South Asian Environmental Humanities and Supranational Institutions: Cure or Distortions to Planetary Crisis.

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Introduction

South Asian environmental culture happens to develop a sustainability that never propose an altered earth as it try to preserve the inherent one. Sustainability happened to be the standard narrative of the South Asian environmental culture. This sustainable cultural narrative is interdisciplinary involving multifaceted human–centric ecological trends of South Asian state system distinctly expressing South Asian Earth system through a sustainable environmental humanities. But this humanly-environment was only human-self-assertion making the environment more non-humane during the colonial era of South Asia. Thus non-human actors such as nature are very much constant in human stories and in the history of assemblages in which humans are a part but not in human history.[1]Thus this human creature within an environmental setting emerges as the agent of anthropocentric environmental humanities of modern state. This

[1]Hannes Bergthaller and Peter Mortensen, *Framing the Environmental Humanities* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2018), 1.

particular EH in every modern state portion out space for humans, their institutions and overshadow nature's needs. Nature is not however kept insular. It is being constantly tied in a framed intimacy with the humans carefully concealed under lofty theorization of Environmental Humanities. But this Environmental Humanities is not single methodic 'nor a determinative object of analyses.[2] Environmental Humanities emerge as a conglomeration of enormous intellectual concerns. It significantly blends analytical and public facing processes and ethics with activism.[3]. The varied patterns of Environmental Humanities are combined and united by the panacea of Environmental hazard remedial initiated by scientists,theorists and policy makers of modern states. One such remedial made by environmental policy makers was Cop 26.

Policy Failures but concealed by blame game

The summit in Glasgow, UK, ended with the use of fossil fuel being blamed on all South Asian nations. In spite of the success of the blame game, it failed to contribute to the solution to the environmental crisis, since the policy makers attributed South Asia as non-ecological and responsible for destroying the world's ecology. A villainous projection of South Asian ecology conceals the failure to solve climate change. South Asian ecology, in contrast, was much more sustainable. As colonial onslaught occurred, this holistic interdependence was gradually obliterated, making easy transformation. A colonial state policy emerged like a modern supranational environmental policy, bringing ecology outside the sustainable zone and encompassing it with a universal policy of transforming nature into an economic variable, making natural resources inaccessible. Thus, South Asia is infested with several environmental issues such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, ecosystem changes, pollution, and desertification. To quell this, an alternate vision of Environmental Humanities emerged, however destroying only the inherent environmental humanities of South Asia to adjust to a new structured Environmental Humanities . The present paper tries to outline how the supranational colonial state encouraged a phase of fossil-imperialism and mono-ecology system that became destructive to the inherent

[2]Stephanie Foote and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Introduction: Climate Change/Changing Climates," in *The Cambridge Companion to Environmental Humanities*, ed. Stephanie Foote and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 1.
[3]*Ibid.*, 2.

environmental humanities of South Asia .The Supranational institutions in post-colonial world concealed the petro-imperialism of modern state but unfurled only the usage of cheap fuels by the post-colonial South Asia.

De-sustainability of South Asia, a Supranational gift.

In this massiveness, we can sense an environmentesque type of South Asian Ecology that existed previously. However, the Colonial state introduced an economy centered on mono-ecology to the South Asian physical environment. So, Cop 26 appears extremely pertinent where South Asia's sustainability was pinned enough to question its sustainability as if it never existed. It was a Western gift to South Asia to use fossil fuels, displacing its indigenous populations from their land and resources. Rob Nixon named this process as "slow violence or an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all."[4]

The policy makings apart from being great failures were devastators as well. So, immense was their skill in devastation that they supported a phase of petro-imperialism generated by the modern state. The globalised supranational environmental policies were inviting non-governmental agencies in a pattern of concealed greed that generated petro-capitalisism and petro-imperialisism. Alaska's Baufort Sea was put for sale.[5]

Passionate local resistance to globalization failed in the face of supranational modernity imbued with scientific revolution, which only bred ecological crisis. It appeared that nature was a single entity whose ecologicality and environmentality served only policies, theories, human politics, and society. South Asian nature was left alone to be extracted only. These 'historical realities'[6]complicate but explain South Asia's nature's being that represents these 'historical realities' in the form of space, place, region, province, animal, plants, and weather bringing out the physical being of South Asian nature . Such realities though valid and important, however don't form part of classical South Asian nature of pre-colonial days.

Altered Earth that know only to drill Resources influencing an universal State policy.

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[4]Lowell Duckert, "Coal/Oil,"in*The Cambridge Companion to Environmental Humanities*, ed. Stephanie Foote and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 216.
[5]*Ibid.*, 215.
[6]Morton, *Ecology without Nature*, 2.

Altered Earth is a superficial concept that only accommodates altered Environmental humanities which is a state strategy to conceal resource extraction. But supranational institutions also involve themselves in quelling environmental issues by insulating the states and involving the non-governmental actors in managing environmental issues of every state.[7]

Thus modern environmentalism and environmental humanities are a global thing also. These superficial Environmental humanists are unable to fix the catastrophic planetary crisis as it is itself unsustainable based on resource use. The supranational Environmental humanities that characterized colonial South Asia made anthropocene ,the patent orbit for South Asia to move. The current planetary crisis however situated its causes on the increased use of coal by South Asia. A distorted picture of human experience has been superimposed on South Asia, making it responsible for planetary crisis, a major issue of our time. Thus we need to take ecology seriously especially when it comes to South Asia, since this is momentous when South Asia has been pinned the blame for being responsible for generating Global Warming. A colonial state and post-colonial supranational world dictated the environmental humanities, that South Asia embraced. So this global environmental humanities ruling South Asia needs to be removed. An environmentally conscious South Asia needs to be projected that has got a sustainable Environmental Humanities.

But What is South Asian Environmental Humanities that don't need an altered Earth to sustain ?

South Asian ecology with its inherent sustainable structure built its own Environmemtal Humamities. In South Asia, environmental history had its birth in the 1980s though nature was discussed much earlier in Vedic texts, ancient Indian epics like *Ramayana and* the *Mahabharata*, the Puranas, ancient Indian compositions like *Malavikanimitra*, *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* and so on[8]. Separate forest departments during the Mauryan and Gupta period attest extensively to the

[7] Michael R. Lucas, *Nationalism, Sovereignty, and Supranational Organizations*,(Hamburg: Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik an der Universität Hamburg, April 1999), 8.

[8]For a detailed discussion of ecological concerns in ancient Indian texts, see KapilaVatsayan, "Ecology and Indian Myth," in *Indigenous Vision: Peoples of India Attitudes to the Environment*, ed. GeetiSen (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1992).

forest concern of early Indians. There are extensive evidences in the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya for forests and Wildlife. These are mainly environmental consciousness which was engulfed by South Asian ecological history having distinct disciplinary methodologies.

South Asian Plants were the first to get commoditized implanting an altered Environmental Humanities.

South Asia faced an altered earth system with the gradual onset of colonial Ecology when its plants were colonised at the very outset . The first step was gathering of knowledge of the plants of the orient. Botany interested the traders and European Botanists initially, mainly because of its culinary and medicinal value. Thus, plants appeared to be the first category to get colonized and economized. Their economic salience inaugurated a most important phase in the history of Colonialism, which was plant colonialism. Thus Van Rheede's *HortusMalabaricus,* influenced the English collectors in Madras such as James Pettier (1658-1718) and Charles DuBois (1656-1740) to collect orient plants. United Brothers, a Botanical society of the 18th century established by Madras botanists as pointed out by I.H.Burkill, enthusiastically collected plants, dried them, prepared herbarium specimens, and sent them to Europe for identification and descriptionAsian[9]. The Royal Botanic Garden established in 1787 at Shibpur by Colonel Robert Kyd facilitated study, exchange and breeding of exotic Indian plants like Teak. Kyd also hoped to promote new crop varieties along with improved techniques and technologies of agriculture that would serve to avert the 'dreadful visitations' of what Kyd termed ' Famines and Subsequent Pestilence'.[10]

The agricultural and Horticultural Society established by William Carey in 1820 collected information on various plants and tried to preserve, cultivate and exchange those plants for commercial purposes with many plants from Europe, facilitating plant colonialism and thereby plant utilization.[11]

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[9] I. H. Burkill, *Chapters on the History of Botany in India* (Calcutta: Botanical Survey of India, 1964), ix.
[10] R. Axelby, "Calcutta Botanic Garden and the Colonial Re-ordering of the Indian Environment," *Archives of Natural History* 35, no. 1 (2008): 150–163.
[11]*Transactions of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India*, vol. 2 (Sreerampur: Sreerampur Press, 1836), 6.

Thus, the history of colonization in South Asia is the history of how plants and botanical matter decided the fate of the colonists[12]. Ecological search outs that often date to the early years of colonization illustrate how a modern power structure can be shaped by ecological encirclements. Europe became a hotbed of 'mechanistic vision' [13]responsible for enslaving Africans and conquering America. But in such a spectrum where is South Asia located? The spectrum was enlarged by the allurement of the Europeans in South Asian plants. Violence and intellectuality (Bacon's observation and experimentation, Darwin's evolutionary theory) were undoubtedly parts of this vision that paved the way for an economy that included human flesh, and blood, which cost the colonized when an extracted economy arose its hood encouraging an urge to know South Asian ecology .This has been viewed by environmentalists like A.W. Crosby[14] (1972) as 'ecological imperialism'. This ecological Imperialism was global to make colonization a supranational institution capable of bringing ecology under a mono-tone and globalised pattern that can be controlled and regulated.This is no doubt followed in the post-colonial phase also under Supranational Institutions that initiate globalised reforms like environmental humanities to deal with planetary crisis.

Conclusion

Thus , Naturalism of the post-renaissance world was only a machinery to extract natural resources and truncating sustainability. Supranational institutions' policies serve only to conceal state extraction and never stop it, which is the source of all environmental crises. But this environmental crisis became the concern of supranational organizations, who were mainly non-state actors that converted the local environmental crisis of states into a global crisis. This obviously gives rise to environmental scepticism as the state is divorced from the responsibility of protecting nature's rights and developing sustainable modes of livelihood.

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[12]Amitav Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* (London: Penguin Books, 2021), 26.
[13]*Ibid*.,45.
[14]A. W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Modern South Asian states are no exception to this. It muted its nature during colonial days and continues this even during its post-colonial days. Supranational institutions have featured South Asia's fossil fuel dependence as a global concern, transforming local issues into glocal ones. As a result, 'environmental crisis' now serve as glocal issues, just as local species go global.

A fragile and developing economy was the most important catalyst for an altered earth system to which South Asia became accustomed. This involved its citizens to ecology extractive professions making them susceptible to environmental scepticism and thus took environment for granted. Environmental scepticism is a by-default problem as environment has been a part of state-policy for which government was made responsible. Supranational institutions gradually involved non-state actors into the management of environmental issues making environment distant from state-citizens gradually. Thus environmental degradation became a state subject and any policy of the state to protect the environment came as a distrust to state people making them a prey to environmental scepticism. An ill-imperialism that capitalized natural resource during the colonial days brought petro-imperialism into the scene during the post-colonial days. There developed "a kind of fatalism" that eroded individuals of their basic virtues and making them prey to a systemic ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’ pattern with an urge to climb this ladder at the cost of natural resources. So State and consequent human development is nature aided making them to both use and degrade nature. This pattern was achieved through preservation ,transfer, and identifying stronger and more valuable natural species. The inferior natural resources are subjected to isolation and rejection. Human will and human intelligence developed forces that bred bio-politics preserving and transferring rare superior species. This supremacy assertion needs to be discarded as we are facilitating an ecology that isconditioning only the superior species. Knowing the local plant species and transferring and exchanging them to new areas resulted in something called ‘glocal’ species. This species transfer was most significantly witnessed in South Asia from where plant species were transferred to Europe resulting in mal-adjustment of the plant –species within the foreign environment. This resulted in the breeding of altered species bringing significant changes in the ecology. Consequently, planetary health is compromised. To maintain a healthy planetary habitat, we must break this single ecology and create and maintain instead natural ecological variance so that we may not fall prey to environmental skepticism. Human negligence is a finite response which can be solved by consistent policy and governmental interventions , when

combined however with environmental skepticism, it grows into an infinite response causing a crisis for the planet that has no solution. Its time for us to consider this seriously and discarding any superficial and artificial habitability that may facilitate an unsustainable structure followed by man-made superficial environmental humanities based on superficial anthropocentrism, claiming to offer cures for all aspects of climate change. This is sponsored greatly by the Supranational Institutions that negate and deny auto-adaptation of the species emerging as a serious problem to the world in an era of distorted planetary health.