

*One Earth, One Species History and One Future: Planet Justice and Indigenous Resistance in
the Anthropocene*

Saptarni Pandit
PhD Research Scholar
Kazi Nazrul University, India
saptarnipandit@gmail.com
&
Anindya Sekhar Purakayastha
Associate Professor
Kazi Nazrul University, India
anindyasp@gmail.com

The global corporate economy based on the idea of limitless growth has become a permanent war economy against the planet and people. (Vandana Shiva, *Making Peace with the Earth*, 2012, 3)

Making Peace with the Earth bears witness to the wars taking place in our times against the earth and people. It also tells the stories of struggles to defend the earth and people's Rights to land and water, forests, seeds and biodiversity. It outlines how a paradigm shift to earth-centered economics, politics and culture is our only chance of survival. (Shiva, *Making Peace with the Earth*, 2012, 7)

We argue here for a post-carbon, post-anthropogenic parallax view for our survival in the Anthropocene that requires the conjoining of the natural world with our everyday epistemic universe as without that we do injustice to the planet earth and to other non-human members or *Earth-others*. Drawing on recent works such as *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History and Us* (Bonneuil and Baptiste, 2016); *Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene*, (Gibson, et al, 2015) and *The Routledge Companion to Alternative Organization*, (Cheney, et al,

2014), this proposal looks for new survival ethics that is premised on the ethos of eco-justice and sustainability. In doing this we take the Indian state of Orissa as our empirical base where indigenous people have been fighting for their rights to resist the neoliberal plunder of natural resources in the name of development. We would argue that the tribal world view of Orissa is more attuned to Eco-justice and it throws up a big challenge to the monological narrative of Anthropomorphic capitalocene. Pope Francis' recent Encyclical letter *Laudato Si' on Care for our Common Home* (2015) exactly emphasizes on this issue of eco-governance and an Earth centric imaginary that can do justice to our common home, the planet earth. We also attempt similar alliances of theologico-cultural tropes of Eco-governance for our green future. Borrowing Vandana Shiva's idea of 'Earth Democracy' and Dipesh Chakrabarty's recent notion of non-human 'species history' this proposal would argue for a reversal of our all too human way of looking into life and living. Hence we would dwell on alternatives to the globalised doctrine of human over-consumption and the resultant carbonification of the environment through our engagement with some instances of persistent ecological uprisings in central India.

Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene

All the ideas discussed so far have been enforced and complemented in the recent work, *Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene*, edited by Katherine Gibson, Deborah Bird Rose, and Ruth Fincher (2015). This book seeks to "Enliven moral imagination...drawing us to reparative and alternative futures" (Gibson, et al., 2015, ii). The prelude to the *Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene*, starts off with the reference to the Biosphere, the part of the air where the humans and non-human animals can survive along with the whole abiotic element of the natural world. This era of the Anthropocene requires the conjoining of the natural world with the cultural world and the section in the manifesto on 'Thinking' is about transforming our preconceived

conceptualizations of Renaissance Humanism. It is about listening to the world for a change that would engender the possibility of thinking ‘with’ the world and not ‘for’ it because those solutions that look at nature as a mere objective, dead entity would always look for economy-driven solutions and generate politico-philosophical measures. The ‘preface’ to the manifesto by Katherine Gibson, Deborah Bird Rose and Ruth Fincher, is all about strengthening the ‘tentative connections’ between *Ecological Humanities and community Economies*. The insistence on a reparative study of anthropological climate change to promote an *ecological-economic thinking* can be effective in repairing the peril that has been wrought upon the environment by humans. In short any theorization regarding the environment needs to be done outside the play of the binaries which has been a common trait of Renaissance Humanism.

Homo-Reflectus, Post-human and Earth-Others

The conceptualization in the manifesto on ‘Thinking with Others’ addresses various anthropogenic events and focuses on the intertwined link between human history and natural history negating in that way the division between man and nature. It focuses on the fact that the real enemy that should be combated is not global warming but our preconceived understandings of the world which is largely determined by Western Enlightenment thinking. Our anthropomorphic hubris promotes the idea of the self and the other due to which we are habituated to think about or for Nature rather than ‘with’ it. Time has come for the *Homo Faber* and *Homo economicus* to evolve into the *Homo reflectus* who can dislodge all our materialist greed to inaugurate a *thinking-self- for- the- other*. It is high time to deconstruct the Cartesian ideology that renders the non-human other as meaningless and dead. Three strategies are visualized here to salvage humanity in the Anthropocene by the manifesto. Those are ‘Rethinking Being’ that suggests the abandonment of the concept of ‘being’ and the

appropriation of the apprehension of 'being-in-common'. 'Assiduity of parochial consideration of economies', usefulness of 'bio-mimicry' and germaneness of practices of the 'knowledge of bionomics' through 'permaculture' designs are ways that can generate the existence of livelihood that can be shared across species. The third is 'Ethical Coordinates for More-Than Human Communities' which proposes the ways of conjoined livelihoods of humans and non-human others. The penultimate section of the manifesto called, 'Contact Improvisation' suggests a form of dance positioned on the propinquity of the collaborators. The concept is to

explore further the eco-philosophical implications of Contact Improvisation, by considering what it might mean to dance with the "earth body" that we have. "Earth body" might be taken to signify my own body, understood as a thing of Earth, as is that of all creatures, human and otherwise, with whom I share an earthly existence in the "dance" of life. (Gibson, et al., 2015, ch. 7, 44-45)

The norm of perceiving the world as a dead object can be changed if we start listening to it. The abandoning of delusions of mastery and control would then cease and we would argue that such a paradigm shift in human thinking can only happen when we incorporate the revolutionary tropes of radical French poststructural thinking. In what follows we would elaborate on that but in the beginning, we would engage with Dipesh Chakrabarty's recent notion of "species history" which can unleash all such radical imaginaries of new thinking in an Anthropocentric world. Chakrabarty's notion of species history is directly relevant to the central line of our argument. Species history calls for a non-human notion of history that supplants human superiority in conceptualizing history.

Human centric History and Species History

The Anthropocene calls for a serious revaluation of our conceptual and cognitive taxonomies in relation to sub-humans and non-humans and in that way there is a greater need now to redefine the category of the "human." In this case to arrive at Chakrabarty's notion of species history we

need to first engage with Rosi Braidotti's idea of post-humanism. Braidotti observes that the "debates in mainstream culture range from hard-nosed business discussions of robotics, prosthetic technologies, neuroscience and bio-genetic capital to fuzzier new age visions of trans-humanism and techno-transcendence" (Braidotti, 2013, 2) and all these technologized buzzwords she felt are doing the rounds to enhance solely the cause of the human at the cost of the non-humans. Such "colonization of the life[non-human]-world" leads to what Braidotti calls the "post-human" that seeks a decentering of the "human". The present excursus would argue for attempts to deepen such post-humanist approaches in the humanities and social sciences so that a better critique of Anthropocentric humanism can be actualized. We would imagine a holistic approach here incorporating the necessity of both western and eastern parallax views in forging an alternative imaginary that questions our existing epistemic *a priories*. Braidotti raises these fundamental questions in her book

The main questions I want to address in this book are: firstly what is the posthuman? More specifically, what are the intellectual and historical itineraries that may lead us to the posthuman? Secondly: where does the posthuman condition leave humanity? More specifically, what new forms of subjectivity are supported by the posthuman? Thirdly: how does the posthuman engender its own forms of inhumanity? More specifically, how might we resist the inhuman(e) aspects of our era? And last, how does the posthuman affect the practice of the Humanities today? More specifically, what is the function of theory in posthuman times? (Braidotti, 2013, 3)

In similar vein, Cary Wolfe's *What is Posthumanism* (2010) begins with drawing our attention to a hackneyed definition of Humanism. He refers to Michel Foucault who in his 1984 essay, "What is Enlightenment?" leads us to the actuality that humanism is apparently a doctrine in itself, full of its own prepossessions and superstitions, which Etienne Balibar calls "Anthropological universals". Foucault also drew a disjunction between Enlightenment and Humanism because Humanism is a doctrine and therefore, Enlightenment, in its true breath,

should be a threat to that tenet. At this present juncture of the Anthropocene, a constitutional interference has been posited by Wolfe

... even if we take the additional posthumanist step of rejecting the various anthropological, political, and scientific dogmas of the human that Foucault insists are in tension with Enlightenment *per se*, we must take yet another step, another post-,and realize that the nature of thought itself must change if it is to be posthumanist. (Wolfe, 2010, xvi)

This means that posthumanism in its discursive practices should not just refer to the “thematics of decentering” of humans in connection to their existential coordinates but it should also interrogate the thematics of “thinking” itself

Here the spirit of my intervention is akin to Foucault’s in “What Is Enlightenment?”; the point is not to reject humanism *tout court*—indeed, there are many values and aspirations to admire in humanism—but rather to show how those aspirations are undercut by the philosophical and ethical frameworks used to conceptualize them. (Wolfe, 2010, xii)

Such dogma ridden and anthropomorphic philosophical frameworks led to the hierarchic distinctions between humans and the non-human others and in what follows we would look into an attempt to reverse the man/animal taxonomic binary, something that needs to be dismantled to restructure our colonizing thought patterns. The ideas of anti-humanism, relational ontology of human beings, and the idea of ethics deriving from the singular encounter with the Other – constitute the basic starting points for a posthuman future. However the tragedy is almost all the ‘philosophers of difference’ restricted their purviews within the anthropomorphic world, for them animals have no world of their own, they are cognitively “poor in world” for Heidegger as only humans are open to “meaning” and a world of significance. (Calarco, 2015, 33)

Human existence is a perpetuity centrally located amid the extant and the extinct breeds. The ownership of the planet by humans has been made possible by distorted notions where humans are thought to be given a privileged position among the other species and are acknowledged as

the simulacrum of the Gods. In an identical frame Pope Francis' *Encyclical* criticizes these perverted ideologies which denigrate all form of non-human or more-than-human lives. Looking at the more-than-human world from an aesthetic spectacle is something that is highly indispensable and its feasibility is equally imperative. Where all may not share a similar vein of faith, we can definitely come to a common ground of principles and models created with or without the biasness of our speciesism. The empathy of fraternity or sisterhood, so to speak, will generate only after there is a proper recognition of the location where the *Homo sapiens* exist in relation with the more-than-human world. Therefore an epistemic paradigm shift should be our common goal. *Routledge Companion to Alternative Organizations* has a chapter titled "Voluntary Simplicity", which insists upon giving up work (labour) voluntary to curtail production and utilizing the time on nurturing connections between individuals. The need of the hour is the adoption of an ecological framework of bonhomie consisting of 'voluntary simplicities', like the aforementioned one. This leads us to the idea of Earth Democracy as enunciated by Vandana Shiva. Earth Democracy calls for an Earth centric imaginary of living where all the species have equal right to live and living itself prioritize the Earth as the primary signifier.

Earth Democracy in the Anthropocene

According to Vandana Shiva, the famous ecological activist and theorist, 'Earth Democracy is both an ancient world view and an emergent political movement for peace, justice and sustainability.' She quotes the 1848 speech of attributed to Chief Seattle of the Suquamish tribe who said

how can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us...

The Earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth... all things are connected like the Blood which unites our family. All things are connected. (Shiva, 2005, 1)

In contrast to the capitalist view of looking into the earth as private property, alternative movements are defending the notion of the planet as 'commons'. Corporate globalization is based on new "enclosures of the commons" which is premised on the ideology of exclusion and colonization. Countering such trends, Vandana Shiva talks of a new future and new alternatives, a future "based on inclusion, not exclusion; on non-violence, not violence, on reclaiming the commons, not their enclosure... I have named this project earth Democracy... Earth democracies success concerns not just the fate and well being of all humans, but all beings on the earth." (Shiva, 4)

Earth Democracy therefore is not just a concept, it is shaped by the multiple and diverse practices of people reclaiming their commons. Corporate globalization

leads not just to the death of democracy but to the democracy of death, in which exclusion, hate, and fear become the political means to mobilize votes and power. Earth Democracy enables us to envision and create living democracies... living democracies are based on the intrinsic worth of all species, all peoples, all cultures, and a just and equal sharing of the Earth's vital resources, and sharing the decisions about the use of the earth's resources. (Shiva, 2005, 6)

This is therefore a clear dialectic between the Earth System and the World System of capitalist expansion and the cataclysmic devastation of the Anthropocene or the Capitalocene requires us to forge a new politics of Earth System oriented living, something that indigenous populations in various parts of the world have been pursuing for long. Vandana Shiva in her wonderful recent work, *Who Really Feeds the World?* (2015) made the following points which are crucial for any understanding of the well being of the Earth in the Anthropocene

The planet's well-being, people's health, and societies' stability are severely threatened by an industrial, globalised agriculture, primarily driven by profit-making.

Indeed, an efficient, wasteful and non-sustainable model of food production is pushing the planet, its ecosystems, and its diverse species to the brink of destruction...The dominant paradigm is an industrial, mechanized one, which has led to the collapse of our food and agricultural systems. This crisis is not an accident; it has been built into the system's very design. At the heart of this paradigm is the Law of Exploitation, which sees the world as a machine and nature as a dead matter...This ecological paradigm of agriculture, based on life and its interconnectedness, is centered on the earth and on small farmers, especially women farmers. It recognizes the potential of fertile seeds and soils to feed humanity, and the diverse species to which we are all related as earth citizens...The industrial paradigm is in deep conflict with the ecological paradigm, and the law of exploitation is pitted against the law of return. These are paradigm wars of economics, culture and knowledge, and they frame the very basis of the food crisis we are facing today. (Shiva, 2015, 1-4)

Such earth oriented thinking and such making peace with the earth is practiced by indigenous ways of living which is completely against all forms of industrialization and in the subsequent concluding section we would discuss about the Earth bound imaginaries of indigenous epistemes so that a new plank of future can be initiated.

Making Peace with the Earth: Odisha and the Case Study Indigenous Earth-centric living

In most parts of India, whether in mainstream or indigenous communities, Nature has always occupied a sacred space. The Vedic concept of *Vasudeva Kutumbukam* that sees the whole world as part of a large family protected by Mother Earth and the Jain concept of *Asteya* are examples of deep-rooted environmentalism. Since the 1970s, India saw a series of environmental movements, including the iconic Chipko movement, the Narmada Bachao Andolan, the Posco Movement, etc and such movements have drawn our focus on non-developmental paradigms. Recent environmental struggles are indeed of a more complex nature and in the case of the Dongria Kondh in the east Indian state of Odisha, the tribal people rose to protect its sacred mountain, streams and forests from the excesses of the neoliberal state, that sees rapid industrialisation and encroachment as the only route to development.

Yet for the state of Odisha, that has often been called a “climate orphan,” the stakes are high. Odisha experiences rapid changes to its environment, exacerbated by the opening up of its forests and natural resources to exploitation by foreign and Indian industrial houses (Mishra, 2013). Indigenous communities, due to the spiritual, physical and emotional connections to their environment, are particularly affected by environmental change, and in Odisha, the lands of these communities are at the centre of natural resource exploitation. For Odisha, its environmental integrity is key to its sustainable development and with such ideas of sustainable development, the space given to traditional and indigenous knowledge has widened in recent years, with Indigenous Knowledge seen as having potential to inform observations, shape responses to climate change and make contributions to sustainable development (Mishra, 2013). Odisha, like many parts of India has rich traditions of environmentalism. These traditions and knowledge systems, however, are varied and reflect the multitude of experiences within the state itself, between modern and traditional systems, between the “mainstream” and tribal (indigenous) systems of knowledge. During the annual Oriya Hindu festival of *Raja*, the Earth, believed to be menstruating is treated with care by the indigenous people. Yet, as people moved to cities, traditional belief systems and practices have often been altered. Modernisation, with its emphasis on the ways of the West, was embodied within the new cultural practices in cities. Traditional or indigenous knowledge refers to non-western systems of knowledge, practices and innovations that are orally disseminated from one generation to another. Vandana Shiva points out that “indigenous knowledge systems are by and large ecological.” Indigenous knowledge (IK) is “a cumulative body of knowledge and beliefs, handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment” (Mishra, 2013).

The knowledge systems of indigenous people have drawn much attention over the last several decades. Indigenous peoples, who "maintain 80 per cent of the planet's biodiversity in or adjacent to, 85 per cent of the world's protected areas" have historically depended on "local biological diversity, ecosystem services and cultural landscapes as a source of sustenance and well-being" (Mishra, 2013). It has now been recognised that indigenous or traditional knowledge may be useful to understand "the potential of certain adaptation strategies that are cost-effective, participatory and sustainable". Indigenous knowledge that has become central to conservation and development projects is rooted to a particular place and set of experiences and The Odisha government's post-liberalisation agenda has meant that industrial plants are now scattered across the state, polluting streams, wells and rivers that are crucial to the survival of tribal people. In the pursuit of quick industrialisation, Odisha government has displaced tribal communities- a physical, emotional, social and spiritual displacement- from their forest homes, which are seen as venues for mineral resource extraction, seemingly essential for the state's 'progress' and yet destructive to Odisha's natural environment and its tribal communities. Many tribal communities have protested against the takeover of their lands and territories. In 2010, the Dongria Kondh tribe's battle to protect their sacred hills and forest homes from destruction by the mining activities of the UK-based Vedanta Resources, ended in a legal victory for the tribe (Mishra, 2013). Yet many other indigenous peoples' protests, such as the one in Kalinganagar, Odisha have not received much attention or success. Mishra in her has shown how the indigenous people of Odisha maintain certain ecological numinous codes in their everyday approaches to nature and they do not unnecessarily break branches of trees nor pluck leaves as that, they believe would be hurt, particularly in the night as the tree/plant is asleep. In the months of October-November (*Kartika* months), the Oriyas refrain from catching and eating fish. The reason is that the fish

breed during these months, and may also be prone to disease. The *Kartika* months are therefore marked by the practice of vegetarianism, where many Oriyas would avoid fish, meat and eggs. During the traditional *Raja festival*, no ploughing is done as the Earth is believed to be menstruating, and hence, *she* must not be injured. A proverb translated from Oriya says: “if no one else eats, then cows will eat.” (Mishra, 2013) This proverb directs everyone not to waste food. If one cannot eat, animals can, and hence any food that is not consumed can and should be fed to animals. Sun-worship and moon-worship was also prescribed in oral traditions, particularly for good harvests. Worshipping of rivers, plants and animals is also common. The *tulsi* (basil) plant is worshipped during the *Kartik* months in Odisha. In some parts of the state the meeting points of two rivers are also worshipped. In August, *Gamha Purnima* is celebrated where cows are worshipped (cows are generally seen as sacred to Hindus). Food is specially prepared for them, and the cows would be offered bread that is commonly eaten by the families themselves. Other animals are also fed customarily. In farming, it was considered appropriate to worship and ask the Earth for permission to sow plants and pray for a good harvest.

In the book, *Indigenous Environmental Knowledge and its Transformations: Critical Anthropological Perspectives* Edited by Roy Ellen, Peter Parkes, Alan Bicker, it is assumed that most of us can be persuaded of the fact that indigenous environmental knowledge (hereafter IK) can hardly be ignored in development contexts and that it is an essential ingredient in any pragmatic development strategy, especially those which claim to achieve a degree of sustainability, as well as having applications in industry and commerce. Local-global, and various historic and disciplinary, refractions. The words we use are not insignificant, since whether we speak of ‘indigenous knowledge’(IK); ‘indigenous technical knowledge (ITK); ethnoecology; ‘local knowledge’; ‘folk knowledge’; ‘traditional knowledge’; ‘traditional

environmental (or ecological) knowledge (TEK)'; 'people's science' or 'rural people's knowledge' says something about the perspectival position from which we approach the subject and the assumptions we make about it.

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