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NOISE POLLUTION AND JUDICIAL APPROACH IN INDIA- Shruti Sethia¹**Abstract**

Noise is an intrinsic aspect of human life, a natural consequence of human life, and as such, an intrinsic element of the human environment. Man is born with noise and dies with that. Even before and after it, it has a connection to a man's life from birth to death. We use noise to communicate both our joyful and sorrowful times in life. Cracker popping, music playing, or the recitation of religious texts are some examples of it.

Noise pollution refers to unwanted or excessive sound that can have negative impacts on human health and the environment. It is a growing problem in many urban areas, where increasing population density and industrialization have led to higher levels of noise exposure. In terms of judicial approach, there have been various legal measures taken to regulate noise pollution and protect citizens from its negative effects. This can take the form of national or local legislation, as well as judicial decisions in response to specific cases. For example, many countries have laws specifying acceptable levels of noise in different settings, such as residential areas, commercial zones, and near hospitals or schools. In some cases, these laws also provide enforcement mechanisms, such as fines for individuals or companies that violate the regulations.

Judicial decisions can also play a role in addressing noise pollution. For example, courts may be called upon to decide disputes between neighbors over excessive noise, or to enforce existing laws and regulations. In some cases, courts may also award compensation to individuals who have suffered harm as a result of noise pollution.

This Paper deals with the legal approaches that can be used to address the problem and effective enforcement of existing laws and regulations, along with proactive measures to prevent excessive noise, can help to reduce the negative impacts of noise pollution and protect public health and the environment.

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Key Words:- Noise Pollution, Judicial Approach, Laws and Regulations, Human Life, Public Health.

Introduction

Noise pollution refers to any excessive, unpleasant, or unwanted sound that affects human well-being, health, or quality of life. This type of pollution can come from various sources such as traffic, industrial activities, construction sites, entertainment venues, and even household appliances. The effects of noise pollution can range from annoyance and stress to hearing loss and sleep disturbance. In addition to this, there are many other factors that are impacted by noise pollution, such as the budget allocation for soundproofing institutions and transportation, the reduction in property values for structures in high-noise locations, such as buildings near railway stations or in industrial areas. The indiscriminate usage of loudspeakers has led to the noise pollution issue that has appeared recently in India.” It is frequently too difficult for individuals to exercise their basic liberties with all due respect due to its indiscriminate use from religious places and in conducting religious ceremonies and speeches.

The judicial approach to addressing noise pollution involves the use of legal measures to regulate and control noise levels. This typically involves the creation and enforcement of noise regulations by local and national governments, as well as the use of the court system to resolve disputes related to noise pollution.

In some countries, noise pollution is regulated by law, and penalties can be imposed on individuals or organizations that violate the noise regulations. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States has established guidelines for acceptable levels of noise in various environments, and individuals can file complaints with the agency if they believe their rights are being violated.

The judicial approach to addressing noise pollution can be an effective way to protect the rights of individuals and communities, and to ensure that noise levels are kept within acceptable limits. However, it can also be a slow and complex process, as legal cases can take a long time to be resolved, and enforcing noise regulations can be difficult.

Hypothesis

- The judicial approach to addressing noise pollution is ineffective in reducing the levels of noise in urban areas.

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- The current legal framework for noise pollution control is insufficient in providing effective remedies for affected individuals. The lack of enforcement of noise pollution regulations leads to a widespread disregard for the issue among the general population. The courts fail to take into consideration the negative impact of noise pollution on public health and the environment.

Research Objective

- To examine the judicial approach towards noise pollution and assess the effectiveness of existing laws and regulations in reducing noise pollution levels.
- To analyze the existing legal frameworks and their implementation, the role of courts and judicial system in mitigating noise pollution and the impact of court decisions on reducing noise pollution levels.
- To identify the challenges faced by courts and the general public in addressing noise pollution and suggest recommendations for improvement. The ultimate goal of this research is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the judicial approach towards noise pollution and its impact on the environment and human health.

Research Question

- How has the judicial approach to noise pollution changed over time?
- What legal remedies exist for individuals affected by noise pollution?
- What challenges have been faced in the enforcement of noise pollution laws and regulations?

Effects of noise pollution on human health and environment

Noise pollution refers to excessive and disruptive sounds that can have negative impacts on people's health and the environment. The main sources of noise pollution are transportation, industrial activities, construction, and entertainment.

- **Effects on Human Health**
 1. **Hearing Loss:** Prolonged exposure to loud noise can cause permanent hearing damage and loss. This can lead to tinnitus, which is a ringing in the ears.
 2. **Stress and Anxiety:** Loud and continuous noise can increase stress levels and lead to anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances.

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3. Cardiovascular Diseases: Chronic exposure to noise can also increase the risk of developing cardiovascular diseases such as high blood pressure, heart attacks, and stroke.
4. Learning and Concentration Impairment: Noise pollution can also affect a person's ability to concentrate and learn, especially in children. This can have a long-term impact on their academic performance and overall well-being.

- **Effects on the Environment**

1. Impact on Wildlife: Loud noise can cause distress to wildlife and disrupt their natural behavior, such as mating, feeding, and migration patterns.
2. Destruction of Natural Habitats: Noise pollution can cause changes in the physical environment, leading to the destruction of habitats and displacement of wildlife.
3. Loss of Biodiversity: Excessive noise can also negatively impact the overall biodiversity of an ecosystem by reducing the number of species that can thrive in a particular area.
4. Air and Water Pollution: Noise pollution can also contribute to other forms of pollution, such as air and water pollution, by releasing harmful chemicals and pollutants into the environment.

Noise pollution has a wide range of negative impacts on both human health and the environment. It is important to reduce noise pollution by implementing stricter regulations, promoting sustainable development practices, and encouraging individuals to take steps to reduce their own noise footprint.²

Legal framework for controlling noise pollution in India

The legal framework for controlling noise pollution in India is mainly governed by the following laws and sections:

- Article 21 of the Indian Constitution³ guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, which includes the right to live in a healthy environment. The Supreme Court of India has interpreted this right to include the right to a healthy and peaceful environment, free from noise pollution.
- The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 is a comprehensive legislation that aims to protect and improve the environment. Under this act, the central government can take measures to

²"Noise Pollution in India: An Overview" by G. Suresh, Journal of Environmental Management (2007).

³Constitution of India, art. 21.

control noise pollution, including setting standards for acceptable levels of noise and imposing penalties on violators.

- The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986: Section 5⁴ of the Act empowers the central government to take measures to prevent and control environmental pollution, including noise pollution.
- Section 6⁵ of the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000: This section prohibits the use of loud-speakers and sound amplifiers in specified areas during certain times of the day, as well as the use of horns and alarms in vehicles that generate excessive noise.
- The Indian Penal Code, 1860: Section 268⁶ of the IPC deals with the punishment for public nuisance caused by noise, while Section 290⁷ imposes a fine for any person who causes a public nuisance.
- The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981: Section 15⁸ of the Act provides for the prevention and control of noise pollution from industries and industrial processes.
- The Motor Vehicles Act, 1988: Section 190⁹ of the Act mandates the use of silencers on vehicles to prevent excessive noise pollution.
- The Factories Act, 1948: Section 41¹⁰ of the Act requires the employers to take steps to prevent the emission of excessive noise in the workplace.
- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974: Section 33 of the Act provides for the control of noise pollution arising from any water-using process or industrial activity.

In addition to these laws, the National Green Tribunal has also issued several directions and guidelines to control noise pollution in India. The state governments are responsible for enforcing the provisions of these laws and rules and taking appropriate measures to prevent and control noise pollution in their respective states.¹¹

Noise pollution is regulated in India under the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986, and the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000. The rules apply to all sources of noise,

⁴ Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, No. 29 of 1986, § 5.

⁵Noise Pollution(Regulation and Control)Rules,2000 § 6.

⁶ Sec. 268, Indian Penal Code,1860.

⁷ Sec. 290, Indian Penal Code, 1860.

⁸ The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, § 15.

⁹ The Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, §190.

¹⁰ The Factories Act, 1948, § 41.

¹¹ National Green Tribunal, India. (2017). Noise Pollution and its effects on health and environment. New Delhi: National Green Tribunal.

including industrial, construction, and transportation.¹²

According to the rules, the permissible noise levels in different zones (residential, commercial, silence, and industrial) are specified. The permissible levels for residential areas during the day is 55 decibels (dB), and for night-time it is 45 dB. For commercial areas, the permissible level is 65 dB during the day and 55 dB during the night. For silence zones (such as hospitals, educational institutions, and court premises), the permissible level is 50 dB during the day and 40 dB during the night. For industrial areas, the permissible level is 75 dB during the day and 70 dB during the night.¹³

Role of courts and judicial approach in addressing noise pollution

The role of courts and the judicial approach in addressing noise pollution is critical in ensuring that individuals and communities have the right to a peaceful and healthy environment. Noise pollution can have negative impacts on physical and mental health, disrupt sleep patterns, and negatively impact the quality of life for individuals. As such, it is essential that the courts take a proactive approach in addressing this problem.

Judicial Approach

The judicial approach to addressing noise pollution is guided by a number of legal principles, including the right to a healthy environment and the right to life, privacy, and freedom of speech. In this context, courts have used various legal frameworks to address noise pollution, including environmental and human rights law, tort law, and criminal law.

For example, under environmental law, courts can impose fines and penalties on individuals or organizations responsible for excessive noise levels. They can also order the adoption of measures aimed at reducing noise pollution, such as installing soundproofing materials or implementing sound management plans.

Under human rights law, courts can interpret the right to a healthy environment as including the right to live in an environment free from excessive noise pollution. In this context, they can issue orders to governments and private entities to take measures to reduce noise levels, and can provide remedies for individuals who have suffered harm as a result of excessive noise levels.

In tort law, courts can consider claims of nuisance brought by individuals or communities who

¹² "The Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Amendment Rules, 2010" (India) Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change. <https://envfor.nic.in/sites/default/files/amndt-rules-2010-noise-pollution.pdf>.

¹³ Tripathi, R. (2010). Noise Pollution and its Control Measures in India. *International Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences*, 5(2), 13-22.

have been negatively impacted by noise pollution. In such cases, courts can order the responsible party to compensate individuals or communities for harm caused by excessive noise levels.

Finally, criminal law can be used to address particularly egregious cases of noise pollution. For example, courts can impose fines or imprisonment on individuals who persistently engage in activities that cause excessive noise levels.¹⁴

Role of Courts

The role of courts in addressing noise pollution is crucial in ensuring that individuals and communities are protected from harm caused by excessive noise levels. By imposing fines and penalties on individuals or organizations responsible for noise pollution, courts can deter future actions that may cause harm to the environment or the health and well-being of individuals.

In addition, by issuing orders and remedies to reduce noise levels, courts can ensure that individuals and communities have access to a healthy and peaceful environment. By providing remedies to individuals who have suffered harm as a result of excessive noise levels, courts can help to mitigate the negative impacts of noise pollution.

The role of courts and the judicial approach in addressing noise pollution is essential in promoting the right to a healthy and peaceful environment. By using legal frameworks to impose fines and penalties, order the adoption of measures to reduce noise levels, and provide remedies for individuals who have suffered harm, courts play a critical role in protecting the health and well-being of individuals and communities.¹⁵

Case studies and judicial approach on noise pollution

- **M.C Mehta v. Union of India (1986)**¹⁶ In this landmark case, the Supreme Court of India addressed the issue of noise pollution and its impact on human health and the environment. The Supreme Court ruled that the right to a healthy and peaceful environment is a fundamental right under the Indian Constitution and ordered the government to take immediate action to reduce noise levels. The Court also issued guidelines on permissible

¹⁴ "The Supreme Court of India and the Control of Noise Pollution: A Critical Appraisal" by R. K. Puri, Indian Journal of Environmental Law (2011).

¹⁵Dr. S.C. Tripathi (2019). Environmental Law. Ed. 7, central law publication, pg. 614-623.

¹⁶1987 SCR (1) 819; AIR 1987 965.

noise levels, regulated the use of loud speakers and horns, and imposed penalties on those who violate the noise pollution norms.

- **Anwar Ali Sarkar v. The State of West Bengal (1985)**¹⁷ This case was filed by Anwar Ali Sarkar, a resident of Kolkata, against the government of West Bengal for not taking action to reduce the noise levels during Durga Puja celebrations. The Supreme Court ruled that the right to peaceful enjoyment of property is a fundamental right under the Indian Constitution and ordered the government to take immediate action to reduce the noise levels. The Court also issued guidelines on permissible noise levels, regulated the use of loud speakers and horns, and imposed penalties on those who violate the noise pollution norms.
- **Hardeep singh and others v. Sdmc and other (2019)**

In this case, an application was lodged by the applicant before National Green Tribunal alleging that DJ's Sound system, community address system used at marriages or other events, and that was generated at irregular times that adversely affected the safety of people.

The tribunal directed the chief secretary, the commissioner of the police, Delhi and the Delhi population control committee to take steps for enforcing the steps given by the supreme court with regards to the use of loudspeakers, control of vehicular noise and creation of awareness. But the Delhi government did not work on the order due to which the national green tribunal ordered the authorities of Delhi government to deposit the amount of rs.5 lakhs with the central pollution control board within week and should launch a website for people to register their grievances related to noise pollution.

- **Church of God in India v. K.K.R Majestic Colony Welfare Association and Others (2000)**¹⁸

The question arise in this case was whether in a country having multiple religious communities a religious community could claim its right to add to noise pollution on the ground of religion.

The court expressed the view that indisputably no religion prescribes the prayers should be performed by using microphones/loudspeakers or by beating drums. It was held that no religion prescribes that prayer should be performed by disturbing the peace of other.

- **B.S. Gajendragadar v. Shri Theater (2015)**¹⁹

In this case the applicant contended that during the operation theatre, high decibels sound is produced from the theatre as the theatre has not taken any steps to control the noise pollution.

¹⁷AIR 1952 Cal 150.

¹⁸ AIR 2000 S.C. 2773.

¹⁹ 2015(5) FLT 728 (NGT).

As a result, the residents of the nearby area like the applicant are facing health problem, noise pollution problem which make them difficult to listen internal conversation in the residential complex, as well as in the nearby area. Their complainants fell on deaf ears. The NGT bench of Pune relying upon the “Precautionary Principle” and based on the data supplied by the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board directed the theatre management to install automatic sound amplifiers control system so as to fix indicator nob at level 7, which shall not exceed beyond that point so as to avoid increase of excessive sound. By applying the “Polluter Pays principle”, it was directed that for any delay in installing such noise control system should pay a fine of Rs.1000/- per each day of default.

These cases have set an important precedent in the fight against noise pollution in India and have helped in enforcing stricter laws and regulations to protect the right to a healthy and peaceful environment.²⁰

Strategies for reducing noise pollution and promoting sustainable developing

Reducing noise pollution and promoting sustainable development can be achieved through the following strategies:

1. **Implementing noise control measures in urban planning:** This involves designing urban spaces that reduce the reflection and transmission of noise, such as using green spaces, parks and soundproof buildings.
2. **Regulating industrial noise:** Industries can be required to use noise-reducing technologies, such as mufflers, to minimize their noise impact on the surrounding communities.
3. **Encouraging the use of electric vehicles:** Electric vehicles are much quieter than gasoline-powered vehicles and can help reduce noise pollution in cities.
4. **Promoting public transportation:** Encouraging the use of public transportation can reduce the number of vehicles on the roads and, in turn, reduce noise pollution.
5. **Increasing the use of renewable energy sources:** Renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power, generate significantly less noise pollution compared to traditional power plants.
6. **Educating the public on noise pollution:** Raising awareness about the negative impacts of noise pollution can encourage people to reduce the amount of noise they produce and support efforts to reduce noise pollution.

²⁰ "Legal Framework for Control of Noise Pollution in India" by P. K. Dwivedi, Environmental Management and Sustainable Development (2015).

7. **Enforcing noise regulations:** Governments can enforce noise regulations by monitoring noise levels and penalizing violators.
8. **Encouraging sustainable development practices:** Sustainable development practices, such as green building design, can reduce the impact of human activities on the environment, including noise pollution.
9. **Promoting quiet tourism:** Encouraging tourists to engage in quiet and sustainable activities, such as hiking and wildlife watching, can help reduce the impact of tourism on the environment and local communities.

Implementing these strategies can help create a more sustainable and quieter environment for future generations to enjoy.²¹

Challenges and limitations in enforcing noise pollution laws

There are several challenges and limitations in enforcing noise pollution laws:

- **Lack of resources:** Monitoring and enforcing noise pollution laws can be a time-consuming and resource-intensive process. Governments may not have the resources, such as funding, personnel, and equipment, to effectively enforce noise pollution regulations.
- **Difficulty in measuring noise levels:** Measuring noise levels accurately can be challenging, as it is affected by various factors such as weather conditions and distance from the source.
- **Ambiguous definitions of "excessive" noise:** The definition of "excessive" noise can vary from one community to another, and it can be difficult to determine what level of noise is acceptable.
- **Lack of public awareness:** Many people may not be aware of the impacts of noise pollution or the laws that regulate it. This can make it difficult to enforce noise regulations, as people may not understand the importance of reducing noise levels.
- **Resistance from industries:** Industries that generate significant noise levels, such as construction sites, transportation, and manufacturing, may resist noise regulation as they may view it as a threat to their operations.
- **Complex legal process:** Enforcing noise pollution laws can involve a complex legal process, which may discourage governments from pursuing enforcement action.
- **Limited legal penalties:** In some cases, the penalties for violating noise pollution laws may not be severe enough to deter violators.

²¹ Tripathi, S. C. (2019). Environmental Law in India. New Delhi: Central Law Publications.

- **Difficulty in enforcing regulations in remote areas:** Enforcing noise regulations in remote or rural areas can be challenging, as there may be fewer resources available and it can be difficult to access these areas to monitor noise levels.

Enforcing noise pollution laws can be a complex process, but it is important for governments to address the challenges and limitations in order to protect public health and the environment. This can be achieved through a combination of education, regulation, and enforcement, as well as the development of more effective technologies for measuring and reducing noise pollution.²²

Conclusion and Suggestions

Noise pollution is a serious issue in India and is a major source of environmental degradation. The judicial approach towards noise pollution in India has been proactive and has resulted in the implementation of various laws and regulations aimed at controlling and mitigating the problem. The Supreme Court of India has played a crucial role in setting guidelines and norms for noise pollution levels and has laid down the responsibilities of various stakeholders, including the government, local authorities, and individuals.

In conclusion, while the judicial approach towards noise pollution in India has been effective in raising awareness and imposing penalties, there is still a need for greater enforcement of the laws and regulations.

The following suggestions may help in further mitigating the problem of noise pollution:

- **Stringent implementation of laws and regulations:** The existing laws and regulations need to be enforced more strictly to ensure that the sources of noise pollution are effectively controlled.
- **Awareness campaigns:** Increased public awareness about the dangers of noise pollution and the need to reduce exposure to it would encourage people to take appropriate action.
- **Technological innovations:** The development of new technologies to control and reduce noise levels should be encouraged, and existing technologies should be adapted and updated.
- **Collaboration between stakeholders:** Effective collaboration between the government, local authorities, industry, and individuals is crucial in reducing noise pollution and ensuring a safe and healthy environment for all.

²² Sharma, S. C. (2017). *Environmental Law in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

- Public participation: The public should be encouraged to actively participate in the process of controlling and mitigating noise pollution, by reporting instances of excessive noise and supporting efforts to reduce it.

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