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“Imagining Sustainability Beyond COVID-19 in India”

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The COVID-19 lockdown in India saw a spate of news stories suggesting improvements in environmental conditions. In this article, we caution against optimistic narratives of environmental revival. First, we analyse air pollution data before and during the lockdown to show that these improvements were temporary and a by-product of the severe restrictions placed on the normal functioning of the economy. Second, drawing upon data on income and inequality, we suggest that the human suffering witnessed during the lockdown was a result of widening social disparities since the 1990s. We argue that environmental priorities cannot be separated from social concerns, and equity has to be at the centre of imagining sustainability beyond the pandemic. (Abstract)

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