

**Climate Change: A new threat in Making and Unmaking of Statelessness**

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### **Introduction**

While I am writing this paper our Earth is witnessing wars in this 21st century (giving away to Human rights) in between Russia and Ukraine, displacing many families and many fleeing as refugees involuntary or voluntarily relocating into new destinations . The European war, Talibans takeover of Afghanistan , the Pandemic and many recent incidents have affected our planet and it people in many ways and to escape they chose to flee from oppression. This ongoing war and rising inflation along with the energy crisis has also affected Asian countries specially Sri Lanka leaving it economically devastated and forcing its people to flee and take shelter in India. And despite all the depressing issues one problem connects through all these problems i.e the problem of climate change. To understand the nexus between environmental degradation and migration.

While being a post graduate student in the University of Calcutta and preparing for my final semester in my special paper I came across a community (*Manta*) in Bangladesh. It was a fishing community who were living on water for many decades. They were denied the fundamental rights and the women face the worst as they are unable to access the healthcare facilities during child birth. These communities are one such example of ecological stateless people. This was the point from where I am looking forward to discuss with these unofficial unannounced crisis of Climate induced stateless people. Substantiated my argument from *Walter Kalin* discussion and his concern about the inhabitants of small sinking islands or states. So my discussion revolves around ecological refugees to ecological statelessness.

Before I proceed further we are somewhere more or less aware of our rights and our surrounding, and the issue of forcibly displaced people can be voluntary actions. Discuss climate statelessness and its hazards how the collective actions from international assistance and local support we can

cope and slow down the pace of environmental deterioration and help people from becoming stateless. Both the Global North and Global South has to work to achieve certain level of success. Lastly I would like to end with *Paul Kinsnorth* and *Dipesh Chakrabarty*'s way pointing at the root cause of all the environmental related issue which is again something we know to acquire power and control and market domination by the developed and semi developed countries leaving and risking their own people's lives .

### **Why to Flee?**

One of the country's first female mayors, Zarifa Ghafari, was smuggled to safety in Germany after telling the press she was just waiting to be killed. Students from the country's only girls' boarding school landed in Rwanda after its founder burned all the student records. (Founder Shabana Basij-Rasikh was a 2014 National Geographic Emerging Explorer.)

The stories of displacements are not new and the reasons are varied. The displacements are due politically induced like in Africa the food shortage have forced millions to flee both internally and crossing the borders.

According to *Hugo* many flee because of fear , political economic instability forces them leave. They flee to new destinations for better living or for new opportunities to start fresh with new scope to rebuild their life. Mostly those who flee to other destination crossing border becomes refugees .

Those who only move within ones country of origin without crossing the international border become IDPs or Internally Displaced Persons . These are found more or less in every country rich or poor . Usually they just flee for better living and food. Hence it usually becomes easier to identify 'refugees' asylum seekers or 'IDPs' . There are another type of refugees which is much common and not new category that is ecological refugees. As Amitav Ghosh in his books rightly

points out that ecological refugees are not new many want to escape their fate or run away from the wrath of the mother nature and become refugees. In our country like India with so many border sharing neighbours this influx of refugees from other countries is not new. People have flocked into our country during the time of partition 1947 later in 1972 or 1992 in India to find a new home and a new identity, leaving behind their painful past. Hence migration or mobility is not something new or bad but it turns out to be bad when the host country fails to provide them with basic requirements and couldn't provide the proper humanitarian assistance. Though the Refugee convention of 1951 has really been in help to define who are refugees. But my main focus is on the Climate induced refugees or stateless people.

Climate has always been compared with the woman, and in current times both haven't been treated well. Due to overpopulation, technological advancements and the life of luxuries all have put strain on our resources and on earth's natural resources. We have over mined, over used, over digged and over pumped in a point where there is no place for replenishments making it almost unavailable. These over has strained the resources making our planet earth warm and unsafe for its inhabitants. Due to global warming, rural to urban migration, rising water levels, blowing of strong winds and storms, common earthquake has become a feature. We have not taken care of our nature and everything has become over priced or limited availability giving birth to more inequalities. As Dipesh Chakraborty has put it in his work. But according to *Hugo and Walter Kalin* it's very difficult to understand the complex nexus of migration and environmental induced migration, as it may be sometimes voluntary action like for temporary relocation and again returning back. Few a times it becomes involuntary when the damage has been immense on human lives and the damage is beyond repair. For instance the recent escalation and war in Ukraine has led many people to countries like Germany, Denmark etc this actions are both

involuntary and voluntary and until now 6 million refugees have fled. The reason being political, food shortages, and mostly fear of life.

But along with all these causes one more being environmental causes, the health hazards due to the leaking of radioactive chemicals, less water availability and they flee and protected by the international law. “Indonesia not being the first. Thus now we know why people flee.”

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### **Whom to Blame?**

Regimes and modern day super power nation states go by certain notions of acquiring or accumulating more resources and wealth from the economically backward ,weaker and smaller states or island nations . Today the true problem lies with the apocalyptic climate change results like strong hurricanes, famine, drought, rising sea levels , rising temperature. The issues which we face today are human induced. The First World Developed countries who are most engaged with industries are the real polluters. With their action it has a direct impact on the developing , backward nations . The excessive reliability for natural resources on these weaker nations by the powerful ones always given, the First world countries took an upper hand and exploited them, a typical case of neoliberalism. Through these discussions I wanted to point out the existence of the notion that strong exploits the weaker. With the birth advent of occident power along with their scientific advancements , their good endeavors most of them turned into the odd side affecting negatively to the backward countries the colonies of British. Destroying the stability among the South Asians states . Ending their 180 years rule they left the south Asians divided and created fences regulating people's entry through it. The porous borders have left many lives in danger. The laws are not able to reach them, people still pour in and it's dangerous. Due to the creation of these borders in third world countries it made the issues of displacements , refugees , statelessness the pressing issue. The porous border like in between India and Bangladesh, India and Pakistan , and many more . The real problem of forceful displacements takes place when one home or state is not safe or the government fails to protect its citizens and its minority section of people. The most vulnerable among all these groups. Refugees are of many types now .But the pressing issue of statelessness which is the most controversial and debatable not easily to b resolved . UN 1954

1960 and many more such conventions and campaigns have been . . . First we need to know what is statelessness and how it occurs.

### **Statelessness the Sinking Islands**

Firstly we need to define statelessness and why these is complicated to understand and examples or case studies we find in statelessness .\

According to 1954 convention A stateless person is someone who is not a citizen of any country. Citizenship is the legal bond between a government and an individual, and allows for certain political, economic, social and other rights of the individual, as well as the responsibilities of both government and citizen. A person can become stateless due to a variety of reasons, including sovereign, legal, technical or administrative decisions or oversights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights underlines that “Everyone has the right to a nationality.” (“What is a Refugee? Definition and Meaning”, n.d.)

It is estimated that at least 10 million people are stateless worldwide: they are not considered as nationals by any State under the operation of its law.

Statelessness is sometimes referred to as an invisible problem because stateless people often remain unseen and unheard. They often aren’t allowed to go to school, see a doctor, get a job, open a bank account, buy a house or even get married. Denial of these rights impacts not only the individuals concerned but also society as a whole, in particular because excluding an

entire sector of the population can lead to social tensions and significantly impair economic and social development. (“What is Statelessness?”, n.d.) Stateless problem is an invisible problem but it affects the normal way of a person’s living. Although statelessness may in many contexts be a hidden problem, stateless people are found in all regions of the world. caused by a number of factors such as: discrimination in nationality laws (e.g. racial, religious or gender), conflict between and gaps in nationality laws and State succession. Being undocumented is not the same as being stateless. However lack of birth registration can put people at risk of statelessness as a birth certificate provides proof of where a person was born and parentage – key information needed to establish a nationality. Risks of statelessness can also arise in situations of displacement. They don’t have the rights to enjoy the rights as they are without nationality.

. Hence it comes under the states responsibility to grant citizen to whom. And in this many feels they are left out . Hence its the law of one particular land or nation which decides for whom to reside. Which proves a nation to be called state needs territory in order to have an administration on its subjects . For instance the most sad example are the Rohingya crisis in Asia.

The SDG goal of #IBelong to eradicate statelessness 2024 is still a far away dream. There has been more pressing problems which we should parallelly try to resolve along with this issue of statelessness, which is human -induced climate change .

Before I introduce climate statelessness , I would like to mention that these is a complicated concept linked with sinking islands They are usually a victim of slow onset of events like change of river



course drought famine .. Forced to flee due to unavailability of proper drinking water, or poverty, sometimes changing of river course or losing of river shores are all part of this climate change induced by human activities. But when we talk about climate statelessness it means the losing of habitat, land or territory on which the people claims their citizenship. Many pacific islands are already facing this issue where the rising water levels . Little has been done and its impact is not felt throughout only the pacific islands are sinking or are on the brink of it. This has been felt very little by humans as the process will take long time to fully get submerged but the habitats human animals are facing the danger. General deterioration of conditions of life and economic opportunities as a consequence of climate change may prompt people to look for better opportunities and living conditions in other parts of the country or abroad, before the areas in which they live become uninhabitable. Such people make use of their liberty to choose a new place of residence if they remain within their country (McAdam 2010, #). In Bangladesh due to the change of river course and the sudden wild rise of water level in river many was forced to leave this information we may all heard about from Amitav Ghosh's work the hungry tide and the derangement the two work highlights how the rising water level in seas and rivers has made those cities, towns near the shore or river basin vulnerable, how much their lives are at risk. One such example can be found in a fishing community in Bangladesh where they usual known as boat dwellers . This fishing community of Bangladesh named as Manta community has lived on floating boats which usually they call houses. These community is lives on boats and are denied the fundamental rights ,living in tiny boats with large family members and little to feed upon. This people finds themselves unable to avail the basic health facilities mostly are unemployed dependent on fishing. The women faced the worst scenarios without availing any health care facilities . They are totally cut off from the land and the local

government is not doing much for them. In this way as a the year passes they might have a possibility to lose their citizenship as well or they might never grant a normal life on land. Little has been done. Mostly the the complexities start with understanding the environment induced displacements the link between then environmental change and the migration . If any migration took plce whether it's voluntarily or forced upon. Migration due to climate change may be one of the major push factors in this 21st century. Usually the low lying delataic area or lands of Asia and Pacific are more prone to dangers. But usually it happens that this type of migrations are not alwyasthe case of permanent displacements but they often become adaptations and temporary movements. Hence it is important to resolve the environmental crisi that will automatically reduce the climate asylym seekers . The Pacific islands orthe examples of sinking islands for instance in Fiji , Tavau Kiribati . The island of Maldives has all come under the radar,

While studying climate refugees we will also need to know he mechanism and the main problematic area which is if a land is declare high risked zone or the land becomes not habitable or it may cease to exist , no territory then what might happen to those islander who might have fled temporarily as climate refugees . then they become stateless as it will not exist . no territory no state where will be the citizenship.

Now this process might look the We nee Earlier we are quite accustomed with the term ecological refugees or IDPs(Internally Displaced People), usualy this people migrate internally within their own country for work voluntarily or they are compelled sometimes Usually these movemnts are made when there is constructions of some dams or their is accurate shortage of food , famine, flooding or drought por for state sponsored pogroms. Either way this movements are often remitted . Usually affecting the lower strata of population of ay third world countries.

But now the issue of the conversion of climate refugees to climate statelessness is gradually happening in a slow pace. We need to think of recovering within the given time so to eradicate it and not to happen it at all. For instance the threat which has been predicted and looming over my city Kolkata which according to reports can be submerged by 2050 or latest by next century . Already the delatic regions of Sunderbans are losing away lands due to water level rise .

### **IDPs**

Internally Displaced persons are usually protected and easily detectable . They are protected under the 1998 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement,<sup>15</sup> as well as regional instruments such as the 2006 Protocol on the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons<sup>16</sup> and the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. ‘persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of . . . natural or humanmade disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.’ This notion of IDP is broad and sufficiently flexible to cover people evacuated or fleeing from their homes to escape the dangers of a sudden-onset disaster, or who are forced to leave in the disaster’s aftermath because of the degree of destruction. (McAdam 2010, #)

The issue of ecological refugees or IDPs has taken a vital turn and the recent apprehensions have turned towards climate statelessness by Walter Kalin, way of perceiving the crisis of sinking islands located in the Asia and Pacific Islands. For instance while doing my research on this topic I have come across in Maldives islands as per one thereport it showed concern with the rising water levels. Maldives government provided a gripping image of this risk by holding a cabinet meeting at 5 meters underwater in wetsuits.<sup>3</sup> The UN Secretary-General (2009) and many NGOs largely echoed these

concerns, which are now part of the standard narrative revolving around powerful images of “sinking (PIGUET . Not only the rising water levels but lands turning dry causing desertification , land remains no more arable ultimately resulting in displacements and looking for fertile and arable land suitable for agriculture, than desertification meaning the literal expansion of deserts, it is a catch-all term for land degradation in water-scarce parts of the world. This degradation includes the temporary permanent decline in quality of soil, vegetation, water resources or wildlife. Hence we can conclude that everything is related to the availability of water. While I chose this topic one thing also came to my mind how the Harappan civilization just disappeared from its land of origin many proponents and causes were put forward but one of the scientific causes can be the changing of river course where the settlements were found in Saraswati river.

The next point which I would like to talk on is about the global Action Plan adopted in Brazil declaration and how much it has been a success. And secondly I would like to discuss from our understanding how to cope with invisible inevitable catastrophe which has been induced by humans like us.

The great big powers have fought and went to battle to capture and conquer to make to capture the resources leaving many in a poor condition. The resources and wealth of the world countries are milking cash cows exploiting , not only humans but their climate their resources filling their baskets and living the the third world countries dependent on them. When this issue of ecological hazard felt again we might find the same history repeating itself the marginalised developing Asian countries and Pacific islands have again found

themselves under ecological threat the conditions created by those super power First World countries.

The excessive use of cars, and air conditioners has made the earth warm. Further the excessive population in the Asian countries has made the take up most the agricultural land for houses and cut down trees for constructing complexes making the Carbon dioxide less absorbed by the trees. Then the problem of water scarcity all of them have taken toll in our lives and making the people felt and uncertain about our future.

The govts are also unable to hold onto so much of population and thus making many left without citizenship or unable to prove their citizenship .

Yet the point is about what the international conventions have done or are planning to eradicate statelessness, whether the current on going crisis of the Russia Ukraine war is going to have hazardous impact on environment? The role played by the first world super powers and their actions to prevent war and to protect environment is it sufficient? When there was summits taking place among South Korea, Japan, India America and many others was the climate issue and the problems the Pacific islanders are facing , were there on their agenda list to discuss? Fiji island habitats are already concerned with the rising sea level they feel threatened. A strategically important position like the Pacific islands reefs , are they losing out on to their own battle against the environment and the real big polluters are not doing enough to protect or think alternatively for them.

. There are many questions unanswered like those islanders losing their habitats or territories. Now we have we to prevent more people from becoming stateless and

specially prevent more from adding to the list . Parallely we should also look at the environmental changes which may triggered the issue of statelessness by resolving the issue with collective actions and planning. Maybe the ripples and effects are yet to be felt but those islanders are still counting their days started migrating inland.

### **Conclusion and Discussions**

I would like to end the discussion hypothetically. Now the european powers are facing the heat waves and rising temperatures and italso witnessing the drying up of rivers and ponds like that in Britain.

The forest fires in France should be taken as signs of deteriorating environment. The signs should be taken seriously and made to work for reversing the wrong doing . And both the Global North and south should work together along with the local to make it work, reducing the temperature and rising water level. Both the Climate Action Plan and Global Action Plan to eradicate both should made to work simultaneously to reduce the global warming. The Global North should become much aware and alerted from the incidents and warnings from the Global South and assist them to come out of the issue by introducing new hydro laws or conventions. Citizens and every policy makers of the countries irrspective of rich and poor must undersatnd that in helping others and understanding the problems oth faced will give the zeala to make plans work out together . Paris Agreement and COP26 agendas will be total failure if the situation continues it in same way making it budensomne to attain the SDG goals to eradicate poverty , food and water scarcity . Human right should be the top priority . New alternatives need to introduce , as ones to understand the climate crisis wil affect everyone irrspective of rich or poor countries. Currently America the first world country is too dealing with frequent earthquakes and severe storms, almost 300 earthquake has taken place in Florida region due to excessive oil drilling . This signals should not be avoided and taken into

account , keeping in mind this small endeavors could save millions of lives and place for everyone to live in such a anthropocene age. *Paul Kingsnoth* in one of his book has quoted Leopold Kohr World are always ending, empires are always falling the climate has changed before change is the only constant . That change is only good when we make a place to live for everyone peacefully with dignity . Not handing over big, or excessive power to any particular which will surely to abuse it but breaking it up and keep, it in checked through INGOs or NGOs .

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