



ACRSS NEWSLETTER

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AIL Centre for Research in Social Sciences

The AIL Centre for Research in Social Sciences (ACRSS) as a society functions with the vision of bringing to the forefront key social, political and economic issues, conducting in depth research on them and educating our community about the same. In a world full of superstition and false faith, the society aims to inculcate a spirit of scientific temper and humanism among our students. In addition we try dealing with subjects like Sociology, Political Science, History and Economics, our research focuses on the very being of man and how we can attain better standards of living.

GREEN ALERT

"A newsletter encircling the Terra Firma we inhabit and destruct"

After much deliberation, ACRSS came up with this theme, throwing focus on a very nerve wrecking and pertinent issue. This newsletter is to help individuals acclimatize themselves with the most uncanny and disastrous forms of environmental destructions manifesting themselves in the modern age. Also, it discloses little steps we can take to preserve the environment, through individual efforts. Happy reading!



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TIME TO FLY ON THE RADAR- ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF AIR TRAVEL

Shweta Nair (4th year)

Air travel can be nerve-wrecking. You have to figure out the time to get to the airport, whether you packed the right weight of your luggage, or if you'll end up in the middle seat or whether your flight will get delayed or not. And then when you finally get off the plane, you're exhausted right after even though you potentially did nothing. But you know what's even more nerve-wrecking than flying? The environmental costs of it.

Aviation is one of the fastest growing industries worldwide. The aviation industry has grown at an extremely rapid rate and it looks as if future growth may be even faster. In the two decades between 1989 and 2009, the global aviation industry has grown annually by 4.4%. On this date, flying contributes to about 2-5% of the greenhouse emissions. Even though this doesn't seem like a big slice of the pie, there are two reasons why we should care about the impact that flying has.

The first concern being the rate of increase of air travel. Airlines estimate that the amount of air travel will grow by an average of just under 5% per year up to 2034, which means that it could have consumed 12% of the world carbon budget for 1.5°C by 2050. While



other industries are trying to decrease their emissions of greenhouse gases, it is not possible for the aviation industry because biofuels cannot keep up with the technology or technological advances as well as fossil fuels.

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Secondly, for those people who fly, which is only 5% of the population of the world; flying can be the biggest

factor for their personal carbon output. To give you an idea, by flying, a person puts 7.4 tons of carbon out into the atmosphere in a year. So, for all the environmental choices you make, they get negated in the end, by the flights you take.

Now, because of this, there are divided opinions out there. Jack Miles, a reporter for Washington Post said, “Take a deep breath and throw away that bucket list for good. You are needed at home, my friend, urgently needed. For the love of the earth and for those who will inherit it when you’re gone, stay right where you are.” Yikes!

So instead of quitting travel, are there ways we can really negate our flights’ impact? And the answer to that is yes, maybe, kind of. Let’s put an asterisk on it.

The first option is carbon offsetting. It is basically where you pay to have the CO2 emissions from flying sequestered in another form. You can offset carbon on through various companies. For example, you pay a company to plant as many trees as the calculation of your carbon offset. There also exists a framework for this on the international level for nations through the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) developed by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).

There are a couple of opinions on this. The first being the most extreme by

Kevin Anderson, a climate scientist. He says that offsetting is worse than doing nothing. It is without scientific legitimacy, and almost certainly contributes to a net increase in the absolute rate of global emissions growth. However, his opinion is from 2012, which makes it outdated. So, we’ll have to take it with a grain of salt. But if we consider it on a more general sense, the social implications are still valid. Therefore, just because someone can offset their flights, does that allow them to take more flights which in turn causes more harm in the long run?

The most common opinion shared by many groups, is that carbon offsetting should be the last resort. One of these groups is Atmosfair, a German carbon offsetting group. They suggest that we should only offset the things that we can’t avoid =. Their slogan is “first avoid, then reduce and lastly offset”.

I’m going to give the last word on carbon offsets to Dr. Kotchen, who is a Yale professor in Forestry. He says that his own view is that purchasing carbon offsets is better than nothing assuming that you’re careful about where you buy them. Yet, when considering ways to reduce your own carbon footprint, you should compare offsetting to a more certain alternative of directly reducing your own emissions.

The second option is to support groups that do work in reducing the impact of air travels. Such a group that comes up

us Free Ride, a UK-based organisation. Their mission statement states, “as a society what we value from flying is occasional holidays to explore the world. With this proposal we can protect those things while focusing efforts to reduce flying on the passenger group that is causing the lion’s share of the problem; the frequent flyers.” Their basic premise and model is that one flight per person per year should be free and otherwise there should be an environmental tax added. For them, it makes more sense to tax the people who are flying the most frequently.

The last measure is said best by Roger Tires, a environmental sociologist, “If citizens remain blissfully unaware of aviation emissions, then airlines and governments are unlikely to do anything about them.”

Therefore, it is pretty clear that reducing the climate impacts of air travel is tough, especially when other

means of transportation are not viable. But we can do small things like reduce the number of flights we take in a year; or take a direct flight to our destination; or taking less number of longer trips rather than frequent shorter trips to reduce our personal impact.

Aviation contributes to quality of life – allowing us to visit friends and relatives, to travel, to experience new places, to shrink the world. Aviation must develop if it is to continue to meet the needs of a growing economy and an expanding population. At the same time, aviation must be environmentally sustainable, operating harmoniously within the constraints imposed by the need for clean air and water, limited noise impacts, and a liveable climate. To maintain its central transportation role, aviation must ensure it can mitigate any environmental constraints that result from its operations.



TO RUIN THE TRIP THAT YOU FOREVER LONGED FOR – THE CRISIS OF ICEBERG MELTDOWN

Nishant Tiwari (4th year)



“A random generic quote in an attempt to attract your attention- I’m swapping my effort with this because I know it wouldn’t.”

-A foreign personality whose name probably even I would have read for the first time

Quick question: Ever wanted to be on the Titanic?

The grandeur of whom the skies speak tales of, the hospitality of whom the angels sing praises of?

Even though the same ship sank and only a handful of people survived? The truth is- you already are.

Ever heard about Vrindavan, or Amaravati, or Antillia? These are places- first mentioned in mythology with divine origin- after which the same names were kept for the places

that you earlier thought these to be.

Vrindavan- the abode of (Lord) Krishna’s birth; Amravati- a place in Indraloka where siddhas made their homes, Antillia- a legendary place where fleeing Muslim Conquerors, founded the Isle of Seven Cities, to the West of the Atlantic Ocean.

One thing in common between all these legendary places is that, in one version or the other, they submerged under the water.

In comparison to these places, are the places that are stretching out today after long slumber under sea- Jal Mahal of Rajasthan, for instance? The turtle island in China, which remains submerged for 9 months and re-emerges in Spring when the water level is comparatively less?

Now, let us talk about Mumbai. A place

that is about to face the destiny of the former category. Maldives. Solomon Islands. Mauritius. Places with high alert now facing the threat of permanent submersion under sea in the near future.

The iceberg meltdown that we have been hearing now for years, that water ought to go somewhere, right? And in the meanwhile, we've already lost a part of Papua New-Guinea to the undersea world. Island submersion is not a problem in isolation. Along with the plausibly impossible problem of refugee rescue, the actual question is who will rescue them? Which country will take the responsibility of harbouring an entire nation? Even when the international conventions talk about the resettlement of refugees from natural island, what about people from artificial islands?

Maybe you started reading this just because I said it was about you. Maybe you left, or are about to, just after knowing that it actually wasn't. But is it all that we are here for? To live callously in our own cozy spheres, indifferent of what another person in some corner of the world might undergoing? Just in the time you have finished reading this article- per minute the world lost 120 people to natural death, 3,700 pedestrians and drivers to road mishaps, and a few hundred refugees. The world is not as 'chill' as we think it is. It is dying, and it is dying a slow death. When we

say it is none of our concern- we actually talk about embracing suicide. But what about the fact that I'll be long gone before that even happens! Just for a moment, be true to your conscience and think about losing your dearest one. Noticed the momentary rush of adrenaline? A spasm of fear? A while of helplessness? The desperation? That is the same thing you'd be putting another person through decades down the line. This is what they meant when they said 'climate change is real, and it is happening.' Water, too, is a tricky thing, my friend. You love it as long as it is in the books and movies, but as soon as it starts choking your windpipe, you see an evil face sneering at you therefrom. The same ocean waves in whose whispering rubble you sought refuge from the cold blows of life, look deadly, devilish, devastating. This article isn't to solemnly lecture you about 'preserving environment' primarily. Because that is what your environmental education classes were for and it clearly didn't work. So, this article is just to make you more responsible. Not for anyone. Not for the person who just finished loading the last carton on the rescue boat and is now looking for all that he can the home that he'll never see again. Not for the pregnant woman trying to "take extra care" we all would wish for, but now is on the verge of making a choice of priority. Not for the

kids who, instead of remembering the dolls that they played with, will recall how they escaped from a sinking island. Not for the governments, that cohort choicelessly and try to devour a way to protect their population, But for yourself. 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.' Here, we are the ones who are giving birth to injustice. And justice lies in the realisation that our lives are much more than about being so callous that we keep hurting each other.

So from the next time when you are tempted to throw a wrapper down the moving bus, DON'T. The next time you see someone throwing trash and keep quiet to avoid the trouble, don't. The next time you see a running tap and choose not to stop it, don't. Do not wait for the big change to come. Let me crack it to you, there is none. Let's start working in our capacity to save the world. Because every time we choose not to, we follow the traces of those who refuted the idea of life boats on the ship. Every time we decide not to, we follow the traces of those who refused to save lives of those who could be saved. Every time we prefer not to, we lose another man to hypothermia, another woman to loneliness, children to orphanage.

Let's choose to do it.

Not only because I need it, because you need it too. Because cliché environmental quotes wouldn't make as much difference, as you can.

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THE CONTOURS OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: AN ANALYSIS

Chahat Bhandari (3rd year)



INTRODUCTION

“Look at your business and the activities that you undertake. Then, start to think about not just your economic concerns, but about social and environmental impacts that business have.”

-Jerry Greenfield

The concept of environmental protection and sustainable use of resources has conventionally been given due significance and was woven in all facets of life in India. Due to the changing lifestyle, infrastructure and industrial development, increased rate of urbanization has led to greater environment pollution and degradation. In such a scenario, Environmental Impact Assessment (hereinafter referred to as EIA) becomes significant. EIA is a process of evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development, taking into account inter-related socio-economic, cultural and human-health impacts, both beneficial and adverse. The aim of an EIA is to ensure that potential impacts are identified and addressed at an early stage in the projects planning and design. The primary intent behind EIA is to recognize, predict and assess the economic, environmental and social



impact of development activities in order to give information on the environmental consequences for decision making and to stimulate environmentally sound and sustainable development through pointing out appropriate substitutes and mitigation measures.

TRACING THE ROOTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN INDIA

"The more you know about the past, the better prepared you are for the future."

-Theodore Roosevelt

It all started around 20 years back in 1976-77 when Planning Commission had put the responsibility of examining the river valley project from an environmental perspective on the Department of Science and Technology. This was also extended for all those projects where sanction from Public Investment Board was required. Environmental Clearance till 1994, lacked legislative support and was solely in the hands of administration. Then, finally on 27th day of January, 1994 the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India enacted the Environment (Protection) Act which made EIA statutory and led to Environmental Clearance (EC) being mandatory for expansion or modernization of any activity or for setting up new projects listed in Schedule 1 of the notification.

IS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT NOTIFICATION, 2020 CONTRA LEGEM?

"Let he who would bring about changes, first complete an environmental impact assessment and a definite public comment period."

-Anonymous

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in the previous year on April, 11 had published the draft Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification 2020 dated March 23, 2020 with the purpose of replacing the already prevailing EIA Notification, 2006. The view point of government with regard to this is that the novel Notification will make the process more crystal clear and expedient by the implementation of an online system, further delegation, rationalization and standardization of the process. But as the saying goes that "all that glitters is not gold."

The draft EIA, 2020 Notification instead of keeping focus on ensuring the protection of the environment, undermines the orders of the National Green Tribunal which had ruled against post-facto approvals. In an order on April 1, the Supreme Court had held "ex post facto environmental clearances" contrary to law. It said: "Environment law cannot countenance the notion of an ex post facto clearance. This would be contrary to both the precautionary principle as well as the need for sustainable

development.”

The purpose of this notification is to legitimize illegalities done by industries. It seems to be emphasizing that an industrial project that has violated environmental rules will have a right to seek approval for it as long as that project is permissible in the area. It is a mockery of the law.

Adding on, the removal of various activities from the purview of public consultation is another major change. In the environment clearance process, public consultation is an important component under which the concerns of local affected persons and others, who have a stake in the environmental impact of the project, are ascertained with a view to appropriately take into account while designing the project.

Nevertheless, looking on the brighter side the 2020 draft notification has a clause which deals with definitions to various terms related to EIA. It may prove useful in the sense that it consolidates the EIA rules and has the potential of removing any sort of ambiguity in the present law. However, the Notification needs to address certain issues and only then it will serve the real purpose.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: REVIEWING ITS JURISPRUDENCE

The goal is to create a world where environment does not need protection.

-Anonymous

In *Sterlite Industries (India) Ltd. v. Union of India* the Supreme Court discussed the specific grounds on which administrative action involving the grant of environmental approval could be challenged. The grounds for judicial review were illegality, irrationality and procedural impropriety. Thus, the granting of environmental approval by the competent authority outside the powers given to the authority by law, would be grounds for illegality. If the decision were to suffer from *Wednesbury* unreasonableness the Court could interfere on grounds of irrationality. Lastly, an approval can be challenged on the grounds that it has been granted in breach of proper procedure. Nevertheless, the Court has not restrained itself, in cases where it found that the SEAC (State Expert Appraisal Committee) had recommended approvals without any application of mind.

Thus, in *Gram Panchayat Navlakh Umbre v. Union of India and Ors* the Court held that the “decision making process of those authorities besides being transparent must result in a reasoned conclusion which is reflective of a due application of mind to the diverse concerns arising from a project such as the present. The mere fact that a body is comprised of experts is not a sufficient safeguard to ensure that the conclusion of its deliberations is just and proper.”

In *Utkarsh Mandal v. Union of India* the Delhi High Court had held that the EAC (Expert Appraisal Committee) was bound to reveal the causes underlying its decision following the principle enunciated by the Supreme Court that quasi-judicial and administrative bodies have to disclose reasons for reaching a particular conclusion. Further, the Court has emphasized the need for a detailed analysis of facts and reasoning.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has held that the “appraisal is not a mere formality and it requires detailed scrutiny by EAC and SEAC of the application as well as the documents filed, the final decision for either rejecting or granting an Environment Clearance vests with the Regulatory Authority concerned viz., SEIAA or MOEF (The Ministry of Environment and Forests), but the task of appraisal is vested with EAC/SEAC and not with the regulatory authority.”

CONCLUDING REMARKS

*"Only after the last tree has been cut down,
only after the last river has been poisoned,
only after the last fish has been caught,
only then will you find that money cannot
be eaten."*

-Anonymous

EIA has a critical role to play in addressing the environmental issues with special regard to project and development and especially power projects. Sustainable Development can

be achieved with the amalgamation of environment and development planning. EIA process becomes significant in providing an anticipatory and preventive mechanism for environmental management and protection which makes a way towards growth. As far as the EIA 2020 is concerned, the two main principles: Precautionary Principle and Sustainable Development which forms the basis of environmental laws will be really infringed if the proposed changes in the draft are brought into effect. But on the greener side the EIA law should not be seen as a hindrance but should rather be considered as a pre-requisite by the business entities in order to make sure that they are carrying on the operations without causing harm to the natural habitat and the society. Certain changes in the draft of 2020 will prove beneficial to all segments of the society.



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ECO- LABELLING: A PUSH TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Harnoor Kaur (3rd year)

ECO- LABELLING: AN INTRODUCTION

"You are the last, best hope of Earth. We ask you to protect it. Or we, and all living things we cherish, are history."

-Leonardo DiCaprio

Rising consciousness about environmental protection globally, has made consumers more inquisitive about the repercussions of their decision of buying a product on environment, thereby giving birth to a very popular instrument: Eco- Labelling. Eco- labels, like any other labels, are marks that can be affixed to a product if the product fulfills the specific criteria. Eco- Labelling ensures that the product is eco- friendly and environmentally preferable. Some of the important examples of eco- labels are Eco- Mark, Blue Angel, Green Label, etc.

The goal of eco- labeling as recognized by International Organization for Standardization ("ISO") is:

"...through communication of verifiable and accurate information, that is not misleading, on environmental aspects of products and services, to encourage the demand for and supply of those products and services that cause less stress on the environment, thereby stimulating the potential for market-driven continuous environmental improvement".



KINDS OF ENVIRONMENT PERFORMANCE LABELLING

Various classifications of environment labelling have been made; however, the classification given by ISO is the one usually applied. ISO categorizes environment labeling into:

- TYPE I Environment Labelling: Principles and Procedures (Eco- labelling):

Type I Environment labelling is based on ISO 14024. License under Type I Environment Labelling can be issued, only if the authorized third party after assessing the product assures that all the laid down criteria's have been adhered to.

The European Eco- label, The Blue Angel (Germany), Ecomark (Japan) and numerous other labels have been issued under Type I.

- TYPE II Environment Labelling: Self- Declared Environmental Claims

TYPE II Environment labeling, also christened as green claims, are based on ISO 14021. Under this category, the service provider can proclaim a particular environmental quality that they profess on their own. Self-Declared Environmental Claims, as the name suggests, is not verified by a third party, but still they are anticipated to be genuine. As an exemplar, the products claiming to be recyclable or biodegradable come under this classification.

- TYPE III Environment Labelling: Environmental Declarations

Based on ISO 14025, Type III Environment Labelling aims at providing quantified data of any product, based on its environmental performance. Life cycle analysis (LCA) of a product is the essence of Type III Labelling. The label is issued only after third party assessment. Eco- Leaf, Korean Environmental Declaration of products, etc. are some of the illustrations of Type III Environmental labelling.

The classification by ISO has proved to be instrumental in facilitating the customers to decipher the labels in a most accurate manner and make well-informed choices.

ECO- LABELLING: WHAT IS THE INTENT BEHIND IT?

“Our planet’s alarm is going off, and it is time to wake up and take action.”

-Leonardo DiCaprio

In the prevailing era of industrialization and urbanization, environment demands our utmost attention. Its degradation has been done at large scale for a very long time and now it’s high time to co-operate and work hand in hand to ameliorate our environment. Eco- labelling is one of the steps towards sensitizing the environmental concerns.

Three fundamental objectives of Eco- labelling can be discussed under the following heads:

1. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Deriving from the name itself, Eco- labelling gives a fair idea to the consumer that the product is in consonance with the ecology. Hence the rationale behind it comes out to be the protection and upgradation of the quality of environment. Eco- labelling intends to advance environmentally preferable goods. It has been very rightly proved to be a market- based instrument which along with influencing the consumer’s decisions, works for the promotion of environmental concerns as well.

2. PROMISING CONSERVATIONIST INNOVATION

The most innovative and

groundbreaking businesses in terms of its environment friendly production, is awarded with a market incentive through eco- labelling programmes. Providing consumers with environmentally sustainable products will act as a ladder for businesses to create a market niche and an optimistic impression in the minds of consumers, consequently enthralling other producers to follow the trend.

The best example to cite here can be of ENERGYSTAR, which has been rewarded for its environment friendly electrical appliances.

3. FABRICATING CONSUMER AWARENESS

Eco- labelling boosts the consumer awareness with regard to the importance of their actions and selections upon nature. This further ensures that the resources are managed sustainably and makes the consumers more accountable towards environment.

ECO MARK SCHEME: A STEP FORWARD

“The only way forward, if we are going to improve the quality of the environment, is to get everybody involved.”

- Richard Rogers

Indian Government launched a scheme under the head of “Eco- Mark” in 1991 to label the products favouring environment. The scheme comes under the direct administration of Bureau of Indian Standards (“BIS”).

The scheme recognizes cradle to grave approach i.e. it takes into consideration the complete life cycle of a product, right from retrieving raw materials to the product’s proper dumping. Only the businesses conforming to the standards (in terms of quality and environment) established by BIS, will be awarded with the eco mark under the Eco Mark Scheme.

THE ECO MARK LOGO



The logo for Eco Mark represents an earthen pot, which clearly passes on a message to the community for being benevolent towards the environment. An earthen pot is created using a renewable resource (soil), and can be disposed of properly without causing any harm to the environment.

Eco Mark Scheme indubitably can be said to be a great governmental initiative to acknowledge magnificent pro-environmental initiatives and advocate sustainable consumption at international level.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

“Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.”

-George Bernard Shaw

Buzzword for the environmental mindful consumers: Eco- labelling, has picked up steam from sometime. Unfortunately, improper regulation and paucity of information have led to the manufacturers making sham assertions about their products, thereby losing the trust of consumers towards Eco- labelling. No doubt, Eco- labelling has achieved much success in other countries. But India being largely populated country, sheltering majority of illiterate and poor population, has faced much difficulty in letting this concept spread progressively. For masses earning hand to mouth of income, buying basic necessities at reasonable prices becomes highest priority which makes them oblivion of its impact on environment.

Cutting the long story short, Eco- labelling can be regarded as the pillar for expanding demand and supply of ecological products. Nonetheless, awareness regarding Eco- labelling and other major steps in this direction to popularize this concept is indispensable.



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ENVIRONMENT CRIES FOR HUMAN COMPASSION

Dr. Gagandeep Dhaliwal

Assistant Professor (Political Science)

An Environment encompasses the surroundings or conditions in which a person, animal, or plant lives or operates. Hence it becomes our utmost duty to make an endeavour to clean and nurture the same. The state as well as the individual should practise vigilance towards the preservation of our Environment which is faced with several challenges like maladministration of the emission of green house gases, plastic pollution, bio diversity loss, deforestation, air pollution amongst a wide range of factors.

India emits 3 giga tonnes of greenhouse gases every year, about two and a half tons per person amounting to half the world average. Our climate is witnessing a rise in temperature, change in snowfall and rainfall patterns, heavy rainstorms and high temperatures. These horrendous changes are a result of increasing levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that are caused by human activities, such as burning fossil fuels for energy. As the most rational creation of God, we must strive for healing our mother earth as well as the environment surrounding it.



Several measures can be adopted for the same. We must shift from cars to bicycle/ public transport as a mode of transport, encourage use of electric vehicles, adopt car-pools and improve processing of manure to reduce methane emissions from livestock as well as consume climate-friendly food . The fast rate of consumption of earth's resources stands in stark contrast to the feeble rate of their replenishment.

The world of mammals, fish, birds, reptiles and amphibians experienced a

glaring decline in their population at an average of 68% between 1970 and 2016. This biodiversity loss is attributed to factors like land-use change, particularly the conversion of habitats, like forests, grasslands and mangroves, into agricultural systems. Many species like sharks and seahorses are endangered due to illegal wildlife trade. There is a probability of 500 species of land animals going extinct. Hence there is a need for global attention towards the loss of biodiversity with subsequent adoption of required measures.

Increasing production and consumption of plastic is an outcome of changing lifestyle. The year 2015, saw a production of 419 million tons across the globe. The fact that 91% of all plastic that has ever been made is not recycled, represent our failure.

Deforestation i.e permanent removal of trees for the purposes of agriculture or grazing, or using the timber for fuel, construction or manufacturing etc. The alarming rate of deforestation across the globe is going to leave earth with only 10% of its forests times to come.



Man in his unquenching thirst for commercialisation and concretisation is not realising the ill-effects of deforestation in the form of soil erosion, loss of habitat, increased emission of green house gases, loss of homeland of indigenous people etc. Therefore a conscious effort on part of the administration is required to control these maladies.

Furthermore, it is the air-pollution which is adding to our woes. WHO reveals that nine out of 10 people breathe air that contains high levels of pollutants leading to loss of life due to air pollution. Hence people are dying of fatal heart diseases, respiratory disorders, cancer and brain stroke etc. There is a need to switch to a more plant-based diet since the global food system, livestock and fisheries are responsible for one third of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions. greenhouse gases such as nitrous oxide through the use of fertilisers for crop production.

The above mentioned are just a few of the infinite ill-effects of mankind's ruthless exploitation of his environment which if left uncontrolled can further aggravate the situation. Hence it is high time we realise the value and worth of our environment and work towards its replenishment and rejuvenation or else our future generations will be left with no option but to lead an unhealthy, sick and short life.

CATERING TO THE NATURE CONSERVATION NEED: BEYOND CONSCIOUS EFFORTS

Anoushka Rana (2nd year)



If one were to keep quiet for a moment,

*“It would be an exotic moment
without rush, without engines,
we would all be together
in a sudden strangeness.
Fishermen in the cold sea
would not harm whales
and the man gathering salt
would look at his hurt hands.”*

Many years have passed since Pablo Neruda wrote these words in his poem, Keeping Quiet. He asks man to stop and reflect on his ways. He also addresses a very important matter – what is the purpose of scientific and technological advancement when in the pursuit of the same, mankind has been inflicting great harm on the natural resources, the biodiversity of the Earth, the atmosphere, the soil, the oceans and by extension to itself?

This question has found itself of

relevance once again as the world battles a terrible pandemic. COVID-19 was horrible in ways that horrible things are. It brought the entire world down to its knees. But, it was also an opportunity – to hit pause and introspect into our ways; an opportunity, it seems, we are letting go to waste. In the early days of the pandemic, government-imposed lockdowns around the world brought our everyday lives to a sudden halt. And, within a short span of limited human activity, we watched nature take its course. The air quality underwent a considerable degree of improvement, the water in the Ganges became potable in a very long time, dolphins returned to the otherwise busy canals of Venice. However, we couldn't bear it for long and grew restless. Within little time and hesitation, we started resorting to the usual modus operandi.

THE NEED TO ACT NOW

It would be myopic to assume that the harm we inflict on nature in the name of scientific and technological advancement has no immediate repercussions. Nature has been fighting back more and more as is evident from number of natural catastrophes that occurred within a span of a year: the

Australian bushfires, unexpected snowstorms in Texas, the Chamoli glacier burst in Uttarakhand, being the most prominent ones. Scientists even attribute climate change as one of the contributing factors of the COVID-19 pandemic, and also allege that it was only a mild pandemic and that we can expect more severe ones in the very near future. Thus, the problem that climate change threatens to pose is not far off in the future and can take unthinkable shapes. What stands before us is not really a case of Man vs. Nature. It is that of Man's present vs. Man's future. Nature existed before mankind and will continue to do so after it is gone. We are ultimate losers. In what is regarded as the costliest accident in the history of mankind, the Chernobyl disaster of 1986 triggered an environmental catastrophe, causing about 3,50,000 people to immediately evacuate the surrounding area. Not only did it claim the lives of a number of people but also resulted in adverse long-term health effects in those who managed to survive the exposure. More than thirty years have passed since the disaster but the place remains uninhabitable for us. In the meanwhile, nature seems to be thriving in the very same place. The area has become a sanctuary for species that are rare elsewhere. This incident stands as a testimony to the fact that no matter how grave our mistakes are, nature will overcome them. It only needs the



littlest of chance to bounce back, as we observed at the onset of the pandemic. The same cannot be presumed for humans and if we are to carry on with the present MO, we might reach a point of irreversible and irreparable damage and accost the possibility of becoming the smartest species that was.

INADVERTENT CONSERVATION

While we continue to hold the tag of the smartest species there is, we have to act in consonance with nature and not against it. With this being realised, there have been ample movements and campaigns that encourage people to make conscious choices like saving water and electricity, not felling forests, using of public transport instead of private vehicles or exploring sustainable options. While all these have left a significant impact in educating people, majority of the human species continues to turn a blind eye due to general ignorance, unwillingness to give up comfort and most importantly, the fact that such

steps are often a burden on the pocket. Thus, nature conversation goes beyond making conscious choices. For it to truly work out, it needs to be incentivised in order for it to become a part and parcel of everyday life.

A prime example of the same is the Kutch Solar Project in Gujarat, a story shared on Twitter by a witness of the same. In Kutch, where the weather is perfect for the tapping solar energy, people living in the area were approached to install solar water heaters in lieu of electrical ones. The difference in the cost of the two was considerable but it was contended that since the solar heater has no additional costs like electricity and maintenance, it was a one-time investment and would cover its cost in about three to five years for an average household. Some people got convinced and a lot did not. However, with positive feedback on savings from kith and kin over the time, more and more people started ditching the electric heater for the solar one and now almost every other house in the area has one installed. The next product to enter the market was the solar cooker. The solar cooker cost less than the usual pressure cooker because of a thirty percent state subsidy, and cooked food with a substantial enhancement in taste. It was an instant hit and consequently, the demand for it was so huge that people had to be on put on waiting lists for months. With an overall



complacency with solar products, some people started shifting to solar panels for electricity generation as well. It had several incentives- one time cost, low maintenance and a relief from power outages. Another major motivation was that the additional units can be sold to the Gujarat Electricity Board at fixed rates. If one is away, electricity would keep getting generated and one could make money out of it. Thus, even when people were not really out there for saving the environment, they were using a solar product.

The advent of menstrual cups in the realm of feminine hygiene is another such example. More and more women are thus making a switch. Replacing the monthly expenditure (average-Rs. 300) of sanitary napkins and tampons, the single time purchase (less than Rs. 1000) cup can last up to ten years and can be worn for about twelve hours at a stretch. Being free of chemicals, it doesn't bring along the health hazards such as Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) that the other products do. Similar is the case with electric vehicles. More and more people are opening up the idea of buying an electric vehicle with the fall in the prices of petrol and diesel is hardly in sight. Not only that, they also come with low running and maintenance costs and government subsidies which make them an affordable option. They include additional benefits like the convenience of getting charged at home, less noise

due the absence of engines, enhanced storage capacities and so on. Such products entice even those who are don't believe that saving the environment is worth-making an effort for.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Thus, scientific development and technological advancement are not necessarily are not the polar ends of a magnet; there's just a need of a different perception to see the same. As we are desperately attempting to go back to our old lives, the battle with the pandemic is not over. And while it is not, we must explore a variety of sustainable options and bring more and more people aboard the nature conservation train – preferably by persuading them to make conscious choices and if not, then by making them opt for the sustainable alternatives unwittingly.



WATER WIVES OF DENGANMAL

Kritika Oberoi (1st year)

INTRODUCTION

In India,

- More than 50% of the population has no access to safe drinking water
- About 82% of rural households are without piped water supply
- Around 40% of the population will have no access to drinking water by 2030

India is a tropical country where the rivers, ponds, and wells become drier and therefore the villagers have to walk for several kilometres in search of drinking water. Maharashtra, being the third largest state in the country has a history of droughts.

BUT CAN YOU IMAGINE THAT THIS WATER CRISIS CAN LEAD TO THE ILLEGAL PRACTICE OF POLYGAMY?

Yes, you read it right, 'Polygamy'.

This unimaginable practice is the reality of a small village of western Maharashtra, Denganmal where the men work in the field and the women run the house, cook, clean, feed, and bathe their children. But there's a problem, the problem of 'unavailability of water'. There are no taps in the village and due to severe heat, the wells run dry. There is no water connection in this isolated village in a remote, hilly area of Maharashtra. The only source of water available to the

villagers is the Bhatsa dam on a river and a well near it, located around 100 kilometres away from the village. Hence, they are left with no other option than to undertake a dreadful journey of 12-14 hours walking several kilometers to a crowded well or river and wait for hours for their turn. But this is also not possible as in order to fill water women had to leave daily chores and also their children alone.

WHAT CAN BE THE SOLUTION?

You need water but you also have to look after your home and children. So, the solution sought by the villagers was to indulge in polygamy i.e. marry multiple women with the sole purpose of providing the family with a pair of hands that will fetch water for them. These women are termed as 'water wives' or 'paani bai'. Generally, these water wives are widows, divorcees, or destitute who accept it as it gives them a marital status, a place to stay, and maybe a little respectability in the



village. The water wives daily leave at sunrise, walk through fields and mud tracks, up and down the hilly terrain carrying 2-3 vessels of 15litres each in the scorching heat. And when their purpose is fulfilled and they are of no use as they have become too old to continue, the husband marries another younger woman to fetch water in metal pitchers or makeshift containers.

LEGALITY

But is this practice of treating women as objects, performing a sham marriage as compensation for such inhumane consideration justified? Polygamy is illegal in India as per Section 494 of Indian Penal Code (IPC). Also, this heavy task not only physically strains the body of water wives by causing neck and spinal problems but sometimes also leads to baldness as they carry heavy pots on their head multiple times. It is also a violation of several international conventions such as CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women) and ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) which guarantee protection against any discrimination done towards women. It is also a violation of their right to live a dignified life, right to health, and right to clean drinking water under Article 21 of Indian Constitution.

But this social malaise strangely finds acceptability and is seen as a cheap

solution that works well in the village with no resistance from the concerned women. According to a few interviews given by the water wives, they get along well with each other. They are comfortable with their husband remarrying someone else and bearing children with them. Rather most of them being widowed or single mothers take it as a blessing to get re-married and have a family all together again.



Despite, authorities being well aware of the practiced norm in the village, no step has been taken so far to curb this practice of treating women as the substitute of water pipes or tankers. This is the ‘Sab ka Saath, Sab ka Vikaas’ being practiced in India where women of Danganmal are made to live a difficult and arduous life despite the presence of a dam on the river whose reservoir has abundant water, just three kilometres from Danganmal village.

While pipes take this water all the way to Mumbai, there is no pipeline to the village.

This is a government-supported injustice and inequality. It's a shame for a country which aspires to be 'Vishva Guru', that the age-old mindset 'Women are meant to serve' still continues.

SOLUTIONS

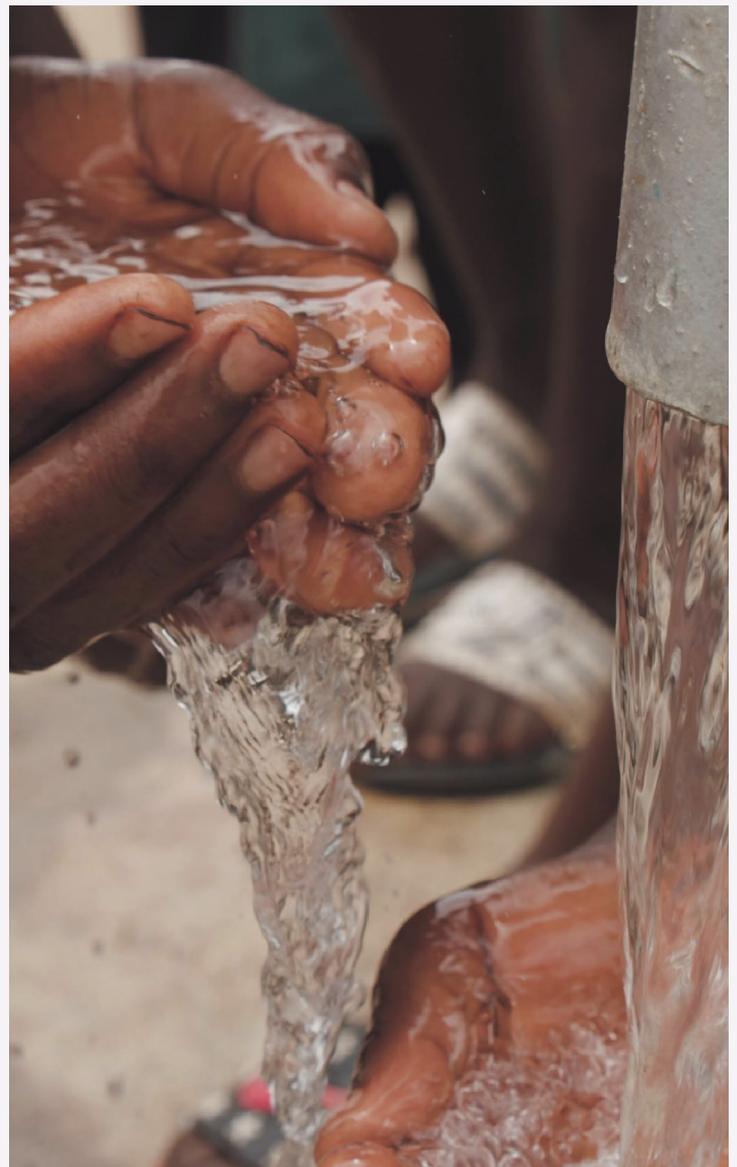
With more than 19,000 villages with no access to water in Maharashtra alone, will marrying for fetching water from distant sources remain restricted to Danganmal alone?

- The issue of water wives cannot be solved by using the existing laws to penalize the men as they are the sole bread earners of the family. Rather, need of the hour is a local level policy change and dialogue with the government authorities. The state is required to use the constitutional provisions in their true essence by bringing in special laws or policies to address this problem at the local level.
- The political leaders representing the constituencies of these villages also need to be held accountable for the lack of response regarding the prevailing conditions of these villages.
- The government needs to take staunch action and provide water to the villagers by building dams or canals which could help eradicate

this practice.

- Awareness drives can be started to empower women and encourage them to be leaders and role models in their villages. Until and unless the women themselves do not recognize or accept this as a problem they would blindly follow this age-old orthodox tradition without questioning it.

As rightly said by Mahatma Gandhiji, "The world has enough for everyone's needs but not for anyone's greed". Hence, we as citizens should also try to contribute to our Mother Earth by using the scarce resources optimally.



UNSUNG PATRONS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Sai Keerti (1st year)

The world is in a mare's nest. It requires a future where the people and the nature can thrive together. It requires a future where cataclysmic climate change can be avoided while the world advances and 10 billion people progress with it. A future where the earth's heart beats strong through its striking scenery and striving wildlife while our countries are strengthened by harmony with nature. While most of us have conveniently ignored this future, there are individuals who have realized the need of this future to survive. These individuals are the advocates of environmentalism. They have set an example for the society and have shown what a man is capable of if only he has the courage and patience to pursue this change. They have shown that a different path to a sustainable environment and positive human-nature relationship is possible. They

have devoted their entire life to the cause and have helped maintain the ecological balance.

THE FOREST MAN OF INDIA

An extraordinary creature resides in the biological gateway of the north-east. Jadav Payeng, also known as the "Forest Man of India" resides in Assam. Payeng has single headedly replenished nature. He planted a dense 1300-acre forest by himself. This forest is called the Molai after him.

"I'll plant till my last breath." - Padma Shri Jadav "Molai" Payeng.

Jadav Payeng was a young boy from a poor family of buffalo traders. In 1979, he came across a freakish site. He saw dead snakes spread on the sand in burning temperatures. They were the victims of the drought in Majuli islands. It stuck him then that this could be the future of all humans. It was the locus of this situation which stirred something within him. The next day, he planted the very first sapling of the present day 1300-acre dense forest on a sandbar. Jadav started small and planned to grow as many trees as he could. He left his education and gave all his time to nature. He knew that he had to do something. Jadav was often claimed to be crazy by the locals but he did not let the comments deter



him from doing what he believed was possible and right. In over 40 years, he had nurtured the land and achieved his dream. The forest is now a home to monkeys, elephants, deer, rhinos, tigers, and different species of birds. It also boasts a huge variety of trees like the pine, cotton, bamboo, teak, herbs, etc. Jadav was also awarded the Padma Shri for his efforts but the nation hardly recognises him today.

AN ALTRUISTIC INDIVIDUAL

Another such revolutionary is Afroz Shah. He is a constitutional lawyer, environmentalist, and a “beach lover”. In 2015, it was just a normal day in Bombay. Afroz Shah had moved into an apartment with a view of the ocean. It was near Mumbai’s Versova Jetty. The sea was visible from his windows and being a nature lover, he was eager to enjoy the view to the fullest. But the only thing he could see was the piles and piles of disturbing amount of trash on the beach. It was then when he decided that he had to do something. He knew that he had to bring the change. From October 2015, he started cleaning the beach himself. He would start picking up trash 2 miles off the coast and work for 4 hours on weekends. His efforts led to the local residents volunteering too. In over 85 weeks, he was able to clean 5.5 million kgs of garbage and dispose 4,000 tons of plastic. He had successfully changed

the face of the beach. This has been called the world’s biggest beach clean-up by the United Nations.

ICE MAN OF INDIA

Ladakh is well-known for its remote majestic mountain beauty. For the tourists, it is a place consisting of breath-taking views, stunning clear blue skies, and high mountain passes. But, for the locals it is often just a piece of cold, dry, and infertile land. These locals struggle every day for their daily water needs. This situation is fortunately changing, and the reason is the 79-year-old retired civil engineer, Chewang Norphel.

Every year, Ladakh, being a cold mountain desert, witnesses low average rainfall of 50 mm every year. 80 percent of the population in the Ladakh depends on farming. The main source for the irrigation water is the water that comes from the glaciers. But due to global warming, the glaciers had been melting rapidly and the farmers had no water. Chewang Norphel, a 79-year-old retired civil engineer wanted to change this situation. One day, he observed that the water which was dripping from the tap collected in a small hole in the ground and froze into the shape of an ice sheet. The idea for an artificial lake struck him. He realized that the water which would go waste after melting from the natural glaciers in summers could be used by the villagers.

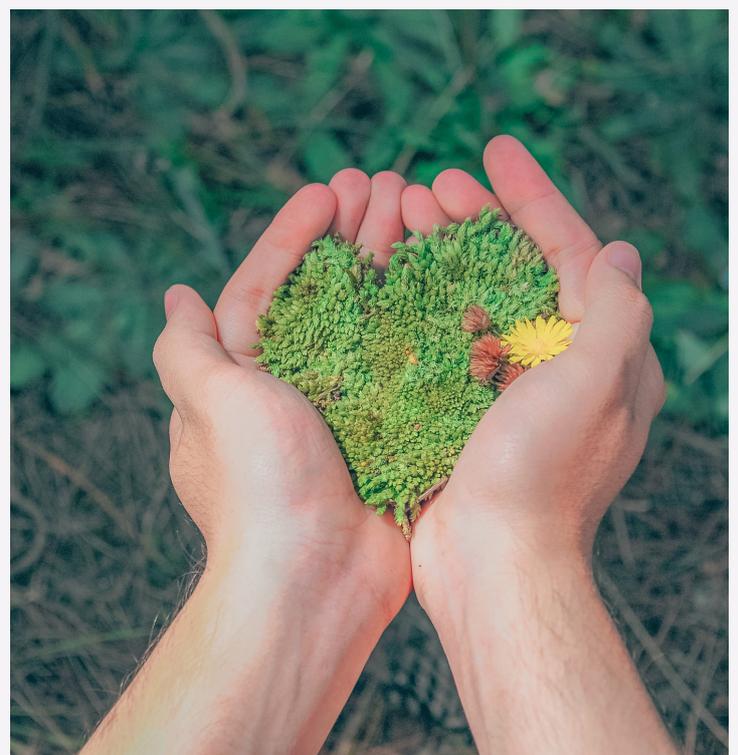
He then put his engineering mind and ample field knowledge to work and started his first experiment in Phutse village. The water was diverted from the mainstream to a small, shaded collection area 4 kms away from the village. This water would freeze in the winters. It was a simple yet a revolutionary idea. He had proved that if a man can harm and disturb the activities of nature, he also had the power and capacity to save it.

Presently, he has created 17 artificial glaciers across Ladakh and has no plans of stopping anytime soon. His efforts have led to an increase in the agricultural production and has in turn increased the income of the locals. His journey was never easy, but that did not stop him from finding a solution that could help the people and conserve the environment together.

THE JOURNEY AHEAD...

Aside from the aforementioned environmentalists, a plethora of unnamed individuals - in India alone - have dedicated their lives for this cause. They have played a pivotal role in the environmental protection of India. Ecologists all over the world serve as an inspiration for self-awareness and understanding of how over-population and injudicious use of resources has been detrimental to the environment. Despite such heroes working to restore the planet and prevent it from going to a point

beyond redemption, every single one of us has to contribute to augment their efforts in conserving the environment. Without limiting ourselves to academical awareness, it is crucial that we make a conscientious effort towards employing our knowledge in our actions to preserve what we have to build a sustainable living. Otherwise, soon we'll have more mouths to feed that'll put even more strain on nature than now. With the climate change looming over us, it is prudent, now more than ever, that we bring about the changes we want to see. Nature maintains a balance in everything; and we are no exception. There will come a time when it tries to right itself if we don't do it first. Environmentalists are only the pioneers of this revolution. It is up to us to appreciate their efforts and carry the mantle forward; the more the better.



INDIA'S ENVIRONMENT AT THE HAND OF IMPERIAL BRITISH

Tirtha Ajit (1st year)



During the 1970s and the '80s, India witnessed a range of popular protests. The popular protests were directed against the forest policies of the Indian state. On the one hand, the policies restricted the forest dwellers' and peasants' access to forest resources and, on the other, led to rapid environmental degradation. During this period, the Indian state's efforts to build big dams also led to large-scale displacement of indigenous people from their native lands and resulted in organized protests and movements. This volatile political context not only provided the backdrop to establish environment as a self-standing sphere of social Beyond Colonialism towards a New Environmental History of India 3 4 science enquiry, but also gave rise to environmental history as a subgenre of writing Indian history. The environmental history, extremely influenced by the agrarian studies of

the 1980s, dealt with a variety of themes. These include colonial forest policies, access to common property resources, ecological imbalances, and protests by the locals on environmental issues. The first wave of environmental history placed its focus almost exclusively on colonialism and its 'negative' impact on the Indian environment/eco-system. The more recent studies have however taken up a more complex themes such as how policy implementation shapes the formation of identities and acts as ways of state-making, and how strategies of representing nature and landscape lead to political control by means of legitimizing state intervention. The first wave of Indian environmental history may be termed as 'nationalist' since its concern was what colonialism did for national/natural resources.

THE EFFECTS OF COLONIAL POLICY

The nationalist school of environmental history primarily argues that the ecological and environmental ills of different regions of India are a direct outcome of the exploitative colonial policies. The policies were motivated by concerns such as revenue augmentation, expansion of agriculture lands, and attaining of sleepers for railways, etc. the irrigation investments

and dam construction activities of the British Raj led to ecological degradation, salinity and malaria in the regions of Sind and Ganges basins in north India. Likewise, Michael Mann's detailed study (1999) on the agricultural transformation in the region of Ganga-Jamuna Doab during the early nineteenth century focuses on the salinity and mass destruction of woodlands due to "the effects of colonial policy". It forced the villagers to convert more than 70 per cent of forest areas into agricultural lands to 5 pay out the revenue. Irreparable natural catastrophes like high level of moisture reduction in the air spread of the saliferous soil by the sand carrying winds due to deforestation and the salinity level increased as a result of water logging in the agricultural fields. Subsequently, stringent famine and drought hit these areas. People could not endure diseases like malaria because of malnutrition. Villagers were forced to shift production from food to cash crops, leading to malnutrition. Moreover, they sold the agricultural lands to meet the tax payment requirements.

ENVIRONMENT LAWS INTRODUCED DURING BRITISH COLONIZATION

The legal control of environment pollution during British period began with the enactment of the INDIAN PENAL CODE OF 1860. The advent of British Raj altered the nature of the



environmental governance in India immensely. During the early times of British rule, there was a wide scale plundering of the natural resources from India. In the Indian Forest Act, 1865 the exploitation of forest resources were inserted in the first forest law. The provisions within the Act depicted an implied monopoly over the forests.

The colonial regime approved a series of laws that converted lot of common lands, into state property from 1865 onwards. The Indian Forest Act of 1865 was formulated to initiate state monopoly and acquisition, especially in the regions which considered for acquiring railway supplies. The railway project took a huge toll on India's forest; around 35,000 trees were being cut annually. In addition to this commercial varieties of trees were cultivated at the expense of other forest resources. Although a series of acts were passed by the British such as Shore Nuisance Act 1853 to combat after pollution caused by the industries

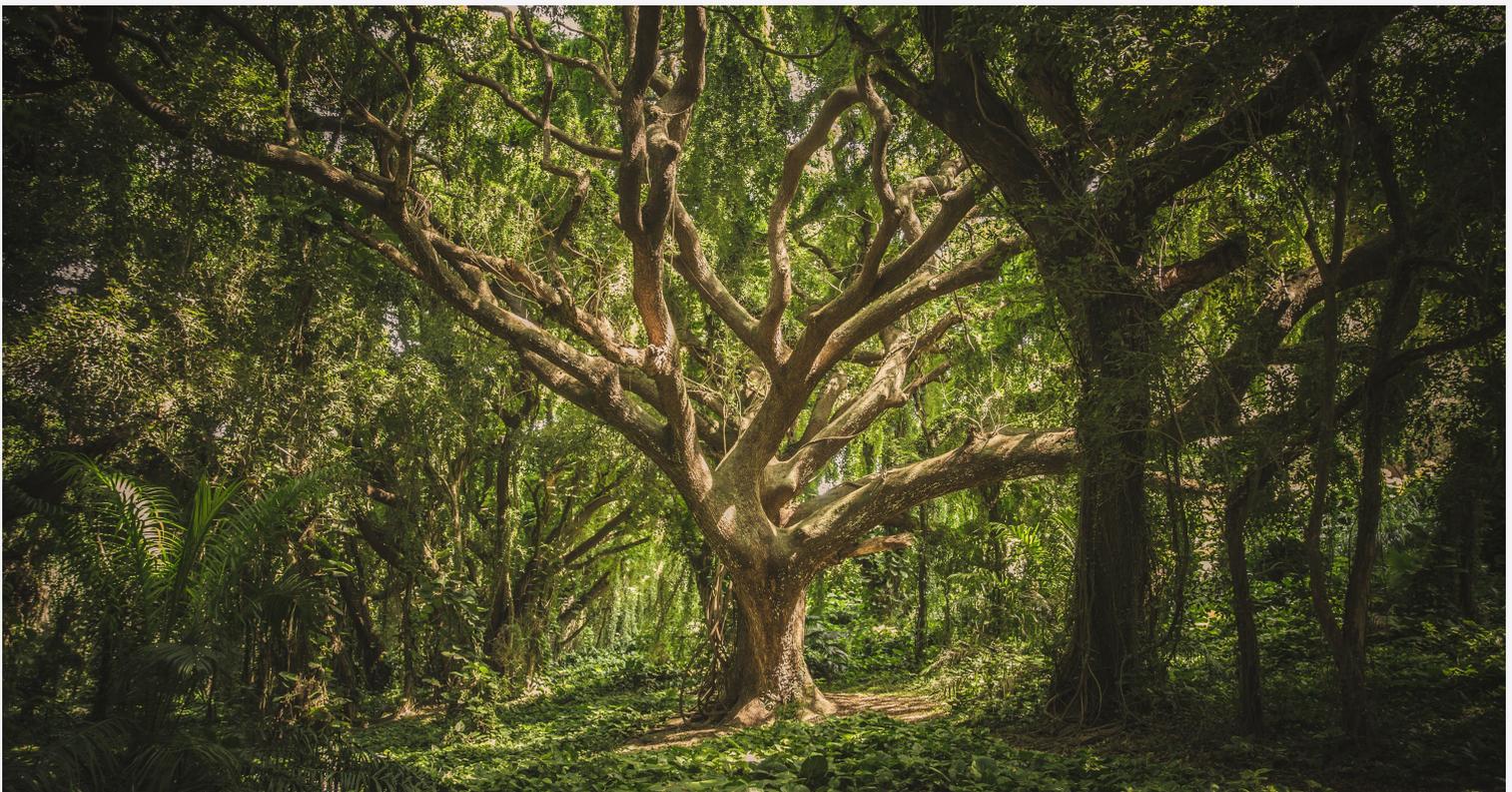
set up by them, Oriental Gas company Act, 1857, North India Cana AND Drainage 1873, it all got nullified because of the environmental torment at that time.

In environmental history, the commodity aspect of forest is largely focused in the analytical domain of forest laws. The primary concern is to reveal the origin and politics of forest laws and how shifting cultivation, soil erosion, forest protection and development of forests were used as instruments to execute the forest management principles, to collect the revenue from people and to bring the areas under colonial control. The colonial regime had started the execution of those principles, which had been already implemented by the colonizer in the African continent, from where; without any modification it was put in to practice by the colonial state

in British Raj.

CONCLUSION

Mahatma Gandhi once said “Among the many misdeeds of the British rule in India, history will look upon the Act depriving a whole nation of arms as the blackest “. The intension of British rule in India was not to safeguard nature’s wealth and interest of the people of India. They drained India of their natural as well as economic wealth, hence the expectation of wellbeing out of the legislations designed by the British cannot be considered at the best interest of the people. However the initiatives by the British were to formulate laws on every sphere for establishing a legal regime in the country thereby creating a platform of environmental jurisprudence in India.



APPRECIATING ALL EFFORTS: BIG AND SMALL

I always carry a water bottle and a jute bag whenever I go out, even if for a tiny trip to the market. Helps me avoid bringing home unnecessary plastic.

SAKSHI NARWAL
(1st year)

I ensure that electricity should not be wasted and I switch off all electrical instruments after use.

SONAKSHI (1st year)

I always carry my own bag for shopping to avoid polybags.

PRIYA KUMARI (1st year)

I plant trees on birthday every year.

VANI SAINI (2nd year)

I never waste a blank paper which can be used to write something.

KRITI BAJPAI (1st year)

I avoid non-eco friendly products for the safety of the environment.

ADVITIYA MALHOTRA (1st year)

I always use hand-crafted paper or burlap fabric to wrap gifts.

SIMRAN SINGH RATHI (1st year)

I haven't burnt crackers on Diwali since I was 10.

ANOUSHKA RANA (2nd year)

I always try to reuse and recycle old products.

HARMANPREET (1st year)

I stopped my family members and neighbours from burning plastic waste and dried leaves

ANJALI YADAV (2nd year)

We grow our vegetables in our home garden

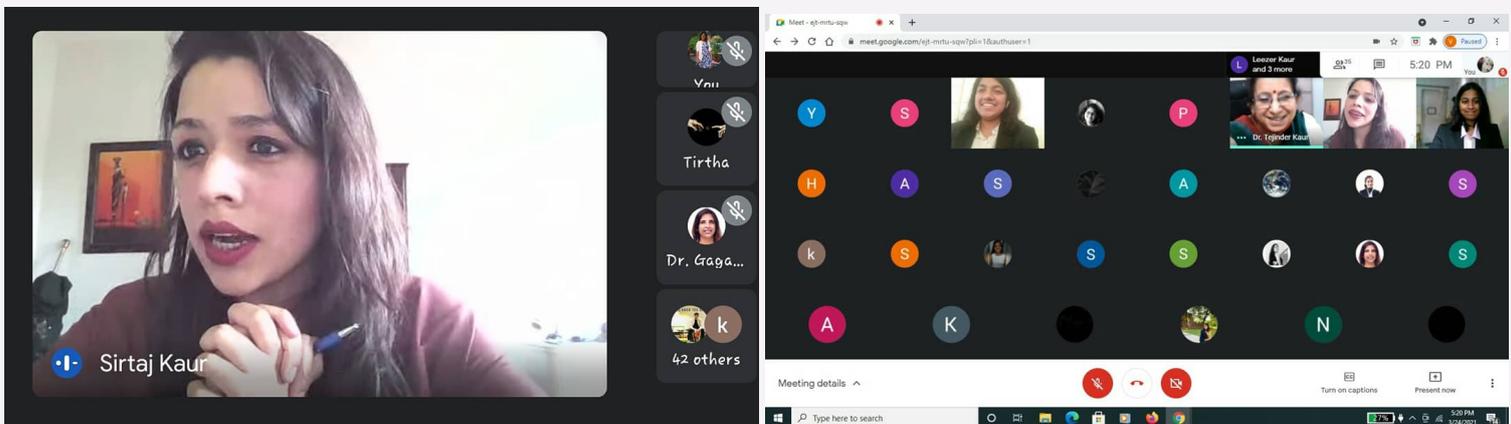
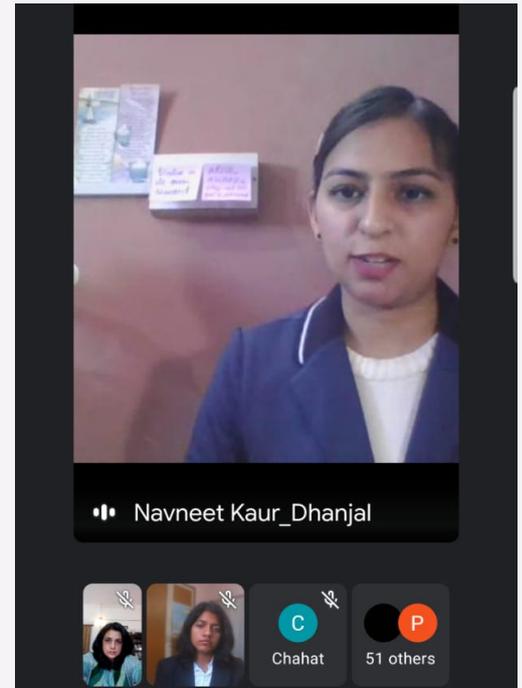
MANVI PANWAR (2nd year)

The extra water discharged by our RO doesn't get wasted as we use it for our plants

GITIKA ((1st year)

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

- **28th February, 2021:** In lieu of the World Social Justice Day, ACRSS conducted its first webinar on the theme “**Social Justice Issues in India: Challenges and Solutions**”. We had Advocate Navneet Kaur Dhanjal (Punjab & Haryana High Court) and Dr. Deviyani Singh (Educator based in Chandigarh).
- **8th March, 2021:** ACRSS officially recognised the International Women’s Day through the blog “**Celebrating Womankind: Now and forever.**” It brought to light the genesis of the feminist revolution and urged people to fight for gender equality.
- **The ACRSS Blog:** Bringing to the forefront crucial social issues and social sciences based research; the ACRSS is constantly uploading blogs. We’ve covered themes such as, “**The Life and Lies you lived in 2020**”, “**Women in Indian Army: Stars on their shoulders shine just the same**” and “**Influence of Greek Mythology on the Modern Western World.**”
- **24th March, 2021:** The ACRSS conducted a webinar on the topic, “**Role of Multilateralism in International Development and the World Social Order**”. We had as our speaker, Ms. Sirtaj Kaur, a Public Policy Lead in Global Advocacy at Global Partnership for Education World Bank Group, U.S.A.



With the collective efforts of our Faculty Coordinators, Dr. Amita Sharma, Dr. Gagandeep Dhalliwal, Ms. Ekjyot Kaur and the Student Coordinators, ACRSS will continue to conduct enlightening activities and deliver quality treatises on noteworthy concepts.

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Dr. Gagandeep Dhaliwal, Asst. Prof. of Political Science

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Ms. Chahat Bhandari (3rd Yr)

Mr. Devyang Bahri (3rd Yr)

Ms. Anoushka Rana (2nd Yr)

Ms. Kritika Oberoi (1st Yr)

Ms. Manvi Panwar (1st Yr)

Ms. Sai Keerti (1st Yr)

Ms. Tirtha Ajith (1st Yr)

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