

NATURE CONSERVATION AND THE ROLE OF BIG INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (BINGOS) IN PROTECTED AREAS

Avanesh Kumar Singh

Associate Professor, Dept. of Geography,

D. S. College, Aligarh

avaneshkumarsingh@gmail.com

Abstract

To protect the planet in the age of Anthropocene, Protected Areas are increasingly becoming important features of global terrestrial landscape. Protected Areas are, not only, promoted as the tool of promoting conservation but also actively engage in local resource management. Recently social science critically engage in examining the role of protected areas as tool of western Conservation that promote neoliberal economic philosophy on the name of nature conservation. The present research work critically examine the concept and strategy of conservation in Indian Protected Areas.

1: Introduction

In recent decades, conservation has become a central analytical focus in the social sciences and exploring conceptual genealogies of conservation uncover the link with various subjects. "Conservation is defined as protection of species and of natural or man-made resource and landscape for present and future use". Preservation, that abide any utilization of natural resources at all, is different from conservation because conservation allow managed and replenishable utilization of recourse.

Since evolution of society, people with simple tools and techniques revered nature for being source and bases at their livelihood and existence. Nature conservation was integrated part of the life style of primitive humans. Worshiping Earth as 'Mother' was universal phenomenon in many indigenous societies. In ancient India, PrithviSukta in Atharva Veda, a 4000 thousands year old ancient scripture is the oldest known scripture to exhibit the essence of environmental conservation -

"Mata BhumiPutrohamPrithivyah" The earth is our mother and all human being are like children of earth.'

The Hindi word 'Prakriti' for nature denotes this philosophy. It means the natural state of anything, or the most original of anything that encompasses whole creation. Pra denotes the initial, at the initiation, and kriti signifies formation, or creation. Therefore, Prakriti factually denotes novel and innate. Some of the earliest Indian classics are called aranyak or 'forest discourses' meant to be read in forests. Consequently, revering and worshiping natural element such as plants and streams are part of preserving and conserving natural resources by ancient traditional communities not only in India but many parts of the world.

But the relationship between humans and nature has changed dramatically over past few thousand years; particularly after advent of fire. Since then, the technological changes led to the human societies to alter their economy and society from hunter-gatherer to agrarian to industrial. Now the relationship between man and nature has been mediated by various discourses and sophisticated technologies that led to the separation between man and nature. The feeling of reverence and subordination has changed into mastering and exploiting the nature as resource. Tools of science and technologies led to change the meaning of earth from sublime nature to environment system. Where mother earth that feeds and protects humans, now is an environmental system to extract, utilize, manipulate and manage according to human will.

2: Statement of the Problem

Nature conservation is problematic in global south that involve the dispossession of poor people and deployment of scientific tool for natural resource management in the favor of market forces. The present research work examine the concept conservation in protected areas. It critically examine the theory and practice of protected area as a tool of neoliberal market conservation.

3: Methodology

Content analysis method is adopted for critically exploring the subject. Content analysis is an observational research method that is used to systematically evaluate the content of all forms of recorded communication. The methodology of present work stems from the thinking of typical problem between the human and the nature. I maintain the possibility of critically scrutinizing particular constructions of nature and certain knowledge about the interactions between society and nature. The method adopted in this research is Qualitative which tries to explore the way peoples act at individual as well community level creates meaning out of their experiences. Behavior pattern is the key to understand the way people describe their world.

4: Historical Background:

JOURNAL OF CRITICAL REVIEWS

ISSN- 2394-5125 VOL 06, ISSUE 01, 2019

Since the antiquity, conserving nature has been the way of people's life all across the world. Local people have been stewarded nature and its resources across globe since generations for their survival. The autochthonous and indigenous community's cosmovision embrace an intrinsic conception of holistic sustainability considering human being as defenders of the natural resources rather appropriators of it. In an important work,

The ideas of conservation evolved into the concept of biodiversity and produced the concept of community management of ecosystems as a solution. The first official application of conservation rules was applied by British in colonial India in the early 19th century to engage in exploration, demarcation, reservation, and exploitation of forests for Teak timber that was important resource for the Royal Navy. The first formal conservation Act was about prohibition of felling of small Teak trees in colonial India. The international trail of environmentalism from India, under Lord Dalhousie's Forest Charter (1855) that introduced the first permanent and large-scale forest conservation program in the world. "The newly protected forests marked the formalization of a divorce that had been threatened since the early modern period – the final separation of human in nature, to human over nature".

These conservation areas began to establishing on the lands of original conservators by uprooting them. Protected areas are the most important feature of the conservation practices Provisions of protected areas is to save the natural landscape on the earth surface. These areas are Locations of unique natural, ecological and cultural values with various levels of protections regarding the law of the country or involved international agency.

The evolution of national park is credited to the evolution of nature tourism also. In fact, it was totally tourism on the name of conservation. The Yellowstone model of protected area that was widely propagated and followed in the world as a conservation model was created for benefit and pleasure of vacationing wealthy urban Americans and Europeans. The Yellowstone Park was established with the collective endeavor of conservationists, politicians and investment of a private railway company.

The main turning point was the government funded expedition in 1872; led by the geologist Ferdinand Hayden accompanied with scientists, photographers and an artist named Thomas Moran who painted a number of landscapes of the natural beauty of the region during expedition. Paintings made by Moran and photographs of the area provide a glimpse of amazing beauty to the Americans.

The history of conservation in national parks starts with inconvenient truth of the removal of local Indian settlers whose centuries of old harmonious life with nature had been brutally destroyed to establish the present day ideals of conservation of nature. The removal of Indians from Yellowstone stands as the "first example of removing a native population in order to 'preserve' nature," and the model of uncontaminated environment in protected area became the model for other national parks not only in USA but also in also other parts of the world.

In fact, the origin of environmental conservation lies in the dispossession of the natives from their land in the name of nature conservation and serves as the promotion of nature tourism for the urban industrial elites. When conservationists assert national parks as America's best idea and propagate the narratives on pioneering environmental conservation, must also be made to take responsibility for the erasure of Indigenous peoples and replicating colonial patterns of white supremacy and settler privilege on the native population. Jon Muir, the father of the US conservation movement argued that "wilderness" should be cleared of all inhabitants and the area should be kept separate to fulfill the recreational and mystical need of urbane people. This notion fallowed as the national policy in 1964 as Wilderness Act in the US. This act defined wilderness as "a place where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." These types of reserves are often referred to as 'Fortress Conservation' separating people from place. It is also termed as 'Coercive Conservation'; as the Government restrictions on the practice of natural resource exploitation in the target area. This approach is dependent on the process of exclusion of people as residents and minimum use of natural resources. The Yellowstone model was followed in the world of conservation till late 20th century. This model doesn't accept the value of local people' involvement and don't approve their conservation practices in defending environment. The idea that nature can only be preserved devoid of people has extensively guided conservation policy. It is in complete contrast to the most ancient society's conservation spirit i.e. ancient Indian philosophy of nature conservation where conservation was the way of life. The new concept of conservation is entirely based on an urban approach and attempts at modernization of nature that advocates the protection of wilderness. The wilderness; defined as an "untouched or untamed land is mostly an urban perception. It is the perception of those people who are far removed from the natural environment they depend upon".

5: Internationalization of Conservation and Development: Evolution of BINGOs (Big International NGOs)

A paradigm shift in the conservation strategy is reflected through the creation of MAB (Man and Biosphere) program by UNESCO that aims to improve human and environment relationship through scientific interventions. Contrary to exclusive approach earlier, MAB ushered in an inclusive approach to conservation with promotion of sustaining livelihood an economic development. "The change in conservation paradigms occurred also because governments and conservation agencies received pressure from a number of organizations to extend the rights to administer natural resources to other stakeholders such as local communities and non-governmental agencies". To promote sustenance to

local people insuring equity and justice, an innovative approach was designed with integration of natural sciences and social sciences. Similarly, World Conservation Strategy (WCS, 1980) of IUCN adopted strategy to include local people by including Conservation and Development Projects and Community based Resource Management (CBNRM).

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recognizes six management categories. National Parks belongs to second category of conservation where protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation.

Considering the dependency of indigenous people on land resources in developing countries the ‘Yellowstone model’ of fortress approach in the protected areas as a paradigm has changed from conservation against people to conservation by people. This was done by considering the role of community participation in national parks. In Kinshasa Resolution (1975), the ICUN asked governments to not displace local people and permit them to utilize specific resources inside the parks to maintain their traditional way of life. Biosphere Reserves (1973) announced under the “Man and Biosphere (MAB) program by UNESCO in was the first global endeavor to identify ways and means by which sustainable development of terrestrial ecosystems may be attempted”. Thus, provision of ‘core zone’ was firmly conserved, trailed by a ‘buffer zone’ was recognized suitable for least resource exploitation to local communities to avoid any conflict of park and people.

Protected area strategy intend to conserve natural environment by restricting land use within area with controlled various level of resource use to local population through strategy of scientific research and social integration to technically manage the protected area.

Third World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas in Bali (1982) agreed that the protected areas in developing countries would survive only as far as they address human concern . Indigenous communities of global south were utilised as a ‘commodity’ by BINGOs and various agencies and pressure groups on the name of conservation and poverty of local communities involved in fundraising, aid and grant activities.

A study of 137 countries revealed that the countries with huge economic inequality and low democratic foundations have major amount of national spaces reserved for nature conservation. This happens because Neoliberal eco-governamentality of state and bio politics favors market over people.

It is estimated that “Indigenous and rural communities protect up to 80% of global biodiversity, but receive little benefit in return.”

However, in spite this fact, the global conservation of nature is increasing under aegis of ICUN.IUCN is not merely a community for conservation action, but a prime global source of production and circulating of conservation knowledge. It promotes epistemic community that follow top to down managerial model controlled far from the implementation area.

6: Discussion and Results

The epistemic community positioned local people as incompetent to manage their ecosystem and situate them as the main reason for local environmental problems. Under the scientific gaze; epistemic community oversight the dynamic ecological practices of the local people to discontinue manifold socio ecological interface through situating them into fixed boundary.

However, applying the Western approach of conservation in developing countries such as India leads to some contradiction with prevailing practices. First, the environmental knowledge system of western world imposes technoscientific model to change formal perception of nature in local and informal ways.

Secondly, the western idea of nature does not include men, instead consider nature a resource system to be dominated and controlled at human need and will. While most societies in developing countries consider humans as integrated part of nature resulting into conservation as a part of life.

Thirdly, the western approach suggests bureaucratic intervention to control and regulate nature applying scientific classification with standardization approach.

Fourthly, regulation and control are tools that regulate and disciplined nature for its development. The relationship between human and nature is a matter of state intervention and needs to be restructured.

Fifthly, the productivity of nature is maintained through interventions at bio physical and social levels and rejecting folk knowledge relative to progressive and revering of nature.

In this way, the western approach to conservation changed the role of local people from stewards of nature to helpless participants in the biodiversity conservation and to be controlled from remote spaces. Thus, the main tendency of present day conservation is dominated by the idea that nature is a resource for human consumption and human can save nature through the art and science of ecological modernization. “Survival of the planet is well on its way to becoming the wholesale justification for a new wave of state interventions in people’s lives all over the world” Basically nature conservation is facing “Trump Moment ” pushing economic logics as solution to global environmental problems.

7: Conclusion

JOURNAL OF CRITICAL REVIEWS

ISSN- 2394-5125 VOL 06, ISSUE 01, 2019

Protected areas have become as apparatuses through which natural spaces are controlled. The concept of nature conservation in protected areas is not only represents western dominance but also deprived people of different cultural connotations to define their form of social life. Industrial states were primarily concerned with the development of the natural resources of their colonies. Establishment of economic value through promotion of development dominated and devalued all other values. Programs were focused mainly on raising living standards and on industrialization through capital formation, investment in human capital, and trade.

Current processes operating in protested areas are having uneven, detrimental impacts on poor people, and ecosystem degradation which in the long run will worsen the impact on marginalized communities unless significant changes are made in the policies, institutions and practices.

8: References

- Adams, W.M. (2001) Green Development: Environment and Sustainability in the Third World, Routledge, London, P 71
- Agrawal A, Ostrom E. (2001) Collective action, property rights, and decentralization in resource use in India and Nepal. *Political. Sociology*, 29(4):495–514
- Braun, Bruce. (2000) "Producing Vertical Territory: Geology and Governmentality in Late Victorian Canada." *Ecumene*, 7(1)
- Büscher, B. (2013). Transforming the Frontier. 'Peace Parks' and the Politics of Neoliberal Conservation in Southern Africa. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Butcher Jim (2007) Ecotourism, NGOs and Development- A Critical Analysis, Rutledge Publications, pg 23
- Butler, R.W (1991) 'Tourism, environment, and sustainable development', *Environmental Conservation* 18(3): 201–209
- Davidson D J and Frickel S (2004) Understanding environmental governance, *Organization and Environment*, 17 (4), pp 471-492
- Escobar A (1995), Encountering development: the making and unmaking of the Third World, Princeton University Press, 5.
- Fairhead, J., Leach, M., & Scoones, I. (2012). Green Grabbing: a new appropriation of nature?. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(2), 237-261.
- Gomez-Pompa A. and A. Kaus (1992) Taming the Wilderness Myth, *Bioscience*, 42(4): pp 271-279.
- Heinen, J. (2012). International trends in protected areas policy and management. In B. Sladonja (Ed.), *Protected Area Management*
- John Urry and Jonas Larsen(2011) *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, Sage Publications, London
- Kashwan P. (2017) Inequality, democracy, and the environment: A cross-national analysis *Ecological Economics*, p. 139–151
- Lemos, M. C., & Agrawal, A. (2006). Environmental governance. *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour.*, 31, 297-325.
- Mascia, M.B., Pailier, S., (2011). Protected area downgrading, downsizing, and degazettement (PADDD) and its conservation implications. *Conserv. Lett.* 4, 9–20.
- Neumann R.P. (2002) The postwar conservation boom in Britishcolonial Africa, *Environmental History* 7(1): 24-27
- Oates, J. F. (1999) Myth and Reality in the Rain Forest: how conservation strategies are failing in West Africa, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles.
- Singh, P. (ed.) (2007). "Report of the Task Force on Grasslands and Deserts, Government of India Planning Commission, New Delhi, p 9
- Tiwari, P. C.; Joshi, Bhagwati, eds. (January 1997). *Wildlife in the Himalayan Foothills: Conservation and Management*. Indus Publishing Company. ISBN 81-7387-066-7.
- Vijayan V.S. (1991) Keoladev National Park Ecology Study: Final Report, Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay
- Weaver, D. B. (2006). Sustainable tourism: Theory and practice. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.