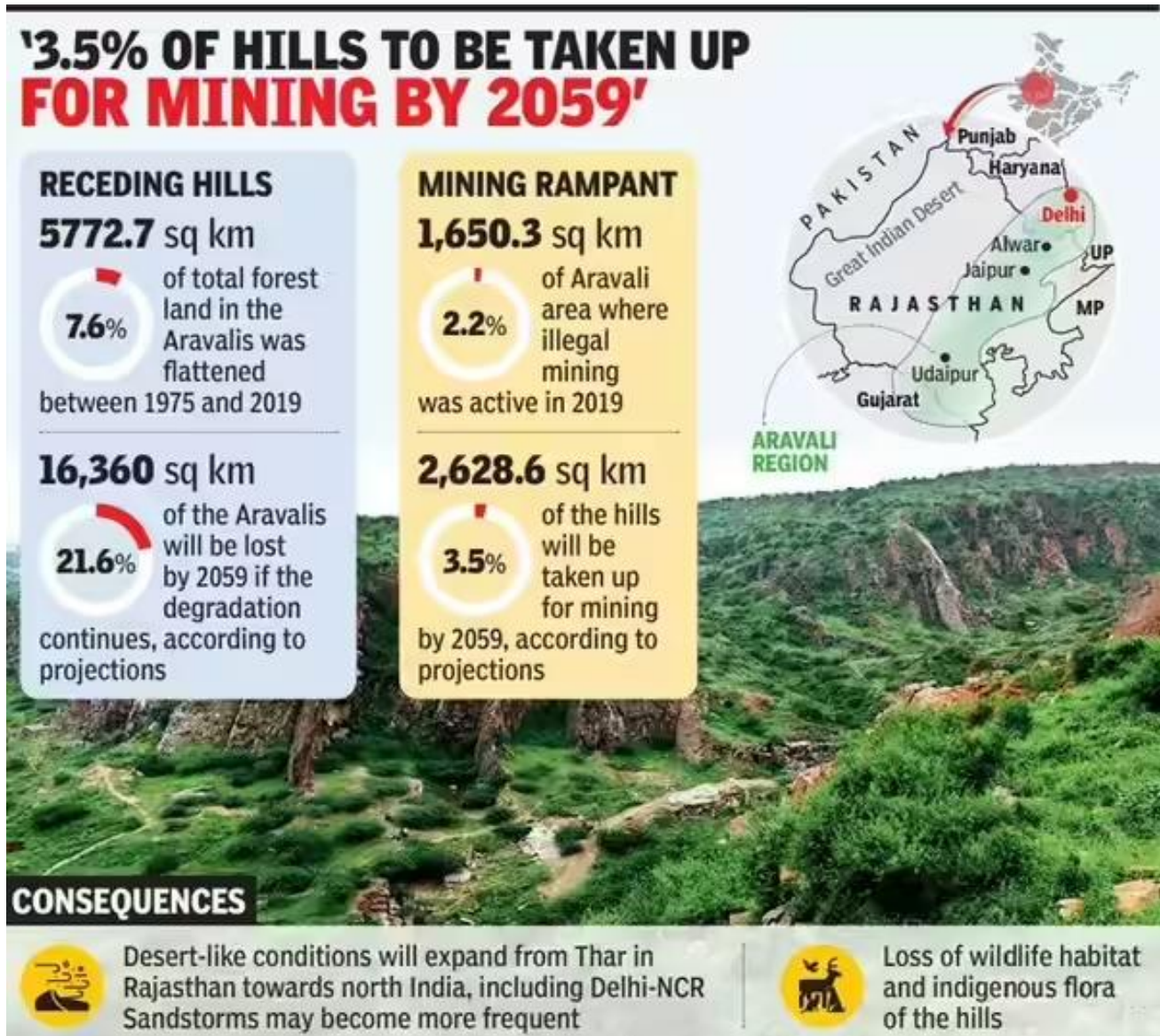
Groundwater depletion is another significant environmental effect that is commonly reported in the media. Media reports from places like Gurugram, Faridabad and other areas have reported water scarcity issues, particularly in the summer. It has been reported that destruction of natural recharge zones in the Aravali Hills is linked to this crisis. For example, the stories in the media report that the land's capacity to absorb rain water has been affected by flattening hills for construction and mining. There have been some instances of local communities and environmentalists reporting the drying up of traditional water bodies and wells which relied on the Aravali ecosystem. These incidents highlight the close relationship between ecological degradation and water insecurity in urban and peri-urban areas.

Another significant impact which has received much attention in the media is the loss of biodiversity. The loss of native flora and the decline in wildlife populations have been reported in the Aravali. Recently some incidents have been reported which indicated the presence of growing human-animal conflicts, especially with forest fringes affecting animals like leopards, nilgai etc. wandering into the human habitation. Such sightings of wildlife in the vicinity of Gurugram and Faridabad, as reported in the media, highlight the encroachment of wildlife into human habitats in search of sustenance and shelter due to habitat destruction. Also, environmental journalists have pointed out that roads and construction have fractured wildlife corridors making it challenging for wildlife to migrate and survive.

Various media reports have also strongly correlated air pollution with degradation of Aravali Hills, particularly in Delhi NCR. Historically, the Aravalis served as a natural barrier to minimise the movement of dust and purify the air of pollutants. But, the protection function has become weak because of the absence of vegetation and the absence of hill buildings. The destruction of the Aravali ecosystem has been linked to the increase in dust and air pollution by the media. The situation of air pollution in Delhi has always been very critical and the exposure of the barren lands and mining areas to airborne particulate matters are often reported during peak seasons of pollution.

However, by several documented incidents Soil erosion and Land degradation have also been highlighted. Reports have demonstrated how, in deforested or mined areas, heavy rains cause the loss of the fertile topsoil. In some cases, media has been able to record the images of the deteriorated landscape with the total absence of the vegetation and the existence of rocky terrain without value. These events can lead to localized flooding and landslides and compromise agricultural production. The incidents that have been reported in the media are enough to prove the devastating environmental consequences arising out of the degradation of the Aravali Hills. These reports help to communicate the scientific information by providing concrete examples of ecological destruction in real-time. They highlight the need for conservation measures and more effective policy action to prevent additional environmental loss.

### III.III. SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS



Source: drishtiias.com/daily

The environmental degradation of Aravali Hills has not only impacted ecological systems, but also had significant socio-economic consequences for communities and urban population. Over the years, the media has pointed out the direct effect that these environmental changes have on the lives, health and quality of life of the residents of the areas near the Aravalis.

One of the most important socio-economic effects that have been reported in the media is the drop in agricultural productivity. The farmers in the regions close to the Aravali range such as some parts of Haryana and Rajasthan have been having problems because of declining soil fertility and water scarcity. There are reports of agricultural land becoming less productive due to soil erosion and loss of top soil due to deforestation and mining. Some of the farmers have had to give up traditional crops or switch to less water consuming agriculture. The economic and financial pressures of these communities have also been discussed in the media, as their economic well-being is also directly impacted by the fall in yields.

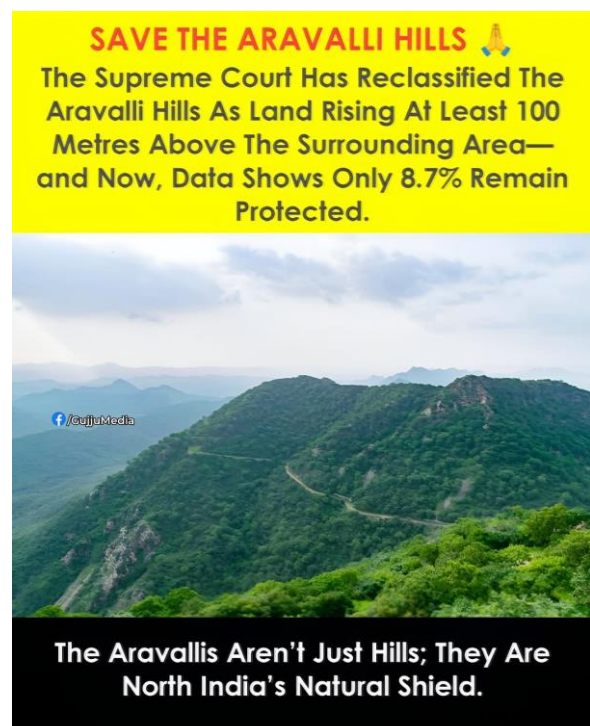
Another significant problem that has been commonly reported in urban and rural contexts is water scarcity. Groundwater depletion, especially in cities, has been the main reason why cities like Gurugram and Faridabad have often been making headlines. Media investigation has identified the problem of water crisis due to over extraction of ground water and destruction of natural recharge areas in Aravalis. Due to dried-up borewells, in several cases, the residential areas have been forced to use

water tankers. This has made life more expensive for urbanites and has resulted in disparities in access to water; those who can afford to use other sources have access to water for their daily needs.

The media are also aware of air pollution and its effects on public health. Degradation of Aravali Hills has led to an increase in the dust concentration and air pollution particularly in Delhi NCR. News reports have often reported that mining areas are exposed, leading to particulate matter in the air, as well as a decrease of vegetation. This is associated with an increase in respiratory diseases, including asthma, bronchitis and other lung diseases. As reported in the media, a number of hospitals and health experts have highlighted the risks for children and elderly people. Pollution levels are frequently seen rising during the monsoons and, at the same time, the role of natural barriers such as the Aravalis in controlling the pollution level has come up as a subject of discussion.

A socio-economic aspect that is associated with the media is the loss of livelihoods related to natural resources and tourism. Eco-tourism, small scale economic activities like forest based livelihoods and local recreation were once possible in the Aravali Hills. But environmental degradation has led to a decrease in the aesthetic and ecological importance of these areas. The impact of landscapes being ruined, illegal building and pollution have been reported to have deterred tourism and lower the income opportunities of the local communities. Local guides and small business owners reliant on tourism have reported a decrease in income in some cases because of the poor condition of the environment. Further, the media coverage has also highlighted the increasing environmental stress-induced social inequalities and conflicts. Hydro-political tensions in the community have arisen in the context of scarce water resources and reliance on private water sources has grown. In some cases, there have been reports of clashes between locals and officials regarding land use, eviction programmes and environmental standards. Such examples show the compounding of social issues and the development of governance problems as a result of environmental degradation. In general, media reported incidents clearly show that the degradation of Aravali Hills is not only an environmental issue but it's an urgent socio-economic issue as well. The effects are experienced in various segments of society including farmers and rural people as well as urban people, thus it is a multi-dimensional crisis and demands comprehensive and sustainable solutions.

### III.IV. ROLE OF MEDIA IN DATA TRENDS





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Source: ALT news



The analysis of media coverage over the years indicates that the problem of degradation in Aravali Hills has been picking up a spotlight from time to time in newspapers, TV and digital media. Reports and studies released by agencies like the Centre for Science and Environment and The Energy and Resources Institute have been frequently reported in main stream media which helps translating technical data on environment to more common information for common people. Such reports have been widely referenced in news articles, particularly in times of environmental crises or legal advances, affecting public discourse and legal-political debates.

Among the most visible functions of the media has been to highlight the illegal mining in the Aravali region. A number of national newspapers and news channels have reported investigation which shows that the mining activities have been in progress even after Supreme Court of India imposed ban on them. For example, the news reporting of the areas close to Faridabad and Nuh brought to light the activities of stone and sand mining mafias in the night, still continuing with the help of heavy machinery. These reports were often backed up by pictures, videos and satellite images that made the situation more real to the audience. The direct impact of the media intervention was evident in administrative crackdowns, temporary mining stoppages, and even renewed legal scrutiny in some cases, as a result of these exposés.

Media attention has also been very important in shedding light on the controversial land use changes and urban encroachments in Aravali. Rapid development in Gurugram has put ecologically sensitive areas under the spotlight in investigative stories. There have been reports of scenarios in which forested areas were supposed to be reclassified and used for commercial purposes, resulting in doubts regarding transparency and loopholes in the regulations. This coverage has been a frequent subject of public debate and, in certain instances, has led to court or government review of environmental clearances. Digital media has also played a huge role in shaping the data trends around the Aravali crisis, besides the traditional media. Real-time dissemination of information through social media platforms like Instagram and X (Twitter) has been made possible by the use of social media applications. A number of cases of the illegal cutting down of trees, land encroachment and environmental violations have first come to light through user-generated content, and then via mainstream media. These have been spread through viral posts, hashtags and online campaigns and have made it imperative for authorities to act faster in many instances. For instance, in the context of Aravali conservation, petitions and awareness initiatives have been undertaken through digital means, resulting in a significant public response, especially among the youth.

A second key aspect of media coverage is the employment of data visualization techniques to illustrate environmental changes. Before and after pictures, maps and graphic representations have been increasingly employed by news media to depict the magnitude of deforestation and land degradation in the Aravalis. These visual tools have helped complex environmental data to be more understandable and impactful, to help the audience to grasp the scale of the problem. This type of data storytelling has lent credibility to environmental reporting and fostered informed environmental conversations. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that there are also some drawbacks in media engagement. A pattern that has occurred is that news coverage is often event-based, rather than continuous. Long term environmental monitoring and reporting on follow-up is limited, while major events such as court cases, environmental protests or large scale violations are covered in detail for a short period of time. For instance, if crackdowns on illegal mining are occurring, it is not well reported in the long term what works and what doesn't. This mismatch can contribute to loss of interest on the part of the public and less pressure on the part of the political decision makers. Moreover, some studies indicate that digital media could be a source of information overload and short attention spans while enhancing the visibility. Thus, significant environmental concerns, such as the Aravali crisis, can face challenges in sustaining a continuous narrative in the rapidly evolving digital news landscape. Media, both traditional and electronic, has, in the overall sense, played an important role in creating the trend of data and understanding the issue of degradation of Aravali Hills among the general public. It has compiled important issues in the environment through investigative reporting, visual storytelling and digital activism. But ongoing, deep coverage is important to guarantee ongoing awareness, accountability, and effective policy action.

Analysis of available data shows there are several important trends in degradation of Aravali Hills and its implications. The most striking trend is rapid rate of environmental degradation in the last two/three decades, mainly due to urbanisation in the areas around Delhi NCR, especially in Gurugram and Faridabad. This expansion has put pressure on land resources, causing deforestation, mining and large-scale infrastructure construction. Meanwhile, the analysis emphasizes that there is a lack of implementation of environmental laws. Regulations and judicial interventions, especially in the Supreme Court of India, have been made as part of the measures to protect the Aravalis, but weak enforcement mechanisms and administrative issues have allowed illegal activities to persist. Another important point is the large reduction in natural resources, in particular the groundwater and the forest cover, which has led to a still further uncontrolled ecological imbalance and to greater risk of environmental disasters like desertification and pollution.

The role of media is seen to be influential and restricted. Traditional and digital platforms have proven successful in raising awareness and exposing violations, and have sparked discussion in public discourse, but their engagement is often short-lived and event-driven, and not sustained. This leads to a 'flash in the pan' effect with no repeat attention-grabbing or ongoing responsibility. In addition, the data reveals an often recurring tension between economic development and environmental protection, in which short-term economic benefits of building, mining, and urbanization often win over ecological issues. This imbalance is indicative of a wider challenge in policy and planning, in which environmental issues are not fully addressed in development strategies. These trends highlight the critical need for sustainable planning, enhanced enforcement of environmental laws, and the implementation of environmentally friendly policies to ensure the long-term survival of the Aravali ecosystem.

## IV. CONCLUSION

The case study of the Aravali Hills abundantly demonstrates the ecological issues being encountered in one of the oldest and significant mountain systems of India. In recent years the activities of people like illegal mining, deforestation, urbanization and unplanned constructions have taken a heavy toll on this fragile ecosystem. These activities have not only changed the natural landscape but also reduced the ecological functions performed by the Aravali Hills for the entire North Indian region. The most significant finding of this study is that the degradation of Aravali Hills is not only an environmental problem but also a social and economic problem. The hills are critical to stopping the spread of desertification from the Thar, for ensuring groundwater levels, biodiversity and air quality. But with the continuous exploitation these functions are gradually diminishing. Consequently, the surrounding areas including the cities namely Delhi NCR are facing issues like scarcity of water, air pollution, rising temperature, loss of green cover etc. The study also demonstrates that, though there are laws and regulations and the Supreme Court of India intervened, the implementation of environmental policies is weak. The lack of strict monitoring, poor enforcement and at times administrative inefficiencies continue to allow illegal activities to take place. This is one of the major reasons why the situation of Aravali Hills is deteriorating. A factor that is also emphasized in this case study is the media and public awareness. The issue has been brought to the fore by organizations such as Centre for Science and Environment, The Energy and Resources Institute, news media, digital platforms, among others. Through media coverage, illegal mining activities and environmental violations have been brought to light, thus raising awareness among the populace and sparking public discussion about conservation. The study also suggests that awareness is not enough, but only when it translates to action and policy implementation.

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