Exploring Core-Periphery Subjectivities: Transnational Advocacy Networks and Environmental Movements in India

BY

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ABSTRACT:

This dissertation reveals the long-term implications of Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) on domestic environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs) in India. It asks two questions: i. *what opportunities and challenges do Indian NGOs face while addressing environmental issues within a transnational framework?* ii. *in what ways can southern domestic activists reduce the challenges of TAN neocolonialism and Indian state repression?* It argues that TANs fail to leverage indigenous interests in the global South and that TAN activity increases Indian activists' exposure to state repression. Existing transnational relations literature downplays the neocolonial side of transnationalism in favour of the short-term benefits of international recognition and material and financial aid. Drawing on over 50 research participant interviews and print documents collected over the course of six-months in New Delhi and Bengaluru, the research teases out the everyday lived experiences and histories of domestic activists in TANs. It analyzes how certain traditional rural-based advocacies that adopt a Gandhi-based approach such as the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (NBA) and *Pathalgadi* movements reject transnational alliances with international NGOs for fear of dominance and oppression, while urban-based advocacies that receive material and financial security from abroad such as Greenpeace India, ActionAid India, and Amnesty International view TANs as a boon for the Indian environmental advocacy sector. The research argues that Indian environmentalists would benefit if they shifted away from TANs towards a 'global solidarity' model that incorporates intersectionality between movements and South-South Transnational Advocacy Networks (SSTANs).

for mummy and daddy
whose endless love sustains me

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Why are domestic environmental activists in the global South being pushed to the margins despite transnational support? In the academic realm where transnational advocacy is regarded as a boon for thousands of domestic advocacy groups, particularly in developing states, understanding the sociopolitical and environmental conditions under which marginalization and everyday othering persists is of critical importance for activists and academicians alike. Drawing on a study that analyzes the opportunities and challenges for transnationalism within southern quarters, this dissertation develops a strategic framework for domestic activists to resolve issues surrounding the impact of advocacy organizations and movements on environmental policymaking in states. It argues that traditional forms of transnationalism between the global North and South have a negative influence on southern domestic advocacies as they undermine the formal structures of domestic environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs) and movements in India. The research hypothesis of this study is that transnational advocacy networks (TANs) fail to leverage indigenous interests pushing domestic activists further to the margins of the state as they feel disempowered by continuously catering to northern demands. The characteristics of this form of transnationalism are detrimental for southern domestic environmentalists because of their financial liability and material dependency on transnational partners obliging them to follow northern diktats.

It is evident that global solidarity can play a symbolic role within social and environmental justice movements such as the Criminal-Justice Reforms, Gender Violence, Black Lives Matter, or the Global Climate Strike. Global solidarity has created opportunities for domestic activists to exchange information, seek counsel, and mediation to facilitate better negotiations with inflexible home governments. It has instilled a sense of humanness, compassion, and trust within these support structures through which domestic activists gain the courage, perseverance, and confidence to push back against oppressive, prejudicial, and discriminatory state structures and norms. But more puzzling is the fact that TANs have not created the same collective goodwill and heartwarming responses, particularly, in southern developing states as that of global solidarity networks where alliances are based on non-monetary terms and meager liability. Global solidarity helps mobilize domestic activists across the world to create credible alarm and impact on issues of sociopolitical and environmental importance. The absence of financial flows from international advocacies to domestic actors allows greater opportunities for cross-border exchange on subaltern issues because domestic actors are not indebted to donors.

On the other hand, transnational allyship creates challenges for policy influence and norm emergence in southern spaces because of issues centering state repression, neocolonialism, and Eurocentrism. For instance, transnational organizations such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace, ActionAid, CORDAID, and Survival International have prompted governmental hostility on domestic NGOs and movements for engaging in socioenvironmental and human rights-related struggles in the Indian state. Despite the general understanding that the government has been using the Foreign Contributions (Regulations) Act (FCRA) as a legal regulatory mechanism since 1976 to target TANs, foreign-funded NGOs have infiltrated southern domestic spaces eliciting governmental repression, clampdowns, and the criminalization of indigenous activists for simply conducting advocacy. Southern activism, within these conditions, has suffered innumerable losses with dissent being trampled as state actors subjugate domestic activists through their ‘civilizing missions’ and ‘reform measures’ that entail violent attacks, incarceration, and in some instances extrajudicial killings sponsored by the state itself. For instance, the *Tuticorin* protests in the state of *Tamil Nadu*, India was supported by Foil Vedanta, a London-based NGO that detailed the killing of 13 domestic activists during a police encounter in 2018 (Varadhan 2018). Foil Vedanta organized a press conference with *Tuticorin* activists in January 2018 regarding the Sterlite copper smelting plant causing groundwater pollution and environmental degradation. This incited widespread protests and sit-downs in February 2018 that resulted in the police open-firing at protest sites killing over a dozen activists and leaving approximately 102 human casualties (Varadhan 2018).

Incidentally, this form of government backlash has also been identified in several counties besides India. States such as Australia, Bangladesh, Colombia, Russia, and Zambia (Crotty et al 2013; Feldman et al 2012; Fransen et al 2021; Henry 2010; Matejova et al 2018; McConville 2015; and Sauter 2015) employ stringent regulatory laws to restrict domestic NGOs from accepting transnational funding provided by international donors. Fransen et al (2021: 13) state that between 1990 and 2018, approximately 90 countries worldwide placed tight measures on TANs restricting them from freely advocating their social, environmental, and human rights issues. This has impeded the ability of these networks to promote better state policies and improve the local conditions of the population. These regulatory measures are stringently applied creating difficult circumstances for TANs to obtain their registration licenses and execute their activities. Domestic and international activists are also subjected to harassment, arrests, intimidation, surveillance, and threats by state powers. Other repressive tactics employed include the freezing of bank accounts, termination of organizational assets, and office closures.

Additionally, issues of neocolonialism and Eurocentrism have also surfaced with the rise of TANs. TANs such as Greenpeace, Amnesty International, and ActionAid impose challenges on domestic environmental activists seeking to persuade inflexible home governments into instituting effective policy mandates and norms in states. Instead, domestic activists fail to realize these goals and face subjugation and marginalization via their transnational partners. It is common practice for TANs to provide material and financial assistance to domestic advocacies that are struggling to make ends meet and mobilize the masses. However, this allows TANs to assert themselves in leadership roles as they provide material and financial resources to domestic activists but also dictate, exercise their power, and control over southern actors. As such, donor aid obligates domestic activists to comply by the objectives outlined by their transnational partners compelling them to become subordinates in their campaign as they prioritize foreign interests above their own values and goals. This not only leads to indigenous underrepresentation but also disempowers and pushes domestic activists further to the peripheral margins of the state.

Yet still, TANs draw on the basic principles of global solidarity that is conceptualized on notions of shared cultural norms, values, empathy, unity, and compassion for domestic struggles in southern quarters (Wilde 2013). But in practice, transnational advocacy reveals inferior images within these discourses that are premised on neocolonial oppression and marginalization. Why are TANs involved in debates surrounding neocolonialism and Eurocentrism when they purport on the same values and principles as that of global solidarity networks? Many existing explanations emphasize that these limitations should be dismissed because transnational advocacy models are ‘no one size that fits all’ (Florini 2000: 237). Young (1992) also asserts that the drawbacks of TANs have been less important over time because of the novel technological advancements and effective modes of communication that southern advocacies have received through these mediums. Khagram et al (2002: 86-8) explain how domestic advocacies should refrain from complaining about transnational challenges because of their inability to self-govern and support themselves. Additionally, Bandy et al (2005: 233) state that the reasons for transnational successes or failures lie in how ‘well-established' domestic movements are. This implies that domestic advocacies are duly required to be self-sufficient beforehand to reap the benefits of transnationalism. These analyses indicate that TANs offer multiple points of influence that can boost or impair domestic advocacies in the global South, but at the core, transnational advocacies are, largely, understood to be highly valuable for domestic movements because of their altruistic functions that help domestic activists raise resources, mobilize the masses, and make headway with inflexible governments by influencing state policies and norms.

These archetypes fail to encapsulate issues of prejudicial discrimination and marginalization that push domestic activists further to the periphery because they eulogize TANs for their benevolent services in southern settings. These scholars not only fail to analyze the oppressive structures present within TANs but also allude to the normalization and naturalization of transnational problems within the global South that diminishes the importance of catering to or resolving indigenous issues within these power structures, further subjugating and exploiting domestic activists, and pushing them to the margins of the state. Instead of critiquing these issues, domestic activists perceive oppression and marginalization as a given — i.e., the norm for practicing advocacy within a transnational framework. On the other hand, the dominant group i.e., international donors continue to perpetuate the construction of these binaries (self-other, core-periphery, and orient-occident) between domestic and international activists maintaining their position as the ‘civilized’, ‘superior’, and ‘intelligent actor’ within these partnerships whilst encouraging other subaltern activists in the global South to acquire their assistance for sociopolitical and environmental remedy. At the same time, domestic activists desire empowerment, confidence, and autonomy in their movements but are marked with inferior labels such as being naive and untrained within advocacy structures requiring the assistance of the global North to ‘reconstitute’ and ‘reform’ them.

How does one reconcile these variegated meanings in the scholarship and everyday advocacy that highlight the advantages of transnational activism but also reveals its dark side creating a troubled setting for southern actors facing prejudicial discrimination, racism, and oppression in the global South? The scholarship (Dahl 1971; Edkins et al 2004; Keohane et al 1972; 1977; Khagram et al 2002; Koenig-Archibugi 2010; Putnam 1988; Risse et al 1995; Tarrow 2005; Weiss 2005) points to the fundamental role of non-state actors in global governance demonstrating their power and authority to influence norms. A handful of scholars (Barnett 2016; Bloodgood et al 2019; De Waal 2015; Jalali 2013; Jenkins et al 1986), on the other hand, state that the transnational advocacy sector is rather precarious because of its paternalistic behaviour towards the global South, its past failures surrounding policy influence in these states, and the complexities involved with working in a highly exploitative and racially prejudiced environment.

But these arguments have still not developed solutions to address the challenges associated with transnationalism. They fail to connect the predominant neocolonial and Eurocentric narrative pervasive within advocacy-centred discourses offering redressal for subaltern concerns. They also do not sufficiently validate the impact TANs have on marginalized communities such that southern activists can reconsider their approach towards adopting a transnational framework that is, fervently, admired by some, but one that is also deeply disturbing, oppressive, and discriminatory in nature. Without deliberating these narratives adequately, the scholarship remains scant as the applicability and usability of transnational strategies for domestic activism in the global South continues to partly recognize southern interests and present issues from the prism of the global North i.e., in terms of what northern actors deem is in the best interest for subaltern activists. In most southern states that have a history with imperialism, governmental repression, political turmoil, and instability, understanding the optics for engaging with transnational actors becomes critically important because it stresses the need for reconstructing power structures and decolonizing subaltern spaces.

In turn, this study aims to employ a decolonial approach to investigate this ‘dystopic side of TANs’ that erase and objectify southern actors through racial privilege and colonial logic. A decolonial approach not only seeks to analyze this production of knowledge that makes invisible indigenous actors, their culture, and lived experiences but also disrupts these neocolonial archetypes that aim to reinforce these power structures. It validates and restores the varied identities, belief systems, and sociocultural expressions and practices of indigenous actors that have been co-opted or eradicated over time due to colonialism and present-day neocolonialism. A decoloniality that rejects these epistemic neocolonial and Eurocentric advances and offers a rethinking of southern advocacy approaches will help confront these power relations that are compounded by inequity to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of stakeholder relationships. It will also help take preventive action when discrepancies arise and discern which knowledge systems should be applied to empower and promote leadership among southern domestic quarters.

Additionally, a decolonial approach benefits this research study as it explains the primacy of how to be an ally and build solidarity, notably, in subaltern contexts that have been marked by histories of imperialism and where issues of marginalization and prejudicial oppression from state and non-state actors are already pervasive. It helps continually reflect over the power dynamics, proprietorship of movements, and structure of campaigns that have been, deliberately, placed in darkness. Ensuring movements are conceived through indigenous interests and practices as opposed to western ideals and implement the organizational principles of southern activism surrounding their empowerment, self-reflection, and healing is also critical. Through decoloniality, this investigative study helps validate varied southern identities instead of forcing domestic activists to abandon their own individuality and embrace a specific identity. It will put value in the cultural understanding of indigenous goals and objectives instead of the normalized, perpetuated belief that TANs are the singular truths for successful advocacy pursuits in the global South.

This study utilizes the ‘Indian environmental lens’ to explain transnational problems in southern advocacy structures as India is the third-largest carbon emitter in the world, after China and the US (Slater 2020). India is also one of the most densely populated states in the world that faces resource scarcity in terms of water, clean air, land, minerals, and forests. Between 2005-15, 11 Indian states encountered a decrease in their natural capital (Envi Stats India 2018: 22). These environmental stresses are worsened by climate change as India faces extreme weather conditions such as heat waves, floods, erratic rains, biodiversity loss, and pollution. It is estimated that India is the seventh most affected country by climate change with more than 475,000 people having lost their lives between 2000-19 because of 11,000 natural disasters estimated at about US $2.56 trillion (Eckstein et al 2021: 5). These factors invoke environmental conflicts in the state that, particularly, emerge between the Indian government and indigenous communities demanding better environmental conditions and standards in the country. Currently, India also has the highest number of environmental conflicts in the world. Environmental Justice Atlas reports that India has approximately 271 ecological conflicts and is far ahead of Columbia (i.e., the country with the second most number of environmental conflicts in the world) with 128 cases (Sarkar 2018). Therefore, it is for these eminent reasons that the 'Indian environmental advocacy sector' was selected for this research study as it helps examine the implications for transnational coalitions on vulnerable marginalized groups as they operate through the ambit of state repression and neocolonial subjugation while protesting their socioenvironmental causes.

This study also develops a theoretical framework to highlight how these shared collective problems can generate solutions for transnational advocacy in the southern realm. It utilizes Gandhi's philosophical teachings to illustrate the importance of developing 'mindfulness' and 'self-reflection' within resistance movements while pressing for political action (Gandhi 1983). Gandhi was not an environmental activist, nor did he directly address environmental challenges in India but his theories surrounding 'non-violence', 'noncooperation' and 'simple living' offer significant knowledge to address environmental challenges in India and the global South (Gruzalski 2002). Gandhi advocates that the implementation of these methods can help inform Indian campaigners to advocate their issues effectively in the state. Furthermore, Gandhi states that, "every village has to be self-reliant. Things required in a village should be produced in the village itself" (1947: 251). Gandhi's insights on 'self-reliance' are particularly relevant to the transnational discourse because they allow domestic activists to employ an indigenized approach of self-governing their movements as opposed to seeking international support from donors that invite other challenges pertaining to state repression and northern influence.

Unlike other modern philosophers, Gandhi challenged India's economic growth by rejecting the imposition of western culture and promoting traditional/indigenous knowledge systems (Guha 1995). Gandhi asserted how domestic actors should be cognizant about the colonizer's activities but also recognize the need for an individual's worldview shift centering *swaraj* (self-rule) and *satyagraha* (quest for truth). Gandhi's political ideas were not adopted post-independence as then-prime minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru designed India's economic strategy surrounding large-scale mass production and industrialization (Guha 1995), but Gandhi's philosophical teachings continue to inspire various domestic movements including feminist, labour, environment, and human rights across the world till date. Gandhi's ideas on 'self-reflexivity' within political protests question the moral and spiritual foundations of modern-day activism intending to be truth-focused and ruminating. In doing so, Gandhi advocates the complete renunciation of internally complacent behaviors and attitudes and a centering of indigenous symbolic powers to confront oppressors whilst leveraging sociopolitical issues and unifying and mobilizing the masses (Guha 1995). Gandhi's techniques are theorized and modeled as a progressive form of conducting everyday advocacy in southern quarters which is why Gandhi's philosophical contributions have been studied extensively within the movement building space in the global South.

This dissertation discerns how Gandhi-based precepts can help build a collective community of domestic activists that can decolonize southern advocacies, adopt a self-reliant approach while advocating sociopolitical causes, encourage intersectional ties between indigenous actors, govern strategic behavior, overcome political barriers imposed by domestic governments, and foster trust and confidence in addressing neocolonial problems within the pedagogical reading of TANs, thus, validating the lived experiences and everyday realities of domestic actors.

The study also investigates the varied experiences of urban and rural-based NGOs vis-à-vis their transnational engagements to better understand the lived realities of local activists within domestic and international frameworks. It analyzes how certain rural-based advocacies that adopt a Gandhi-based approach such as the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (NBA) and *Pathalgadi* movements reject transnational alliances to avoid northern dominance and oppression while some urban-based advocacies that receive material and financial security from abroad such as Greenpeace India, ActionAid India, and Amnesty International remain vested to the idea of TANs being a boon for the Indian advocacy sector. Gandhi-based rural advocacies adopt 'self-reliant' techniques to meet their campaign needs by utilizing minimal resources and rejecting all forms of transnational aid. With these means, they have still been able to effectively pressure governments into formulating better environmental policies and sociopolitical conditions for the masses in the state. At the same time, most development-centered urban NGOs that favour transnationalism for their advocacy networks continue to seek foreign aid for stability and growth.

Rural-based NGOs that adopt a *Gandhian* approach in their environmental movements exemplify how indigenous activists share a close and intimate relationship with nature. They connect Gandhi's ideas on 'simple living', 'self-reliance', and a 'less wasteful lifestyle' to highlight the significance of traditional knowledge systems in southern environmental advocacy. The *Narmada* dam movement exemplifies how domestic activists mobilized masses without the use of foreign aid, material, and technological support. They resorted to the use of non-violence and were still able to pressure the World Bank to withdraw support from the *Sardar Sarovar* dam project in 1993. The *Chipko* and *Appiko* movements in north and south India, respectively, became successful campaigns because they not only leveraged local mobilization declining transnational coalition-building, but also adopted Gandhi's theoretical ideas on nonviolence to protest the felling of trees by the means of physically embracing them. This led to an eventual ban on commercial forestry (Mitra 1993). Additionally, the *Pathalgadi* movement initiated by the tribal community in *Kunti* district of the state of *Jharkhand* elucidates how activists are able to sustain the movement without receiving foreign aid from transnational actors. The *Pathalgadi* movement proves that there are certain rural based advocacies in India that continue to follow this traditional route influenced by *Gandhian* principles and which serve as a powerful determinant for political action and policy reform in the state. These traditional advocacies unlike others (i.e., other contemporary rural-based NGOs accepting foreign funding for their activities and certain urban based development NGOs that do the same) cultivate the shared vision of Gandhi through collective welfare and unity among members of the advocacy community. Positioning this ideologue reflexively helps negotiate differences regarding situatedness. It also reimagines an alternate paradigm for environmental advocacies in the global South to thrive on. Thus, the proposed framework of this dissertation highlights this scope for contemporary rural and urban-based development NGOs that seek a transnational route for their campaigns to adopt instead a *Gandhian* vision in their advocacy structures that can help them appease the challenges surrounding TANs which, in turn, subjugates them through governmental repression and northern influence.

Yet still, considering the optics of a Gandhi-based approach, mainly, in India's urban sector where there is a stronger inclination towards TANs is vital. Traditionally, Gandhi-based rural NGOs would place importance on village development and the production of indigenous knowledge by raising funds locally and relying less on foreign aid. But many contemporary rural and urban NGOs have digressed from this thought and consider external funding as a necessary condition for practicing domestic advocacy in the state (Aryal 2011). As such, there seems to be a greater leaning towards transnationalism in these spaces where capacity building support, material and financial resources can easily be found allowing domestic NGOs to swiftly advocate their causes and mobilize the masses. Khagram et al (2002) argue that this is an important characteristic of transnational advocacies as domestic activists would not be able to sustain their activities without the support of TANs. Similarly, Moghadem delves into how transnationalism provides international recognition and leverage for subaltern issues without which "the world would hardly have known about atrocities" (2005: 195). In this light, a rapid shift towards a Gandhi-based model seems unlikely when transnational opportunities are a more lucrative option for southern NGOs to pursue. However, domestic activists are also becoming increasingly aware of the negative implications of TAN activity in their states such that concerns surrounding state repression (Matejova et al 2018) and northern influence (Banks et al 2015) are more predominant now than ever. Rootes (2005: 42) states that southern NGOs are now aware of the cultural insensitivity towards them by their transnational partners urging northern NGOs such as Friends of Earth (FoE) to refrain themselves from establishing flagship offices in southern spaces and extending their solidarity from afar. Schramm et al (2018: 665-7) also point out that there must be a greater recognition of affected alliances from transnationalism such that TANs reconstitute their role by offering logistical and financial support not only vertically to their beneficiaries below but also horizontally to other transnational networks to help address the problem of paternalism and northern dominance present within them. Ergo, urban based advocacies (as well as rural NGOs) may be compelled to consider a reformulation of their advocacy structures gradually urging them to adopt a Gandhi-based model of conducting advocacy because of the increased challenges associated with transnationalism.

The research study employs a combination of archival research and nearly 50 open-ended, semi-structured research participant interviews to delineate the long-term effects of TANs on domestic advocacy groups in India. These interviews have been conducted over a period of six months in the states of *New Delhi* and *Bengaluru* in India. The case examples used in this study demonstrate the previous and existing relationships formed between domestic and international activists or general perceptions formed by southern activists as a result of their own understanding and/or concerns regarding TANs in the global South. The dissertation argues that a *Gandhian* approach is necessary to strengthen and empower domestic activists such that they should internally consider raising funds and resources instead of seeking aid and pursuing advice 'from above'.

The dissertation also acknowledges that there are existing differences between the perceptions of environmentalism in the global North and South such that they are conceived very differently from each other. Northern activism is epitomized for its ability to bring recourse and justice to matters relating to effectual environmental policy change in states while southern environmentalism is professed to be ‘disoriented’ and ‘wide-ranging’ (Guha et al 1998). Other conventional wisdom regarding northern environmentalism is that advocacies are more fully equipped and prepared to deal with environmental protection and human rights (Guha et al 2013). However, environmental groups in the global South are seen as less willing and able to value nature in the manner that it deserves protection, preservation, and restoration. Hobsbawm et al also state that “it is no accident that the main support for ecological policies comes from the rich and middle classes (except for businessmen who hope to make money by polluting activity. The poor, multiplying and under-employed, wanted more ‘development’, not less” (1995: 570). These eulogizations suggest that environmentalism in the global South is ‘too poor to be green’ (Martinez-Alier 1995) because it requires the material, financial, and technological assistance of international powers to prevent environmental degradation and human rights’ abuse from governments and private corporations whilst urging for the institution of environmentally friendly policies in states.

In this light, the study examines these traditional forms of TANs that mainly emerge from NGOs in the global North and South to highlight how transnationalism has been instrumental in the institutionalization of these North-South binaries in the environmental advocacy space, pushing marginalized communities further to the periphery by silencing domestic voices in their own struggles and/or inciting greater governmental intervention by markedly making their presence felt on southern domestic turf. The postcolonial theoretical approach used in this study will not only help explain how traditional TANs between the global North and South have perpetuated problems of marginalization, oppression, and the exoticization of domestic activists in southern settings but also help in the reimagination of an alternate form of southern environmentalism devoid of northern participation. Such a model will include indigenous knowledge systems, domestic interests, and visions for a better, safe, and secure future for environmental activists in the global South.

In terms of scale, the research study critically examines traditional TANs i.e., coalitions formed between NGOs in the global North and South rather than TANs between southern partners. Particularly intriguing are the problems of neocolonialism, Eurocentrism that emerge from these traditional settings as opposed to South-South transnational advocacy. This is because southern activists engage with northern powers and bring their varied identities, culture, and political issues to fore. On the contrary, South-South TANs exhibit greater diversity, inclusivity, and integrate varied cultures in their networks unlike their traditional TAN counterparts. Evaluating the domestic-international NGO scale is also vital for the assessment of transnational advocacy operations that function independently as well as in collectives. The role of international NGOs in these systems is that of a donor that supplies material, financial, and capacity building support to domestic NGOs. Domestic NGOs, on the other hand, are recipients of these resources provided by donors which, in turn, constrains their ability to enjoy sovereignty over their campaigns. In sum, these top-down hierarchal positions in TANs depict the different levels and scales present within domestic-international cross-border relationships. As such, this research study primarily focuses on the negative implications of international North-based NGOs within TANs on domestic environmental advocacy groups in the global South.

Finally, the research project aims to clarify the differences between governmental repression on TANs vis-à-vis locally funded domestic NGOs. In addition to TANs, the Indian government views domestic NGOs that raise funds locally also liable to subjugation and repression because of their politically motivated interests and activities in the state. They perceive these NGOs as liberal-minded civil society institutions that are critical of the government because of their western ideology that has ‘anti-national’ and ‘seditious’ leanings seeking to keep India underdeveloped through neocolonialism and Eurocentrism. These NGOs do not receive northern aid and only raise funds locally, but they are still repressed by the Indian government because they are perceived to be influenced by the global North. This gives the state a valid reason to institute attacks on these groups and oppress domestic activists under the same labels as that of TANs such as ‘anti-national’, ‘neocolonial’, and ‘Eurocentric’. For example, the NBA movement was supported through a global solidarity model by international actors and was not financially sponsored by transnational NGOs and yet NBA activists were subjected to harassment, arrests, imprisonment, and beatings by the Indian government. The state used the Official Secrets Act (OSA), sedition, and criminal defamation laws to subjugate NBA activists that were campaigning at the protest sites. In this manner, the government was able to repress dissenting domestic activists without the use of the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) but employed other legal regulatory mechanisms such as the OSA, sedition, and criminal defamation laws to suppress this form of political activism in the state. Both political alliance groups such as the left-wing *United Progressive Alliance* (UPA) as well as the right-wing *National Democratic Alliance* (NDA) have criminalized public intellectuals and human rights activists using various regulatory laws to cripple democratic civil society participation in the state.

In effect, this research study intends to make it perfectly clear that while hypothesizing TANs are uncongenial for domestic NGOs in the global South, it does not recommend that the withdrawal of transnational aid from domestic environmental advocacy structures will imply a smooth transition back into civil society or that other advocacy-related problems will diminish. Domestic activists are still likely to face sociopolitical challenges including state repression while campaigning. Instead, the project analyzes how the removal of TANs from the global South will invoke much lower risks for domestic activists while conducting advocacy in the state than with having to engage with transnational actors. This is because unlike other civil society proponents, there is a greater intolerance towards TANs in India resulting in stringent measures being imposed on them by the Indian government. For example, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) in 2014 led under the BJP Narendra Modi government stated that there has been a 2-3 per cent reduction in India’s gross domestic product (GDP) because of TANs (Intelligence Bureau 2014). As a result, in 2016, the Indian government cancelled approximately 20,000 out of 33,158 foreign-funded NGO FCRA registration licenses (PTI 2016). Matejova et al (2018: 145) also argue that there is “a global trend towards states depicting local NGOs with international linkages as subversive agents of foreign interests, justifying legal crackdowns and the severing of foreign funding and ties.”

The Indian government finds it easier to target TANs through the use of the FCRA that requires NGOs to obtain prior approval before their inception. Since 1976, the FCRA has been amended several times requiring all TANs to disclose financial and staff-related information to the IB (Singh 2015). A greater level of transparency is expected from TANs unlike other civil society organizations. The FCRA also entails broad and vague terminologies such as ‘organizations of political nature’ and the ‘economic interest of the state’ that conveniently broadens the scope of the Indian government to penalize dissenting TANs and prohibit them from receiving FCRA approvals (Kiai 2016: 10-2). This imposes greater challenges for domestic activists in TANs than other locally funded domestic NGOs that do not experience operational and inception-related problems such as these in the state. In effect, these factors indicate that there are greater organizational challenges at play for TANs because state repression is more pervasive in these advocacy networks than any other sector in India. Thus, this investigative research study chose to examine the case of TANs because they exhibit greater sociopolitical challenges for domestic activists in the long run.

Terminological explanations

The term ‘transnationalism’ is, broadly, applied in this study to denote the variegated meanings and concepts surrounding cross-border advocacy alliances. Derived from Kearney (1995); Keck et al (1998); Peck (2020); and Tedeschi et al (2020) ‘transnationalism’, in this research context, refers to the process of initiating cross-border exchanges between advocacies in the global North and South. It builds a heightened sense of interconnectivity between domestic and international activists and informs the role of norm entrepreneurs in the international system to influence global norm-making processes. In turn, ‘transnationalism’ strengthens ideas by forming domestic-international linkages to transform sociopolitical and economic state structures (Keck et al 1998). This helps actors to pressure inflexible governments into instituting their preferred and effective policy designs in states (1998: 9).

Correspondingly, Keck et al (1998) conceive the term ‘transnational advocacy networks’ (TANs) to define how non-state domestic and international actors work on common issues of concern. These networks “comprise of actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse and a dense exchange of information and services” (Keck et al 1989: 89). The terms ‘transnationalism’ and ‘TANs’ have been used interchangeably in this research study as ‘transnationalism’ is more prescriptive in nature than ‘TANs’. ‘Transnationalism’ denotes the processes and practices of cross-border assimilations between domestic and international NGOs. On the other hand, ‘TANs’ are the structured forms of coalition building through organizations, networks, actors, and the material and financial resources that flow from international donors to domestic NGOs in order to provide meaningful discourse to the socioenvironmental struggles of indigenous actors in the global South.

The term ‘TANs’ is also used in this study because of its inclusivity for domestic and international actors in cross-border exchanges. It foregrounds common ideas of civil society participation in advocacy structures but involves the intensive and dynamic development of global norms as they hold inflexible governments accountable to international standards. In this light, ‘TANs’ not only act as contributors to global processes but also configure the standards and behaviors of states and nonstate actors which may have evolved differently otherwise. ‘TANs’ are also not confined to the traditional roles of international NGOs and movements in globalized processes that aim to create interconnectedness over all social, economic, political, and environmental sectors (Tedeschi et al 2020). The idea is to not conflate ‘TANs’ with ‘globalization’ because ‘TANs’ evolve from global processes as much as they participate and contribute to it.

The term ‘global solidarity’ is used to refer to a mutual feeling of sympathy or unifying bond and sentiment formed between individuals or groups impelling supportive action and pursuing social inclusion (Wilde 2013: 1). Contrary to TANs, these relationships do not involve monetary transactions or the flow of technological, capacity building, other material support from one actor to the other. ‘Global solidarity’ fosters unanimity and altruism among varied actors and which emerges organically between sensitive audiences that romanticize ideas of protection, justice, equality, and peace in the international system. Advocacies based on a 'global solidarity' model do not encounter the same problems as that of TANs such as northern influence or state repression because donor expectations that emerge through financial and material favours are not involved. On the contrary, TANs oblige domestic activists to perform the particular interests of northern actors whilst ignoring indigenous goals. TANs are premised on transactional relationships wherein both parties (domestic and international activists) are likely to set expectations on each other. These relationships often involve the flow of financial and material resources from the global North to the South or between southern regions. Grants are allocated in return for greater leverage and representation of donors over the global South and the international community. 'Global solidarity' performs the same functions as that of TANs such as mobilize domestic advocacy groups, invoke pressure on inflexible governments, and influence policy changes in states. However, this is achieved without monetary transfers or material resources. The study refrains from conflating these two terms even though they are used interchangeably in transnational academic literature and activists' discourses. It also proposes a gradual shift from 'TANs' to 'global solidarity' networks in the advocacy sector.

'Intersectionality' is another term used in this study proposed by Crenshaw (1989) in critical race theory to describe the overlap and intersections between varied oppressive systems of race, class, and gender. Crenshaw argues that there is a "dominant conception of discrimination conditioning us to think about subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis" (1989: 140) when Black women, for instance, feel erased from this narrative because their race and sex-based discrimination is limited to the experiences of other privileged group members and not their varied corresponding identities. Thus, this study recommends drawing 'intersectional' ties between social, environmental, and rights-based movements to not only manifest the multiple marginalized experiences of domestic activists in the global South but to also offer real effort to liberate vulnerable groups from oppressive state and non-state structures through collective restraint and policy influence. Lorde (1982) also states that "there is no such thing as single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives". As such, an intersection between movements will reinforce the collective power of the people which has potential to "build collaborative, far-reaching movements that really strike at the root — the core of the system itself" (Goldfield 2019). For instance, in the *Affected Citizens of Teesta* (ACT) NGO, *Sikkim*, ACT activists allied with the International Rivers Network (IRN), Intercultural Resources, *Kalpavriksh* Environment Action Group, student unions, local media organizations, political parties in opposition, and other elite philanthropists to urge the government against the construction of dams along the *Teesta River*. As a result, the group successfully managed to cancel four out of five dam projects (Participant 12).

The term 'core-periphery' emerges from Wallerstein's 'world systems theory' that characterizes world politics as the structure of inequality between the core (capital-intensive, high skill countries) and periphery (labour-intensive, low skill, and dependent states). This is manifested through the unequal distribution of global wealth, asymmetrical economic dependencies, and political inequity (1979: 20-8). Wallerstein examines how core states engage in the redistribution of natural resources from peripheral states causing exploitation and marginalization of the less industrialized nations while advancing their own progress (1979). This study uses this idea of 'core- periphery' in the same way to denote how the global North creates neocolonial challenges for southern states through state repression and northern influence. Competition requires northern actors to win publicity and create greater goodwill for themselves in the international system (Schramm et al 2018). This narrative aligns with the world systems analysis that theorizes how core states depend on the periphery for socioeconomic progress creating power asymmetries and hierarchies between domestic-international activists in the global North and South. Southern activists feel disconnected from their northern counterparts despite their regular claims of promoting the interests of the vulnerable population (Barnett 2016; Schramm et al 2018). More so, they also experience further marginalization as northern activists disempower and subjugate them in their own discourses (Bob 2005; Eriksson Baaz 2005). Northern worldviews become the normative claim that informs southern activism. In turn, a 'core-periphery' analysis exudes this global advocacy realm where North-South interaction between activists can be interpreted as exploitative and oppressive in nature.

Additionally, the concept of 'subjectivity and objectivity' used in qualitative methods implies that 'subjectivity' is based on assumptions, centring interpretations solely on personal opinions without verifiable facts that would lead to researcher's bias and reactivity (Maxwell 2012). Ratner (2002) argues that interpreting narratives should be done in a way to discern how the 'subjective' notions of research participants would impact the 'objectivity' of a research study. Thus, the aim of this study was to conduct the research 'objectively' by making unbiased, balanced observations based on facts in order to arrive at the truth. For this purpose, the researcher conducted the inquiry with participants that were mainly domestic activists in rural and urban advocacy settings in India. Drawing on the truths, lived experiences, and stories of these participants was the only way to arrive at the study's conclusion that also helped the researcher validate and restore subaltern sensibilities and experiences of indigenous activists within their networks.

Finally, the term 'neocolonialism' in this dissertation is referred to the continuation of imperial tendencies in a previous colony by the state or former colonial power. Nkrumah (1965) discusses 'neocolonialism' as the perpetuation of colonial practices under the guise of achieving freedom. This is done by providing aid schemes, for instance, in the education or military sector. In certain African states such as Ghana, 'neocolonialism' has led to the diversion of key national resources to the global North (Western Europe, Japan, and the US) to help these countries further industrialize. For example, the African Development Bank (AFDB) worked in cooperation with the World Bank and European Union through co-financing to increase Africa's economic development, social progress, reduce poverty, and promote sustainable development but instead this partnership promoted 'trade and investment liberalization' and 'privatization' of state-owned companies only. Nkrumah (1965) proposes building economic and political unity to address this challenge of 'neocolonialism' in southern states. This study utilizes the term 'neocolonialism' to highlight the continued postcolonial impact of northern NGOs in transnational networks on domestic advocacies as well as the sociopolitical life of indigenous people in the global South.

Chapter Outline

Chapter one introduces TANs and its associated opportunities and challenges. It highlights the financial and material benefits domestic NGOs receive in transnational partnerships. It surveys the problems of state repression and northern influence emerging from TANs that disempower and marginalize domestic activists in the long run. This chapter also discusses the approach the study undertakes in order to combat the negative effects of TANs on southern domestic NGOs using global solidarity tactics which do not involve seeking financial favours from the global North but creating a similar strong pressure on ineffective governments to institute effective policies in the state through domestic-international unity, shared values, and collective action. It presents the reasons for selecting an 'Indian environmental lens' for the investigative research that examines domestic environmentalism vis-à-vis TANs. It examines Gandhi's key contributions to the advocacy sector such as his philosophical teachings on 'non-violence', 'simple living', and 'self-reliance' that raise important lessons for contemporary Indian environmentalists to decolonize the movement-building space in India. It also discusses why the study focuses on TANs when state repression is also exerted on other civil society groups such as domestic NGOs that are locally funded. Finally, this chapter defines the varied terminological differences and scales between transnationalism, TANs, global solidarity, intersectionality, core-periphery, subjectivity-objectivity, and their appropriate usages.

Chapter two discusses the research problem, methodology and case selection strategy of this study. It outlines the significance of this dissertation that highlights how activists should endeavour empowerment for themselves and make informed decisions about their lobbying techniques especially while allying with international actors in the global North that may realize or hamper their goals in the long run. It also states the research questions, hypothesis, data collection, and data analysis methods of this study. This chapter addresses the limitations of the study and the approaches undertaken to resolve them. It also deliberates the potential for future investigative research and discusses narratives the dissertation chose to refrain from. The scholarly literature on TANs fails to investigate the neocolonial and Eurocentric aspect of TANs and, thus, offer effective solutions for transnational-related problems in the global South that domestic activists can utilize while campaigning. Failing to sufficiently analyze the South-South dimension in TANs, this investigative research also recommends further research on this front.

Chapter three provides a comprehensive review of the existing scholarly literature on transnational advocacy and Indian environmental activism. It discusses the theoretical framework of the study that has evolved out of Indian environmental thought, TANs, and postcolonial theory. These theoretical lens help answer the research questions of this study and layout the existing gaps in the literature that are currently missing. It discusses how this study helps to fill these gaps by proposing a theoretical framework on advocacy coalitions which will supplement the academic knowledge in this field. The primary intention of this chapter is to use a problem-solving approach to address the lacunae in the scholarly literature surrounding TANs that fails to provide pragmatic solutions and strategies for transnational problems vis-à-vis state repression and northern influence. This chapter reduces this knowledge gap by offering effective professional advice to domestic environmental activists in the global South that fail to envisage a future without TANs.

Chapters four and five are the data chapters that illustrate the research findings of the study. They provide descriptive, narrative accounts of research participants, their lived experiences, understandings, and actions shaped or unshaped by TANs. Chapter four demonstrates the threats posed by the Indian government towards TANs and how that has negative implications for domestic environmental activists in India. This chapter highlights the various overt strategies employed by the Indian government to subjugate TANs through the use of the FCRA but also exemplifies other covert techniques such as the creation of artificial resource scarcity to increase demand and fragment activists' groups which ultimately demobilizes the masses and causes campaigns to fracture. Chapter five explores the problem of northern influence on southern domestic advocacies. It assesses instances of how northern influence impacts Indian environmental activists revealing issues of neglect and underrepresentation of southern interests in their own discourses. The research participant accounts illustrate the experiences of domestic activists feeling excluded, rejected, and disempowered in these networks highlighting concerns of marginalization, prejudicial discrimination, oppression, and exploitation that result from northern dominance in these transnational setups.

Chapter six outlines an advocacy coalition framework for domestic and international NGOs to utilize whilst conducting advocacy in the global South. This chapter proposes several strategies for environmental activism using *Gandhian* tenets to help southern domestic activists become effective policy influencers in the state without losing themselves to TANs. It suggests how domestic activists can combat transnational challenges and establish robust movements in the advocacy sector to protest inflexible governments. This chapter extrapolates a rethinking of southern thought-processes through the incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems required for domestic advocacy systems as opposed to the utilization of transnational structures. In doing so, this chapter proposes the rejection of transnational allyship and suggests building intersectionality between various movements based on global solidarity, but which also upholds the *Gandhian* values of 'self-reliance' and 'simple-living'. It urges domestic activists to resist the FCRA and pursue South-South transnationalism instead of traditional TANs to support and sustain their endeavors in a more efficient manner.

The concluding chapter of this dissertation discusses the research results, broadly, extrapolating the research data and findings to distinguish the challenges and risks of associating with TANs vis-à-vis their interactions with domestic NGOs and movements in the global South. It catalogs new insights for contemporary activists exemplifying the success stories of Gandhi-based rural advocacies in India that continue to reject TANs and cater to pursuing a decolonial approach prioritizing indigenous values and practices as opposed to catering to northern demands. This chapter also examines the 'dystopic side' of practicing *Gandhianism* in domestic environmental advocacy forums. It discusses how relying solely on indigenous knowledge systems would pose the problem of social exclusion and state-sponsored violence within these structures. Without global solidarity, domestic activists are more likely to face isolation in these protracted struggles that may, in turn, cause these movements to disintegrate rather than subsist. Additionally, Gandhi's ideas invalidate the role of the state as the latter often resorts to the use of brute force for sovereign gains. Thus, without a proper blueprint to protect indigenous advocacies from state repression and violence domestic NGOs continue to face sociopolitical challenges in the global South. Thus, this chapter unravels these perspectives to holistically make the case for a *Gandhian*-based framework for domestic NGOs in the global South.

Chapter 2
Research Problem and Methodology

Introduction

This study undertakes a thematic qualitative analysis to understand the impact of TANs on domestic environmental movements in India. It investigates two themes that emerge from the participant interviews conducted during research fieldwork in India. These are state repression and northern influence. While state repression creates problems for domestic activists to continue to advocate their causes within transnational structures, northern influence systematically creates challenges for domestic activists in the southern realm to conduct environmental advocacy effectively in the state as western goals are transposed over indigenous ones. This chapter explicates these problems and describes the thesis' methodological approach. In addition to examining the statement of the problem and significance of the study, this chapter provides a detailed discussion of the research questions, research design, case selection strategy, data collection, and data analysis process of this investigative inquiry. Finally, the chapter concludes by examining the methodological limitations and the potential for future investigative research on TANs.

This study delves into the issues of TANs and their implications for domestic environmental advocacies in the global South recommending various strategies to overcome the unprecedented challenges of governmental repression and northern influence that result from TANs. This project claims that there exist overrated assumptions and theorizations about TANs regarding their positive reinforcement in the southern sector due to the opportunities transnational advocacies extend towards domestic activists in terms of material, monetary, and capacity-building support. However, the study examines the risks and challenges for participating in TANs that, in turn, do more damage than good for southern domestic activists that operate within the ambit of transnational frameworks aiming to provide redressal for environmental issues but pose neocolonial challenges for indigenous actors. TANs marginalize and disempower domestic activists by pushing them further to the periphery rather than helping them advocate their sociopolitical and environmental struggles in the state. Thus, superficially, TANs depict a picture of altruism where they project themselves as benefactors to southern NGOs by offering them advocacy-related support and services, but the pervasive challenges and risks posed by TANs indicate the complex arrangement within traditional TANs between the global North and South that impose challenges for domestic activists to sustain their movements in the long run as their socioenvironmental and political problems continue to persist.

TANs in India are particularly important because of their pre-colonial social conditions as well as the neocolonial influences of northern powers that seek to subjugate southern domestic interests. Northern NGOs continue to systematically dismantle the democratic freedom of indigenous activists involved in the reshaping of their social identities in neocolonial realms (Banks et al 2015; Barnett 2016; Bob 2005; De Waal 2015; Eriksson Baaz 2005). Domestic activists remain disempowered and vulnerable as government scrutiny intensifies with TANs disallowing southern activists to protest as they are considered 'anti-national' and 'anti-India' by state powers (Deo et al 2011; Matejova et al 2018). The Indian government imposes repressive tactics such as raids, the freezing of bank accounts, shutting down offices, and activist' arrests (Chaudhry 2022). On the other hand, northern NGOs tend to dominate southern environmental campaigns by leveraging their own interests. With no adequate support received from other civil society actors, domestic activists are compelled to seek this external assistance for their survival and sustenance. Despite the associated drawback of working within transnational frameworks, domestic activists continue to persist within TANs as it allows them to continue lobbying their socioenvironmental causes.

The Indian government perceives the civil society sector in a negative light (Participant 24). In a Lok Sabha[1] speech in February 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's stated that foreign-funded NGOs were detrimental to India's national interest as they receive generous funding from foreign sources to plot against India's economic growth and national interest (Modi 2019). Modi lauded the Indian government's efforts to cancel the registration licenses of approximately 20,000 foreign-funded NGOs in the state with plans to shut down additional TANs through the use of the new FCRA guidelines. "The *Sardar Sarovar* dam was ideated by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1961 but it was only until 2019 that it got inaugurated. There have been groups seeking to cancel the project with the help of foreign aid but that has not happened till now. This is an ongoing fight, and we are going to fight it" (Modi 2019).

> Participant 12 further adds: "the perception of rights-based NGOs is that they seek to keep India underdeveloped though international aid. They adopt a colonial posture towards the global South but can also be corrupt as they misuse this assistance for personal leisure. This is evident in the lifestyles they exhibit such as first-class world travels and driving expensive cars."

These factors have not only tarnished the image of TANs in the civil society sector but have also exacerbated the conditions of other domestic NGOs that raise funds locally but face governmental repression under similar projections.

As such, this study investigates the imminent risks and challenges posed towards domestic advocacy groups practicing environmentalism within transnational frameworks. Domestic activists face governmental repression that hampers their campaign activity, but they are also subjugated by northern powers who fail to represent their goals and further marginalize them to the periphery. However, these experiences are not shared between South-South TANs that function separately from traditional transnational advocacies in the global North and South. South-South TANs manage repressive settings dissimilarly than their counterparts in the global North as they work autonomously but in the interest of indigenous communities. These networks are commissioned to create diversity, integrate varied cultures whilst respecting traditional beliefs and practices of other advocacy groups in the global South. This is a relatively new body of literature that has yet to be fully explored by academics (Shipton et al 2021: 244) but one which may have found considerable success in the global South till date. Scholars including Moreira (2019) and O'Brien (2019) analyze South-South TANs by investigating the Amazonian Hydroelectric Collective (CAH) and the Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR) initiatives respectively to deduce how South-South TANs has been effective in these forums.

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[1] The Lok Sabha is the lower house of the Indian parliament while the upper house is termed as the Rajya Sabha. Constitutionally, the Lok Sabha is also referred to as the House of the People as it is represented by people directly appointed through elections.

Based on these factors, this study examines whether South-South transnationalism can be considered as an alternative to traditional transnational advocacies because of its ability to cater to southern interests more effectively than the North. This study utilizes a *Gandhian* approach to suggest that southern environmentalism can be successful and sustainable if self-reliant techniques were to be employed by domestic activists. Instead of seeking transnational support from the global North, a Gandhi-based approach would urge domestic activists to engage with 'the self' more and eliminate excessive material and financial desires that may not ultimately culminate into campaign success. By the same token, movements such as the NBA and the *Pathalgadi* exemplify how collective power and resistance are sufficient to push back against extreme neocolonial government powers and influence policy without forging transnational relationships. Both movements illustrate varied sources of vigor and power to defy governmental backlash averting the possibility of northern influence by rejecting transnational offers that were readily willing to support and finance these movements. Similarly, the *Affected Citizens for Teesta* (ACT) campaign severed ties with their northern counterpart (i.e., Action Aid India) to maintain the authenticity and legitimacy of the *Lepcha* tribe in terms of reclaiming their ethnic identity in the state. Domestic activists in these movements demonstrate how the path to self-reliance and indigenous empowerment (as advocated by Gandhi) is attainable by redeeming their right to practicing environmentalism independently devoid of any foreign intervention.

As a result, this study seeks to propose an alternate framework for traditional TANs in the global North and South that is premised on Gandhi's philosophical ideas of 'self-reliance' and 'simple living'. The positive reinforcing experiences of South-South TANs and global solidarity networks where the former assures inclusivity and equity in transnational relationships while the latter involves no monetary exchange between domestic-international activists prove to be effective strategies for campaigning. The examples of the NBA, ACT, and the *Pathalgadi* movements indicate how environmental activism can successfully be achieved without transnational assistance. Instead, global solidarity can help southern activists carry out their activities without obliging them to return favours to donors in terms of material and financial aid. Since global solidarity is premised on notions of empathy, harmony, and interdependence it provides a 'source of liberation' instead of being a 'source of dominance' that TANs invoke (Walsh 2016: 249). In turn, an alternate framework for advocacy coalitions will help domestic activists critically assess the costs of advocating through transnational forums and, thus, compel them to withdraw themselves from TANs and perform everyday forms of advocacy in a more sovereign and autonomous manner. This would involve greater reliance on indigenous knowledge systems, local resources, and infrastructures to confront neocolonial problems within these domains by the state and northern powers.

The following sections are divided into two parts: I. Research Problem and II. Methods. Part I discusses the research problem, research questions, hypothesis, definitions, and significance of the study. Part II covers the research design, case selection strategy, research method, data collection, data analysis technique, and limitations of the study.

I. Research problem

This thesis focuses on the dual problem of state repression and northern dominance on domestic environmental activists as they enter transnational alliances. While northern influence undermines indigenous priorities, state repression creates setbacks for domestic activists to disintegrate in the long run. Government intervention intensifies with increased northern presence in the Indian advocacy sector. The Indian government blames TANs for their neocolonial posture in the state that seeks to keep India underdeveloped and poverty-stricken (Intelligence Bureau 2014). However, domestic activists argue that the Indian government displays these neocolonial tendencies and not them as they dismiss attempts for socioenvironmental pragmatism in the state through the expansion of their economic developmental projects but also at the expense of the marginalization and subjugation of indigenous people pushing them further to the peripheries of the state (Participant 24). This is seen as an extension of the orientalist, neocolonial project that aims to control and civilize the masses. But the government dismisses these narratives by asserting the neocolonial roots of TANs in southern spaces. It uses the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) to counter these alliances with both the former [*Indian National Congress* (INC)] and current ruling party [*Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP)] expressing their indignation towards TANs in India (Kumar 2019). This growing governmental intolerance towards TANs and the threat of northern influence on southern advocacies makes it increasingly challenging for domestic activists to not only persevere but also model themselves as effective policy influencers and changemakers in the state.

Contrarily, the boomerang theory allows domestic activists representing the interests of marginalized communities to use international norms and pressure local governments to institute effective policies in states (Finnemore et al 1998; Keck et al 1998). Southern domestic activists can reach out to their counterparts in the global North for campaign-related assistance and northern actors can throw boomerangs to southern NGOs to pursue their own political agendas at home (Shipton et al 2021). Boomerangs are deemed to be an effective mechanism for transnational cooperation on the advocacy front as they are based on the shared visions and values of domestic and international activists in the global system. However, the Indian government has been impeding this process by disallowing domestic activists to throw boomerangs and form collectives, thus, permitting domestic governments to remain fixated about their policy mandates (Matejova et al 2018).

In turn, governmental repression has disrupted the flow of material and financial aid from the global North to the South resulting in the cancellation of approximately 20,000 out of 33,158 FCRA licenses of foreign-funded NGOs in 2016 (PTI 2016). The Intelligence Bureau (IB) of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) also published a report in 2014 accusing ‘internationally funded NGOs for engaging in anti-development activities’ (Intelligence Bureau 2014). This report states that Indian NGOs are typically regarded as the ‘real drivers’ of socioeconomic development in the state but that a few contemporary campaigns have imbibed ‘anti-national’ practices reducing India’s economic growth by 2-3 per cent per annum (Intelligence Bureau 2014). The report elucidates how traditional TANs in the global North and South are not only responsible for inversely impacting the state’s annual gross domestic product (GDP) but that their “field reports are being used to build a record against India and serve as tools for foreign policy interests of western governments” (2014: 1).

In addition, the right-wing BJP government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi imposed a crackdown on foreign funded NGOs in 2014 which plunged transnational funding by 40 per cent in the state (Kumar 2019). Increased repression on TANs has created constraints for domestic activists to pursue advocacy as movements succumb to governmental pressure and disintegrate in the long run. They fail to exercise their constitutional right of democratic participation in the state whereby they can enjoy freedom of expression and assembly. In turn, they are unable to conduct advocacy and ally with northern actors to pursue effective policy change in the state. These domestic advocacies seek to participate in public discourses by critiquing governmental policies and improving socioenvironmental standards in the state, but they are compelled to reach out to foreign NGOs as they lack support from Indian philanthropic organizations and elite groups. Transnational aid allows them to sustain their campaigns, mobilize the masses, and pressure inflexible governments for policy change.

TANs struggle to overcome these political hurdles as they fail to invoke pressure on domestic governments by keeping other civil society actors uninvolved when their assistance could be used to exert pressure on these repressive governments. Being unable to fight back and failing to collectively address the problem of state repression perpetuates institutional advocacy, allowing the government to impose tighter restrictions on TANs and, thus, weakening the scope of domestic advocacies to sustain their campaigns and effectively engage in the movement building space of India and to invoke policy change in the state (Participant 3). However, a few transnational NGOs such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International have taken legal action against the government for revoking their FCRA licenses but these efforts have been caught up in protracted legal battles and without the support of other civil society actors anticipated wins are quite unlikely.

Furthermore, TANs experience interference from northern powers in their domestic matters as international activists tend to undermine indigenous issues and leverage their own interests in southern campaigns. Northern NGOs capably alter domestic advocacy programs to meet northern needs such as allocating greater representation for themselves in movements, modifying campaign objectives according to northern interests, and building global recognition for themselves. This happens because of the resource provisions provided by northern donors that creates a top-down, hierarchal system between domestic and international activists where northern priorities supersede the goals of southern actors. This exhibits the neocolonial character of northern NGOs as they seek to govern the southern advocacy realm based on their ‘subject knowledge’ of the global South but which, in turn, invokes friction between domestic-international activists with northern actors persuading indigenous activists to re-align their interests with that of their donors. Domestic activists who do not have other sources of support yield to these demands and, thus, find themselves being dictated to and dominated by international powers in their own discourses.

This questions the legitimacy and accountability of TANs claiming to challenge the status quo and create open and safe spaces for critical dialogue to influence inflexible governments into instituting effectual policy change in the state. Northern NGOs extend material and financial aid to southern advocacies with the prospect that their expectations as donors regarding their participation rights, representation, ability to reform, and share of ownership in advocacy groups will be met (Banks et al 2015). In turn, northern NGOs operate under the diktats of public and private donors in the global North that allocate funds based on specific ‘need-based’ programs. Northern NGOs are tasked to fulfill these demands that are outlined by their issuing authorities and failing to do so inhibits their ability to reobtain these grants that are meant to be disseminated for southern issues. When these NGOs carry out northern mandates, they fail to execute other functions of empowering domestic activists and making sure their goals are realized. More so, they push indigenous activists further to the margins of the state and undermine their capacity to self-govern their movements by imposing western influence and steering governmental repression towards them.

TANs are also overly bureaucratic as their focus lies on growth, capacity building, and creating new partnerships in the global South. These endeavors have become standard protocol and universalized the way TANs operate in southern spaces. In effect, TANs have reduced their impact and ability to be innovative, flexible, long-term, and self-critical (Banks et al 2015). Rather than developing a spirit of learning by doing, NGOs focus on service-delivery models and the techno-managerial aspects of conducting advocacy (Behar 2019). This includes distributive justice and rights-based activism as opposed to empowering the grassroots and leveraging indigenous knowledge systems, resources, and infrastructures urging domestic activists to become self-sufficient and eventually equipped enough to self-govern their own campaigns without transnational assistance. From the onset, northern NGOs also do not exhibit their future exit strategy from domestic advocacy structures making it unlikely for domestic activists to eventually take over their movements (Banks et al 2015). Northern NGOs continue to persist and fund these organizations as long as the expectations of those 'above' are met. In turn, domestic activists fail to free themselves from these traditional bonds as they become increasingly resource-dependent on the global North for material and financial aid. This dependency continues to grow and maintain this top-down hierarchal power structure that continues to subjugate and marginalize domestic activists.

However, certain transnational advocacy groups such as the Southern Initiative on Globalization and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR) (O'Brien 2019) and South-South transnational advocacy networks (SSTANS) (Moreira et al 2019) demonstrate that all forms of transnationalism may not be detrimental to southern interests. This is because of the valuable experiences of southern labour union activists in the SIGTUR initiative that are exemplars for international assimilation and internationalism in the global South (O'Brien 2019: 90). Akin to traditional TANs in the global North and South, South-South advocacy alliances have also been able to facilitate a platform for grassroots activists to share their 'culture of struggles' resulting from repression and providing safe spaces to develop alternative visions (Lambert 2013). Moreira et al (2019) also reiterate how the Amazonian Hydroelectric Collective (CAH), a SSTANS was successful in rescinding Brazil's hydroelectric projects in Peru as it pressured policymakers to adopt long-term energy planning at a national and corporate institutional level. Moreira et al also point out how SSTANS find it easier to highlight the neocolonial characteristics of southern states emerging from South-South TANs and their involvement in the exploitation and plunder of indigenous people (2019: 89-91). This is unlike traditional TANs that fail to highlight the problematic nature of global North and South linkages as they negate the lived experiences and invalidate the struggles of their domestic partners even though they profess to have 'shared values', 'common discourses' and a 'dense exchange of information and services' (Keck et al 1999: 89).

Consequently, there also exist underlying challenges for southern transnational coalitions that make them, arguably, less heroic. For instance, O'Brien (2019) discusses the issue of realizing movement success in terms of self-confessed victories versus realistic positive outcomes. On one hand, movements may define their success by their ability to achieve specific objectives such as influencing popular culture but, at the same time, they may fail to influence state policy. Under such conditions, O'Brien questions the manner in which a movement's success must be measured

(2019: 181-4). Moreira et al (2019) also state that while the CAH played a pivotal role in the hydroelectric dam issue, it failed to impact Brazil's Economic and Social Development Bank's (BNDES) lending policy which was a crucial component in the SSTANS mandate. This reveals how South-South TANs can still fail on several fronts despite averting the varied challenges imposed by traditional TANs on southern domestic movements.

Given the opportunities and challenges for SSTANS, a closer examination of this category of transnationalism is necessary to determine whether SSTANs can offer itself as an alternative to the traditional forms of transnationalism in India that are, predominantly, motivated by northern advocacy narratives. For the most, this study focuses on traditional TANs in the global North and South because of their dominant presence vis-à-vis weak roots in Indian civil society. On one hand, traditional TANs face pressure from their donors above to prioritize northern interests but in doing so they also disempower their beneficiaries below. On the other hand, domestic governments turn hostile towards foreign-funded advocacy organizations that are engaged in challenging policy narratives of the state. There is also a dearth of literature available on South-South TANs making it a relatively new area of study in the transnational scholarship. With only a few South-South transnational groups in India, the dissertation critically focuses on traditional TANs that have demonstrated greater perceivable risks and challenges for southern domestic activists in terms of neocolonialism and Eurocentrism. Traditional TANs excel at service delivery (Banks et al 2015) but fail to support indigenous knowledge systems and structures pushing domestic activists further to the periphery by keeping them marginalized and disempowered (Bloodgood et al 2019). This also diminishes the opportunity to rethink southern advocacy models in innovative ways or consider a shift in focus from traditional lobbyist agendas governed by northern NGOs to subaltern discourses. Due to these factors, domestic activists' groups are susceptible to disintegrate because of the negative implications of TANs that cause increased northern influence and governmental repression on them.

Shepherding these campaigns from the onset with no apparent motivation to resign in the short or medium term, domestic activists, in turn, conform to the diktats of their northern allies and inhibit them from leveraging themselves in their own movements. Such TANs create greater dependence on the global North for material and financial support reducing the scope of southern domestic activists to ever govern their campaigns and represent their struggles independently. Additionally, state repression makes it more challenging for domestic activists to sustain their movements in the long run after northern support is retracted by the government. Traditional TANs in the global North and South heighten governmental hostility on domestic activists that aim to challenge the status quo and dishevel governmental authority.

Finally, most of the transnationalist literature stems from western academic sources that are governed by the liberal elite asserting that traditional forms of TANs are "consistently progressive and cooperative in character" (Clavin 2005). This idea reproduces the assumption that TANs prevail for the greater good of society eliminating room for critical dialogue and improvement necessitated within these networks. This study seeks to dispel these western notions of transnationalism that, largely, paint a positive picture for TANs in the global South. It interrogates the possibility for southern advocacy alliances premised on South-South cooperation, self-reliance, and a mutual understanding of culture to fructify as an alternative for traditional transnationalism in the global North and South.

Research questions

This research study analyzes the imminent risks posed by TANs on domestic environmental groups by offering participant commentary and explanations for transnational advocacy setbacks in India. The objective of this present project is, therefore, to offer solutions for the persisting risks and challenges posed by TANs on southern advocacy groups. As such, the research questions that follow are:

I. *What opportunities and challenges do Indian NGOs face while addressing environmental issues within a transnational framework?*
II. *In what ways can southern domestic activists reduce the challenges of neocolonialism and Eurocentrism posed by TANs through northern influence, and state repression to reorient and empower themselves in southern advocacy structures?*

The first research question examines the negative implications for TANs in the wake of their opportunities in the global South. The academic literature (Haas 1992; Rosenau 1990; Keck et al 1998; Khagram et al 2002; Tarrow 1994, 2005) highlights the potential benefits for southern advocacies whilst engaging with northern NGOs. Although these scholars reckon that TANs are required to support domestic advocacies through material and financial provisions, they do not acknowledge the pervasive culture of neocolonialism and Eurocentrism that also persists within North-South exchanges. The research question, thus, qualitatively, assesses the problems of marginalization and oppression that ensue from neocolonialism and Eurocentrism within TANs gauging the overarching posture of domestic advocacy groups within these relationships. It helps counter the existing norms and assumptions surrounding TANs in the global South and, simultaneously, deduces new learnings and meanings that domestic activists can take advantage of by wholly realizing the stakes for participating in TANs.

The second research question stems from the realization that there are pervasive neocolonial and Eurocentric challenges present within transnational advocacy structures that emerge from, one, the government repressing transnational advocacies because of their 'foreignness' and 'anti-national' stance. But two, also because TANs initiate this process of domestic activists undertaking or adopting western culture in their advocacy tactics, norms, and epistemologies that diminishes their interests and lived experiences. Thus, not only exploring explanations for these given challenges but also investigating the potential ways for improving domestic advocacy experiences in the global South helps unpack this research question. The advocacy coalition framework that emerges from this study offers a blueprint for domestic activists to protect themselves against externalities, specifically, emerging from northern powers and state actors. It recommends various ways in which southern activists can empower themselves and be the sole proprietors of their campaigns without serving northern diktats or being shut down by intolerant governments. This is done by analyzing ways to overcome FCRA-related challenges that restrict NGO campaign activities in the state. Also, offering solutions regarding the utilization of indigenous knowledge systems, resources, and infrastructures from the purview of Gandhi's philosophical teachings. These include rejecting foreign intervention in everyday advocacy matters in order to effectively safeguard domestic activists against the neocolonial and Eurocentric agendas of northern NGOs. It also includes practicing South-South transnationalism and engaging in global solidarity networks (that purport unity without the flow of material and financial aid). These strategic alternative recommendations conceptualize the advocacy coalitions framework that allows domestic activists to rethink their participation in TANs.

In sum, the research questions not only help identify transnational problems (as a portion of the transnational scholarship that does highlight this paternalistic behavior of transnational advocacy networks does not offer effective, pragmatic solutions for these neocolonial challenges), but the questions also pose the need for greater explanations and solutions to institute effective measures for southern domestic activism that can be conducted without the support of transnational partners.

Research hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is that TANs are adverse for Indian environmental movements as they do not facilitate the process of policy reform and systems change in India. Instead, TANs create greater lobbying challenges for domestic activists in the global South that, in turn, undermines their efforts to achieve socioenvironmental justice and transformation in society through effective policy change in the state. TANs invoke governmental repression and northern influence on domestic NGOs rather than creating a conducive environment for them to advocate their cause, hone their policy influencing skills, and eventually allow them to lead their own movements in the long run. Domestic activists become a victim of governmental crackdowns, surveillance, they experience FCRA registration cancellations and the freezing of their bank accounts. In some cases, activists have also been physically assaulted, incarcerated, and even murdered by the state (Varadhan 2018). Such events not only undermine TAN activity but also dismantle the campaign projects of domestic movements in the long run. Northern NGOs fail to provide adequate support to TANs when governmental repression is high. In such situations, domestic activists are not able to sustain their activities without donor support and may disintegrate in the course of time finding it hard to revive their issues at the national stage again without international allyship.

Additionally, domestic advocacies are also susceptible to donor influence. Northern activists hinder domestic NGOs from independently campaigning in the state as they tweak their advocacy programs to match their own interests, and which are determined by northern powers. This shifts the focus from indigenous activists' discourses to the issues of northern actors as domestic activists become more accommodating to international requirements rather than catering to their own needs. Northern NGOs tend to successfully manipulate southern advocacies because of their resource deprivation problem. Donors supply the necessary material and financial aid to meet domestic needs. In turn, domestic activists are required to concede to northern demands because of the power northern actors possess to rescind funding from campaign projects if international compliances are not met. This impedes southern empowerment inhibiting domestic activists from uplifting indigenous actors from their struggles and establishing them as leaders of their campaigns by utilizing indigenous knowledge systems and infrastructures to govern their movements. Northern NGOs tend to establish a hierarchical relationship between North-South activists in the global South as soon as a TAN is established there. Northern NGOs are usually at the top of this structure with southern advocacies at the bottom. This diminishes the ability of domestic activists to independently lead their campaigns and become decision-makers of it. A lack of support from philanthropic organizations and elite groups leaves domestic activists with the choice of sustaining their movements through transnationalism or rejecting TANs and self-sustaining their movements by raising funds locally.

These intangible challenges posed by neocolonial powers (i.e., the state and northern NGOs) impinge domestic NGO activity in the long run. While TANs provide opportunities for strategic planning, collective action, and material and financial aid, this study, conclusively, hypothesizes that TANs create more risks and challenges for domestic advocacies in the long run. Despite resources being hard to come by, the negative implications for remaining in TANs are far more adverse for domestic activists to manage than having to remain in transnational advocacy structures and allowing them to impede their activities. TANs not only obstruct domestic activists from advocating their struggles in a politically hostile environment where the government coerces them, but northern actors also seek to marginalize, disempower, and oppress domestic activists by using them as pawns to fulfill their own northern agendas and sidelining indigenous goals. Core-peripheral divisions also exacerbate as southern domestic activists normalize and naturalize these realities by focusing on the positive aspects of TANs and ignoring their negative consequences. Thus, examining these challenges in the wake of the opportunities for TANs is important because these existing differences create ambiguity and contradiction regarding the long-term impacts of TANs on domestic advocacy groups in the global South.

The hypothesis builds on these challenges of government repression, ideological differences found between the global North and South, neocolonialism, and the further marginalization of activists' groups to dispel the general assumption that TANs are beneficial for domestic environmental advocacies in the global South. The study analyzes the long-term implications of allying with transnational advocacies vis-à-vis adopting a 'self-reliant' approach based on Gandhi's principles that advocate 'simple living', 'reducing wasteful consumption', and 'raising resources locally' instead of drawing cross-border connections. The evidence does not suggest that all contemporary and previous transnational advocacies are failures when noticeable successful outcomes have been found within the movement building space despite how success may be valued and interpreted differently by some (O'Brien 2019: 181-4). But the core argument is rather that there are neocolonial pressures associated within transnational networks that make them less appreciable for southern activists irrespective of what the campaign outcome may be because characteristics of Eurocentrism are inherently always exploitative and oppressive in nature. As such, the research study concludes that if southern domestic activists coalesce with transnational NGOs, then this will undermine the efforts of domestic environmental movements fighting for policy and systems change as they get coiled with the politics of transnationalism that disempowers and pushes them further to the periphery.

Significance of the study

This study evaluates the existing opportunities and challenges for contemporary transnational advocacy problems in the global South. It offers solutions and strategies to enhance southern priorities in rising economies such as India where indigenous activists are not only conditioned by governmental repression and donor influence but also haunted by their colonial history of oppression and marginalization at the hands of western powers since 1757 to 1947 (Roy et al 2021). Currently, TANs are unable to respond to these challenges that place domestic activists at higher risks with government clampdowns and/or northern dominance. Being incapable of helping domestic activists navigate their colonial traumas of the past TANs fail to holistically leverage domestic issues at the international stage.

The recommendations proposed in this dissertation will help southern domestic advocacies to operate without the support of transnational actors and help them sustain their operations, empower indigenous people, and create effective policy change on the environmental front in the state. It will provide a comprehensive examination of transnational challenges caused by northern actors within the Indian environmental context. The rise of TANs in the 20th century and its steady decline after 2010 with the implementation of the FCRA deserves further extrapolation as this fluctuation has not been explored in the scholarly literature. Understanding the factors behind this slump and the growing skepticism towards TANs as they determine the contemporary and future course of Indian domestic activists in the long run is essential to envisage how a decolonial approach can be applied to indigenize activists that are currently being marginalized by neocolonialists.

This study gauges the implications for TANs in India and draws parallel conclusions that may be applicable to other similar advocacy groups in the global South facing state repression and northern dominance. Transnational challenges are not, merely, limited to the Indian advocacy sector. They have created rifts for domestic advocacy groups across the world. For instance, Andrew (2011) argues that there has been northern influence in the *Zapatista* movement in Mexico where northern donors shifted their focus from gender-based issues to economic development-related matters. This neglected the interests of vernacular groups in the *Zapatista* movement creating discord and power imbalances between domestic NGOs and their northern ally as *Zapatista* activists were unable to meet this new campaign criterion. As a result, this led to a split between the two activists' groups inviting new challenges for the *Zapatista* movement to continue to advance their struggles in the state. Additionally, Russia and Australia also exemplify the long-term risks for participating in TANs as these governments impose various restrictions to limit the movement and activities of domestic NGOs and activists in state (Crotty et al 2013; Feldman et al 2012; Henry 2010; Matejova et al 2018; McConville 2015; Sauter 2015). These governments continue to denounce and prescribe transnational activists as 'foreign agents', justifying crackdowns on them which have resulted in reduced financial flows from the global North to these states (Matejova et al 2018). The government of Ethiopia also forbids environmental and human rights-based NGOs from receiving more than 10% of their income from abroad. This has created mobilization-related challenges for domestic advocacy groups as they fail to raise sufficient funds for their campaigns (Dupuy et al 2015).

In effect, an Indian context will set the stage for other southern domestic advocacies in the international community to understand the perils of working within TANs. After carefully analyzing contemporary transnational challenges and the potential for successful environmentalism to take place by utilizing solutions presented by Gandhi's ideological teachings on *satyagraha* (truth quest) and *ahimsa* (non-violence), other developing states in the global South will be able to pursue advocacy with the lesser challenges of northern influence and government repression. Gandhi's philosophical ideas help answer critical questions that existing research studies (critiquing TANs for their destabilizing role in southern advocacies) have failed to offer.

The literature expounds on the negative implications for TANs but does not provide effectual solutions for the identified problems that create setbacks for domestic environmental activists in the global South. Gandhi's ideas have been utilized by a few Indian rural-based advocacies such as the *Chipko* and NBA movements, but they are not devotedly pursued in the same way by other rural and urban-based advocacy groups. Some rural and urban advocacies rely on transnational assistance that helps them sustain themselves and mobilize the masses. They abandon Gandhi's teachings on practicing minimalism and self-reliance as they are not profitable endeavors and strive to build transnational partnerships that will provide them material and financial resources to sustain their campaigns. This study provides a revaluation of Gandhi's tenets to dispel concerns surrounding TANs and help domestic activists regain the confidence to employ a Gandhi-based approach centering self-reliance and simple living to help empower themselves and self-govern their campaigns.

The findings of this study will benefit domestic and international activists alike that are currently engaged or seeking engagement in transnational forums. The recommendations offered revisit various Indian environmental advocacies such as the NBA and ACT movements that have resisted transnational aid and are still considered to be successful environmental campaigns in the Indian civil society sector. This study uses these explanations to suggest alternative visions devoid of TANs but which, at the same time, also urge domestic activists to be financially stable and help leverage themselves as effective policy influencers in the state. This is done by understanding the needs of domestic activists in urban and rural settings whilst acknowledging that various NGOs have different advocacy expectations and requirements in the state than that of others. While some urban-based NGOs find transnational assistance key to their continuity and growth in the advocacy sector, a few NGOs in the rural sector may regard transnational support as invasive and exploitative in their campaigns. Thus, both domestic and international activists will find this study useful to segregate various activists' interests and then employ the necessary strategies to help strengthen their indigenous programs and practices in the state.

This study will also help academic scholars in transnational studies to understand southern environmental challenges in the movement-building space. It will help uncover critical aspects of the Indian advocacy sector that have been challenged by the growing popularity of transnationalism in India's environmental sector and yet insufficiently explored in the scholarship. Academics may also find the study useful as a problem-solving framework that is developed utilizing *Gandhian* ideas to strategize and resolve transnational problems specifically from the lens of southern indigenous identity. Readers will be guided about the strategies for domestic activism that can be used to combat the negative implications for TANs. Currently, the absence of an Indian transnational discourse and framework is concerning since India is a key stakeholder in global environmental negotiations in the international community and is home to one of the most number of environmental TANs in the world.

In addition to reaching out to the aforementioned groups, the dissertation also attempts to reconfigure the mainstream and subaltern scholarship on transnational studies and Indian environmentalism that, currently, recognizes the drawbacks of TANs but still reckons the need for transnational alliances in the global South for preferred policy implementation. Scholars such as Bridger (2015), Bandy et al (2004; 2005), Khagram et al (2002) and Yeophantong (2020) critique TANs for their debilitating role in the global South but still maintain that greater transnational cooperation is essential to strengthen and improve domestic conditions in southern spaces. This dissertation seeks to disrupt this pervasive narrative that allows domestic activists to persevere in such oppressive and discriminatory settings that are informed by racial privilege and colonial logic. It does so by arguing that a traditional transnational approach between activists in the global North and South is harmful and should be avoided at all costs despite the material and financial gains involved when there exist neocolonial and Eurocentric tensions that aim to subdue and marginalize domestic activists to the periphery. It also suggests an alternate form of South-South TANs led by southern activists that can help cancel out these neocolonial issues.

This study also exposes southern NGOs and movements, particularly, the urban-based environmental ones that acknowledge the fallacies of traditional TANs on the one hand but continue to act as facilitators of transnationalism on the other. This highlights how such NGOs can be both victim and contributor of neocolonial problems such that they ultimately adopt the very same posture for which they critique the global North. The proposed decolonial approach of this dissertation will help southern domestic advocacies to analyze their role in the NGO sector and structure their discourses given the current complexities. The existing literature fails to deliberate this front, but this study aims to develop a concerted effort to strengthen domestic environmental activism in the global South in this regard.

I. Methods

Research design

This study uses qualitative research methods including participant interviews that were, mainly, conducted in the states of New Delhi and Bengaluru in India. These states have the most number of TANs as well as locally-funded NGOs across the country. The participant interviews conducted are descriptive, narrative, and exploratory in nature to encourage respondents to elicit generalizable information (Maxwell 2012: 104). Participant interviews are conducted verbally, and their stories are highly reflective of the respondent's everyday struggles and lived experiences with TANs. These interviews typically focus on activists' lives which are narrated in their own way to objectively capture the sociopolitical environment within which they thrive and/or witness. Maxwell (2012: 33) also states that qualitative research designs are 'do-it-yourself' instead of 'off-the-shelf' processes involving nuance and depth between various components of the study instead of reiterating previous approaches.

This dissertation is an exploratory study of the experiences and accounts of domestic activists participating in transnational systems. It unpacks how activists' lives are impacted in adverse ways by external actors situated in the global North. Participant narrations are recorded to deduce the subject's understanding of transnationalism which has permeated into their everyday lives. Direct (North-South) or indirect relationships (rejecting transnational offers) manifested from any form of transnational advocacy exchange exhibit activists' approval or disapproval for transnationalism. While in some cases activists experience negative outcomes after allying with northern NGOs and reproach TANs, in other instances, participants explain why they chose to reject transnational offers due to their inherent fears of being governed by a western power. Participants discuss how these anxieties are validated by their subject knowledge on transnational influence and domination. Participants are aware of the negative implications for TANs as they import neocolonial and Eurocentric problems. They are weary of drawing alliances with such organizations, anticipating further marginalization. Other participants expound on why they still adopt a transnational approach despite the potential challenges it involves. These participants continue to advocate for TANs because of their inability to generate resources themselves but which is easily furnished by northern NGOs. Such experiences create greater credibility for TANs as participants continue to endorse transnational advocacy alliances.

The selected timeframe for the research study ranges between 1970 to 2021. This is because environmental activism began in India during the 1970s (Nabhi 2006: 127) and the FCRA was also introduced in 1976 (Bhat 2012). During this time, domestic activists recognized the gross environmental violations being committed by the Indian government and corporate sector. This called for the urgent need to protect resources and institute better environmental policies in the state. Environmentalism was limited to the rural sector where the real impact of the state's rigid environmental policies was felt. Since then, there has been a surge in the number of environmental movements across the state. At the same time, the government also imposed the FCRA to contain political activism and regulate civil society activity in the state. Post-1991, TANs entered the Indian advocacy domain by extending solidarity to southern domestic advocacies in the form of material and financial resources (Rodrigues 2003). This move was welcomed by most urban-based NGOs that faced operational challenges to sustain themselves as they did not receive sufficient assistance from their local quarters. In turn, transnational aid offered them the necessary resources to support campaign activities and recruit masses for mobilization.

Post 2000, there has been a surge in the number of TANs in India (Rodrigues 2003). Northern activists connected with the global South to provide support whilst southern advocacies readily accepted the opportunity to ally with foreign actors, receive financial aid, and represent their struggles internationally. Northern NGOs such as Greenpeace, Amnesty International, WWF, ActionAid, among others setup their offices in the state. However, post-2005, governmental coercion grew as the state began scrutinizing these networks under Finance Minister P Chidambaram who introduced stringent guidelines within the FCRA on foreign funding. In 2005, Chidambaram stated that, 'about Rupees 20,000 crore ($200B) funding was received by NGOs but that nobody knew where Rupees 10,000 crore ($100B) went out of it' (Express News Service 2020). He stated that TANs were responsible for disturbing internal peace and security in the state and called for effective regulations on such networks. In 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that TANs were 'anti-national' and 'anti-India' and, therefore, amended the FCRA with even tighter restrictions halting NGO activity further. This led to the cancellation of approximately 20,000 NGO FCRA licenses (PTI 2016). Thus, the selected time periods allow the study to situate the history of Indian environmentalism post-independence. It maps its evolution and contemporary posture to discern the opportunities and challenges that TANs present in the state.

Case selection

India offers a unique case study for environmental movements in the domestic and international realm for several reasons. First, India holds 17% of the total world's population and is likely to be the most populated country in the world by the year 2022 (Burke 2011). This exerts greater pressure on natural resources such as forests, water, and air. It creates challenges for the equitable allocation of these resources on an ever-growing population. As a result, India has the greatest number of environmental conflicts in the world today with approximately 271 reported cases – far ahead of Colombia at second position with 128 reported cases (Environmental Justice Atlas 2015). Second, India is also the third-largest contributor to carbon emissions in the atmosphere, after China and the US (Menon 2021). This keeps India in the spotlight and recognizes the Indian state as a key stakeholder in global climate negotiations. India's developmental policies have a huge impact on socioenvironmental issues such as climate change, population growth, and resource scarcity. Third, India also has one of most number of NGOs in the world. Currently, it possesses approximately 3 million NGOs which is more than the number of schools and hospitals in the state (Anand 2015). There is nearly one NGO for every 400 people while there is only one policeman for every 709 people in India (Anand 2015). This draws attention to the important role of NGOs in the Indian civil society sector and their impact on influencing state policies.

Fourth, India also has a history of colonialism (Tharoor 2016) that presents unique challenges to the critique of transnationalism where asymmetrical power relations and unidentical goals and norms exist between the global North and South. In the advocacy sector, TANs are perceived as 'foreign agents' attempting to forbid India from further developing. These networks are prescribed with labels such as 'anti-national' and 'anti-India' to depict the state's intolerance towards such groups as they seek to keep India from developing and prospering. As such, the FCRA allows the Indian government to regulate the transnational NGO sector and curtail domestic and international activists from raising critical inquiries about the state. However, the dichotomy lies in India's acceptance of foreign investments for extractive industrial purposes but exhibits intolerance towards TANs. In this way, India uses the very same oppressive measures to expand its neoliberal, capitalist agenda in the state. A case study on India examines this conservative approach adopted by the Indian state towards TANs for their neocolonial propaganda to subjugate India but, at the same time, alludes to India's farcical allegiance towards the global North for financial aid and material resources for its developmental programs. Thus, India's colonial history teases out these complex narratives highlighting the pervasive nature of imperialism that exploits and further marginalizes minority groups at the hands of northern powers but also via the Indian government.

The existing scholarship (Crotty et al 2013; Feldman et al 2012; Henry 2010; McConville 2015; Sauter 2015) also highlights similar challenges experienced by domestic advocacies in other states such as Australia, Brazil, Colombia, and Russia due to their transnational engagements with northern NGOs. But there is limited scholarly evidence about the neocolonial attributions of environmentalism in the Indian context. The literature (Barnett 2016; Bob 2005; De Waal 2015; Eriksson Baaz 2005) analyzes the factors for governmental hostility towards other southern groups and, mainly, reason neocolonialism and antinationalism as some of the major concerns state actors share regarding TANs. These foreign governments limit the influence of TANs by using regressive labels such as 'foreign agents', 'spies', and 'extremists' to restrict their movement and prohibit them from 'throwing boomerangs internationally' (Matejova et al 2018). However, there is limited discussion available in the scholarship on India's environmental advocacy sector that experiences far greater risks and challenges from transnationalism than any other domestic advocacy group in the state. Most often these discourses are silenced by academics (Bandy et al 2005; Florini 2002; Khagram et al 2002) as the opportunities for participating in TANs outweigh their associated costs. However, this study seeks to fill this knowledge gap in the literature by extrapolating the Indian case not only because India is a critically important player in the international system but also because the state has produced some of the most celebrated environmental movements in the world such as the *Chipko* and NBA movements that other advocacies have and can benefit learning from. In this light, investigating the contemporary challenges for domestic activists and the approaches they undertake to counter repression in the state is useful for academics and activists alike to study and perform advocacy respectively.

Additionally, the 'environmental' sector has been, specifically, selected for this research study because environmentalism is one of the largest advocacy sectors in the state (Participant 3) and yet there lacks sufficient academic discourse around it that can focus on the transnational aspect of Indian environmental problems. Most of the transnational academic literature investigates labor, women and rights-based activism leaving environmental movements beyond the purview of exploration. This study offers empirical evidence regarding this large sector in India that as environmental advocacies are the most commonly targeted groups by the Indian government. In 2014, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) in its report titled "NGO activism against developmental projects in India" listed environmental NGOs as the ones that were responsible for inversely impacting India's economic growth (Intelligence Bureau 2014). The report did not mention TANs from other sectors such as labor, education, and human rights indicating the complexities involved within the Indian environmental advocacy sector and making it an area worth investigation.

However, Sikkink (2017) states that it is unfair to critique TANs just by generalizing some case studies and applying them to other discourses. She states that this is often done to claim that most transnational alliances have ulterior motives as they are dominated by northern powers and issues of neocolonialism and Eurocentrism are pervasive within these structures. However, this may not, necessarily, be an accurate representation of domestic-international coalitions in the global South. Sikkink claims that there is deficient research on non-western sources, fostering generalized assumptions and creating erroneous hypotheses about these processes (2017: 55-138). As a result, there is need for more adequate research on this front to deduce wider claims. Similarly, there is insufficient data to claim the analogous impacts of neocolonialism and Eurocentrism on Indian environmental movements. Existing studies have utilized these predominant narratives to formulate generalized analyses about Indian environmental movements whilst highlighting their challenges vis-à-vis transnational partners. In effect, this study will amend this knowledge gap by avoid making any grand theoretical claims before studying the sociopolitical nuances of Indian environmental movements vis-à-vis their transnational alliances. As a result, investigating the dynamic interplay of the state's masqueraded colonial practices, transnational challenges, North-South differences, and the implications for domestic environmental activists in the long run will be intriguing to investigate through the course of this study.

The examples used in this study have been carefully selected to illustrate the problems associated with state repression and neocolonialism which, inversely, impacts the growth of TANs in India. For instance, the *Mahan* movement, led by Greenpeace, demonstrates how it faced governmental backlash as it challenged the *Mahan* coal mining project in Singrauli, *Madhya Pradesh*. In effect, the government decided to freeze Greenpeace India's bank account and cancel its registration license. This ultimately forbid the organization to carry out its daily activities. Similarly, the ACT experienced challenges with respect to donor influence and micromanagement. This developed issues of exploitation and marginalization. Other case examples of the NBA, *Forests Rights* and *Pathalgadi* movement extrapolate the potential for domestic activists to resist northern assistance and yet create significant pressure on the Indian government to re-evaluate its policies. These domestically led environmental movements have refrained from drawing transnational alliances but are creating widespread national and international on their advocacy fronts.

Research Methods

This study employed critical research methods to extrapolate the problematized background assumptions and scholarly claims of the research program i.e., the situatedness, normalization, and naturalization of transnationalism in global southern advocacy spaces. It interrogated the practical research strategies that neatly follow from these assumptions. For example, the qualitative methods used in this study were not discerned as the ultimate standards of evaluation. Interview methods were deemphasized to focus on the creative process of theoretical teasing and problem solving as suggest Yanchar et al (2005). Subsequently, the existing standards of theory testing, and methodological practice were challenged to eliminate complacency and stagnation of the given process. This was done by continuously closely monitoring the scientific process and allowing research participants to freely communicate without hesitation to avoid selection bias and reinscription which can also be a problem according to Chenail (2011), Heckman (1990), and Maxwell (2012).

Additionally, since neocolonial research practices are embedded within critical work and reinforced through abundant factual information objectifying research practices (Bhavnani et al 2014), the main challenge of the research study was to ensure reflexivity and a decolonial intervention to shift through different locations allowing the lived experiences and realities of research participants to come forward and express themselves uninhibitedly. For instance, conducting research with ethnically marginalized environmentalists such as the *Lepcha* tribal community required substantial empathetic understanding and insight into their everyday struggles impacted by TANs. Being flexible with the interview guide, keeping questions open-ended, and semi-structured allowed research participants to also navigate the direction of the interview without feeling cut off (Maxwell 2012: 104-6). This also allowed the respondents to speak candidly about their common advocacy-related challenges and discuss how they overcome these problems. A conscious effort was made to avoid reinscribed research (Bhavnani 1993) that would further render them as exotic and silenced in their own discourses. Thus, understanding that transnational structures and the state machinery have a compounding effect on domestic activists was important. This helped knowledgeably analyze how the field is constituted and how participants should be treated. The aim was to avoid all forms of reinscription during each stage of the research process to ensure participants were not exoticized and marginalized.

Domestic activists were selected as the main population of this research study because of how well they relate to transnational advocacy problems (Maxwell 2012: 180). Other participants that had expert knowledge about this topic were also selected from various sectors such as policy analysts, academics, lawyers, government officials, media persons, and retired civil servants. In order to address the issue of generalizability (Maxwell 2012: 134-8), a diversified audience that included civil society activists, state, and corporate actors were also selected. These research participants were contacted via email or telephone after retrieving their contact information from their online presence i.e., through their organizational or individual websites. Potential research participants were contacted with a request for their availability to attend a face-to-face or telephonic interview after sharing the research study guidelines, interview questions, and the ethical aspects of the dissertation with them (Gerring 2011; Warren 2002). A majority of the research interviews were conducted in-person while some were over the telephone due to privacy concerns (Warren 2002).

The eligibility of research participants was determined based on their subject-knowledge regarding TANs and Indian environmentalism. Nearly 50 participants were interviewed aged between 18 and 65 over the course of six-months research fieldwork in India. Participants were also selected based on their active or inactive involvement with advocacy-related work. Participants were expected to demonstrate their knowledge (Gorden 1998; Kvale et al 2009; Rubin et al 2011) by disclosing information about their previous or present experiences with the Indian advocacy sector and/or describe their subject knowledge on the matter. Initially, an online search about the individual or organization's published work, speeches, interviews helped with the same. Respondents had to provide oral/written consent before participating in the research study and could withdraw, at any given point, if they felt compelled even after having submitted their insights for the study (Gorden 1998; Rubin et al 2011).

This research also honored ethical standards set by the McMaster Research Ethics Board under project #0388. As such, all research participants were informed about each step of the research process. Participants were given more importance than any other aspect in the study and, therefore, their formal written or verbal permissions have been documented and preserved digitally. Audio recordings and field notes collected from participant interviews were destroyed immediately after they were transcribed by the researcher. All written transcriptions were also destroyed at the end of the data analysis stage. Participants were informed that the study was completely voluntary and would not affect their jobs, in any way.

Data collection

The data collection process provided a profound understanding of the individual and community-wide ideologies informing the intricate nuances of the domestic and transnational advocacy sector in India. The research study utilized qualitative methods in the form of primary and secondary sources of information. These included research participant interviews (Adler 2003; Hertel et al 2009) and information retrieved from archival sources such as book chapters, journal articles, op-eds, political commentary, dissertations, and textbooks (Finnegan 2006; Hill 1993). The study employed semi-structured interviews allowing conversations to be guided in advance to avoid respondents drifting away from the topic but, at the same time, permitting them to uninhibitedly document their stories (Gerring 2011; Maxwell 2012).

The list of questions composed for this study were open-ended in order to avoid rigidity (Gorden 1998; Kvale et al 2009; Rubin et al 2011. The intent was to record stories, narrations, and descriptive accounts, thus, open-ended questions provided participants with the flexibility to do so . Interview methods prove to be valuable as participant's subjectivity and insights could not to be obtained elsewhere. Questionnaires, research guidelines, and consent forms were emailed to each participant a week before the interview date so that participants had sufficient opportunity to review the documents and understand the research topic before agreeing to participate in it. Anonymity was adhered to, in each interview, ensuring the interview process provided a safe space without, inversely, impacting participant's security and privacy in any possible way (Wiles et al 2008). Participants chose their preferred locations for the interview which on most occasions was their office space at their organizations or home addresses. Each interview typically lasted between 45 minutes to 2 hours in duration.

In-person interviews with participants helped guide the course of the study as more meaningful, in-depth, and qualitative data was retrieved (Oishi 2003). Telephonic interviews were also conducted in situations when participants felt uncomfortable being interviewed face-to-face or when participants were traveling, and their locations were distant from the primary researcher (Farooq et al 2017). These interviews were, relatively, more restrictive such that developing a rapport between the researcher and participant was, comparatively, more challenging. Participants were more restricted in detailing their stories and narrative accounts as opposed to in-person interviews where participants felt more comfortable expressing themselves at length because of human proximity involved. All interviews were digitally recorded using the researcher's iPhone. Most of these interviews were conducted in English with a few exceptions that were done in Hindi, and which were, subsequently, transcribed to English later. Fieldnotes were prepared in situations when participants expressed discomfort regarding being digitally recorded (Kvale et al 2009).

At the start of an interview, each participant was briefed about the differences between terms — 'TANs', 'transnationalism', and 'global solidarity'. This was necessary to help participants understand the varied meanings behind global solidarity and TANs. Most participants initially conflated global solidarity for transnationalism which implying international donors mostly transferred financial aid to domestic NGOs in the global South. Participants referred to 'global solidarity' as an all-encompassing and comprehensive term to denote the flow of financial aid between states as well as empathetic solidarity that stems from global solidarity models but does not involve monetary transactions. Therefore, it became important to disengage these terms and probe participants to further elaborate on what they meant by 'TANs' and 'global solidarity' when referring to them as such. Once the scope of these terms was established, it became easier to understand and analyze participants' advocacy discourses.

Additionally, secondary sources of information were collected in the form of government documents. These were obtained from government websites such as the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and other nic.in sites. Books, peer-reviewed journal articles, think tank/NGO reports, newspaper stories, op-eds, pamphlets, photographs were collected from online (world wide web) and offline sources (i.e., libraries, the national archives, research institutes, NGO reports, and protest rallies). Extensive research was conducted at the National Archives of India, New Delhi. Additionally, library research at various research and advocacy institutes in New Delhi and Bengaluru directed the course of this study. A few potential rich sources of information were found at the Greenpeace India, Bengaluru; Environment Support Group, Bengaluru; Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Bengaluru; Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), New Delhi; Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), New Delhi; Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi; Parliamentary Library, New Delhi; Nehru Memorial Library, New Delhi and the Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi. Secondary data helped assess the changes in the advocacy sector since the 1970s.

As discussed earlier, this research study is, largely, descriptive, and interpretative in nature. It follows a narratives-based approach to include participants' lived experiences, histories, and storytelling anecdotes (Hawkins et al 2012). Research participants were able to recount their individual experiences and discoursed their relationships with northern actors. These participant narratives were, extensively, documented for subsequent examination. Participants shared their dis- or pleasure with TANs. While documenting narrative accounts during the research interview stage, caution had to be maintained at some stages as there was a tendency for participants to deviate from the topic. In such cases, probing participants with further questions whilst collating information using an eclectic and robust research approach worked effectively (Maxwell 2012).

Snowball sampling was also used to recruit additional research participants (Biernacki et al 1981; Johnson 2014) as most participants retracted their online information due to the government's intolerant behaviour and repressive tactics in terms of surveillance on them. In effect, it was hard to find potential participants to interview but with the help of the existing research participants that had already been recruited, other subjects became known and were contacted whilst maintaining their privacy and confidentiality. Due to the sensitive nature of this study, existing participants were sent an email at the end of the interview that entailed the researcher's name, contact details, and a request to participate in the study. Existing participants would then share this information with their colleagues and networks that they deemed would be a good fit for this study. In turn, the new potential participants would reach out to the researcher indicating their interest to participate in the research study. In certain cases, existing participants would obtain permission from other participants before disclosing their contact information to the researcher. Standard protocol in terms of obtaining consent and sharing interview questions beforehand was adhered to. As a result, the researcher was able to recruit hidden participants in the population and collect additional primary data which was otherwise unavailable (Biernacki et al 1981; Johnson 2014). Snowball sampling helped build interpersonal connections whilst interviewing participants which encouraged them to feel comfortable during the research interview stage and speak freely in the research study.

Data Analysis

The data collected from primary and secondary sources of information was divided into smaller categories and sections. This was achieved by reviewing the transcripts several times and making elaborate notes of cohesive insights and common factors that were present across various research participant transcripts, field notes, and secondary data (Gerring 2011: 105-6). Themes that were similar in nature were then categorized separately to create relatable units. All participant interviews were collected in digital form and, subsequently, transcribed. Field notes collected during participant interview sessions were also transcribed. Gerring (2011) also suggests categorizing data by re-reading, checking again, and editing it. During the interview questionnaire stage, the researcher enlisted broad themes such as transnational advocacy, domestic advocacy, environmentalism, state repression, northern influence, self-restraint, Gandhi, neocolonialism, and Eurocentrism. Emerging sub-themes were also identified for coding and classification such as funding sources, donor intent, movement changes, non-monetary aid, alternate sources of funding, transnational resistance, global solidarity, intersectionality, and South-South transnationalism. Categorizing different components helped draw common themes and assign various codes to each of their respective columns (Gerring 2011: 105-6). After classifying all sections, the researcher compared various data sets with each other and then developed an interpretative and analytical sense of judgment to synthesize the findings and derive logical conclusions from them.

There were a few instances when data had to be verified with research participants a second time to ensure the accuracy of the information provided. This prevented inconsistencies in data interpretation and ensured the cohesiveness of results. The researcher also followed up with a few research participants regarding any new and evolving developments within TANs-related discourses that had a direct or indirect impact on the research study. This additional data surfaced from – amendments within the FCRA, government crackdowns, campaign initiatives, changes within advocacy programs, or the organization and activists' arrests. This information was then compared with the previous research material collected, classified, coded, and then synthesized into formulating relevant research interventions and hypotheses for the research study.

In sum, data analysis included the researcher's interpretation of themes after synthesizing the differences and similarities of participants between various interviews. This allowed typologies to develop. The research validity of the data was checked by going through the transcripts multiple times and developing common patterns within the responses, whereby, critical analysis within the methodological process could also be established in order to realize the research goals and objectives.

Limitations of the study

There are a few assumptions and limitations identified in the research study. First, evaluating research participant inputs was a challenging task as all participants did not possess the same experiences as that of other participants. Participants in the rural and urban belt had unique judgments and experiences of transnationalism within their advocacy group. For instance, some research participants in the rural areas regarded TANs as a bane for domestic advocacies because of their ability to contort the ideological missions of these groups. They, thus, believed in rejecting northern assistance as it impinged upon the domestic interests of the Indian grassroots. In doing so, they raised funds locally and/or resorted to self-help measures such as resorting to minimalism, self-restraint, and detachment techniques that reduced excessive desires and only fend for what was actually needed, as advocated by Gandhi.

On the other hand, certain urban-based participants demonstrated their need for TANs for the sustenance and mobilization of southern domestic activism. This led to donor dependency and a greater favourability for TANs in the global South. Thus, understanding, processing, and finally deriving conclusive evidence from these varied perspectives across the advocacy sector was a challenge. Since the study is narration styled and exploratory in nature it was difficult to qualitatively deduce new meanings in an objective manner as stories and descriptive accounts were subjective and personal to each individual research participant. There were moments when narrations were discursive, thus, discerning any logical substance from them was tedious. Developing a rational approach towards each subject and their individual vistas became imperative but, at the same time, ensuring greater sensitivity within the research focus without developing bias towards some groups over others was also important. Using observational rationality and objectivity whilst avoiding cherry-picked datasets was important but a challenging task (Ratner 2002).

Additionally, developing a domestic advocacy framework for southern environmentalism based on *Gandhian* precepts also posed as a challenge for this research project because Gandhi is, largely, revered as a pragmatist and not a theorist or philosopher (Fox 1990). His ideas on rejecting western industrialism/globalization and adopting a 'self-reliant', 'simple living' form of governance can be perceived as 'regressive' and 'superficial' because these techniques are disengaged from certain cultural contexts and specific groups in the contemporary realm (Dasgupta 1996). Gandhi's main focus was on the 'Hindu way of life' that prohibited a universal application of his philosophical formulations on other non-Hindu groups. These ideas were perceived as detached notions from specific cultural contexts that placed Gandhi's utopian ideas in direct confrontation with certain sections of the indigenous population (Allen 1993: 293). Thus, the research project focused on these complex and contradictory interpretations of Gandhi to demonstrate how Gandhi's ideas may (or may not) be applicable in southern advocacy contexts. However, the research found that it was Gandhi's influence on multiple advocacy campaigns across various sectors such as the environment, labour, and human rights that his teachings continue to be valorized in the contemporary realm. His philosophical approaches stem from personal beliefs and experiences but his ideologies are continually endorsed by many successful environmental campaigns such as the *Chipko*, *Silent Valley,* and NBA.

The other challenge was to document subaltern sensibilities within existing methodological traditions that are colonial in nature. In doing so, the works of Smith (2021) and Datta (2017) were particularly found to be useful. Smith (2021) deconstructs research methodology in Western scholarship that marginalizes, disempowers, and denies indigenous people of their validity, right to self-determination, natural resources, and cultural knowledge (2021: 1-2). While focusing on these concerns, Smith offers a new research paradigm surrounding indigeneity and traditional knowledge systems. "Western academia is guided by colonial powers that consider their research as 'serving the greater good for mankind' (2021: 1-2) … Thus, for researchers, decolonization would entail the process of having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices" (2021: 22). Additionally, Datta (2017: 1) emphasizes the need for decolonization in research to "create a positive impact on the participants' community, and conduct research ethically … This may not only reclaim participants' rights in the research but also empower the researcher." As a result, the existing scholarship on decolonizing research methodologies helped confront some of these methodological challenges while critically examining Western academic research that is, inherently, colonial, and oppressive in nature.

Integrating qualitative southern imaginings and knowledge within transnational theory that is a production of western academic literature was a challenge as decolonial possibilities are not widely interpreted within this theoretical research paradigm. For instance, the term 'indigenous people' refers to the native populations of western states including First Nations, Native Americans, among others. However, India does not apply the same usage of the term 'indigenous' for its tribal and native populations. Instead, India refers to these groups as '*Adivasi'* which means tribal populations. Thus, applying and reinforcing subaltern references to preestablished western standards in an effort to shift western research approaches towards decolonial cursive framings was a challenge but helped transform the epistemological lens of this research.

A final limitation of this research study was to navigate issues surrounding the Indian state targeting NGOs irrespective of their transnational status. Research participants 4, and 17 explain how the Indian government has not only been successful in repressing TANs through the use of the FCRA that helps them dismantle all forms of support structures that aid TANs but has also used other regulatory laws such as the official secrets act, sedition, and criminal defamation to penalize advocacies that raise funds locally. Participant 4 examines how the state uses varied forms of repression to attack advocacies that are critical of it. "The government has created an 'anti-national' and 'anti-India' rhetoric that stems from India's colonial past and contemporary forms of neocolonialism enabling the state to widely target civil society actors who are deemed to be working against national interest" (Participant 4). Participant 17 also elucidates how the NBA faced governmental repression despite its status as a domestic environmental movement. "The NBA staged protests, hunger strikes, sit ins, and lockdowns to oppose the construction of the

Narmada dam project. This unappeased the state causing them to falsely charge NBA activists for violating the sedition law and official secrets act" (Participant 17). The NBA movement was termed as an 'anti-national' campaign as it allied with international actors through global solidarity (i.e., alliance formed between domestic and international activists based on their shared visions and cultural values but one which did not involve the flow of financial aid).

Despite this, the study focuses on TANs as they are easily targeted through the FCRA by the state. TANs have been experiencing a steady decline since 2014 as multiple FCRA amendments have been introduced to further tighten regulations surrounding foreign activity in the Indian NGO sector. In 2022, 5968 TANs lost their FCRA licenses (Tripathi 2022) and a cumulative total of 12,580 FCRA organizations lost their registrations prior to that (Bhardwaj 2022). However, there is no available data to document similar figures and experiences in the domestic advocacy sector where NGOs raise funds locally and the flow of financial resources from the global North to the South does not take place. As such, investigating TANs prove to be a more viable option because of the existing preliminary evidence that reveals how state repression is more pervasive and intense in the transnational sector than the domestic advocacy realm. TANs also shift the scales of power among varied transnational advocacy groups. Fransen et al (2021: 14) examine how government repression "upends traditional development aid delivery models, forcing thousands of NGOs to shut down their offices and drive donors to reduce overall foreign aid-disbursements to countries repressing civil society." The FCRA is also used as a proper tool to contain transnational activity in the state while no such regulatory laws have been formally instituted to specifically control domestic NGOs in the state. The government uses other generic legal routes such as the sedition law and official secrets act to repress domestic activists, but these laws are not as stringent as that of the FCRA. The FCRA has been amended several times since 2014 after Prime Minister Narendra Modi commenced office (The Print Team 2020). It is also the only dedicated law for NGOs that claims to ensure regulation in the advocacy sector, but it only focuses on the operations of TANs and not other categories of NGOs because TANs fit neatly into their definition of 'anti-nationalism' and 'anti-India' since their donors are situated in the global North.

Due to the qualitative methodological restraints of this study, it was difficult to investigate both TANs and domestic NGOs to assess the varied effects of the FCRA and other laws (sedition, official secrets act, and criminal defamation) on domestic activists in these forums. However, the interviews and print documents made it clear that although the government intends to subjugate all forms of dissension in civil society, and targets TANs as that of domestic NGOs, there is a greater degree of regulation and restrictions imposed on TANs than on any other type of NGO in the state. For instance, 20,000 out of 33,158 TANs have lost their FCRA registration licenses since 2016 (PTI 2016). Additionally, the study does not make the claim that a withdrawal from TANs would imply that domestic movements will be successful thereafter or that such advocacy groups will not face organizational or mobilizational challenges. Instead, it argues that advocacy-related problems will continue to persist, but domestic activists will face far lesser challenges imposed by the Indian state and for this they will have to gauge whether the risks of conducting advocacy within a transnational framework is even worth it. In turn, examining these varied narratives to assess the most useful case for the purposes of this study prove to be a challenge as both cases confirmed the presence of state repression on them and which prohibits their ability to conduct advocacy freely in the state.

Conclusion

This chapter situates the research problem and methodological framework of the study. It helps analyze the implications for TANs in southern advocacies using a qualitative research approach. It sheds light on the research question and hypothesis of the study that discusses the varied insights of domestic and international activists regarding TANs and the proposed solutions for averting transnational problems within the global South. It also helps understand that TANs may not necessarily be the primary source of support and assistance for domestic advocacy groups and their related needs. Gandhi-based rural activists perceive transnational affairs in a different light rejecting their support structures and sustaining rural activism through self-measures. This provides an innovative rethinking of the interpretative data that positions their ability to sustain domestic advocacy groups through indigenous knowledge systems, resources, and infrastructures.

The study also helps in the construction of a decolonial-inspired intellectualism utilizing Gandhi's philosophical teachings to communicate self-sustaining and self-restraint methods to conducting advocacy effectively. These recommendations are highly reflective of the pervasive challenges that emerge from transnationalism and commit to a self-reliant model of governance where domestic activists can protect themselves from marginalization and disempowerment at the hands of the government and transnational actors. The results of this study thus, seek to serve multiple stakeholders including, but not limited to, academics, policymakers, policy analysts, domestic, regional, and international activists. The scope of the study is to extend the research findings to build a strategic foundation based on decolonial values and precepts protecting domestic activists from neocolonial and Eurocentric challenges. Thus, the qualitative research study develops an advocacy coalitions framework to help overcome some of these inherent problems that prohibit domestic environmental movements from fully utilizing their right to democratic freedom and empowerment in society. It suggests ways to identify and resist northern influence in order to establish themselves as leaders of their own movements in the long run.

The study also proposes future researchers to critically assess and apply the theoretical framework proposed in this research study to gauge the effects of a Gandhi-based approach for domestic activism in the global South. Future research investigators can employ the strategic recommendations made for southern domestic advocacy groups to analyze whether a *Gandhian* model is effectively applicable to subaltern movements. The evidence used in this study will highlight the inherent nuances of practicing advocacy with or without the support of transnational aid in India where material and financial resources are imperative but also hard to come by.

Chapter 3
Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This chapter examines the existing scholarship to outline the theoretical approach of the research study. It extrapolates the core concepts and key philosophical ideas surrounding TANs using relevant academic literature to highlight absent conceptualizations of TANs surrounding southern advocacy. This helps analyze the nature and patterns of association between TANs and their southern domestic counterparts to determine whether these relationships reinforce or undermine each other. This chapter also expounds the evolution of environmental movements in India since the *Gandhian* era that have a resounding impact on contemporary Indian environmental thought. It uses a postcolonial lens to examine various cases that deduce the neocolonial and Eurocentric character of TANs. Critical theory helps gauge whether TANs weaken the process of environmental activism in India and amplify the marginalization of indigenous activists.

The literature on transnational activism, Indian environmental advocacy, and postcolonialism in this chapter offer insights into the ways in which TANs prohibit or advance the goals of domestic environmental advocacies in India. Examining these concepts helps elucidate how the production of competition and conflict appropriates conditions for collaboration and solidarity among southern domestic NGOs. The transnational scholarship helps examine the formation of coalitions between domestic NGOs and transnational actors aiming to facilitate deliberations about domestic environmental problems by dismantling domestic architectures under the garb of global solidarity and effective policymaking. However, these exchanges also produce competitive behaviours and conflict situations between NGOs seeking to maximize opportunities for international exposure, financial assistance, and remediation for their struggles. Diminishing the prospects for solidarity and cooperation activists, in turn, rely on northern support as opposed to forming allegiances internally that may also help them achieve campaign success. On the other hand, international NGOs also contest each other to draw alliances with domestic advocacy groups that will help them expand their northern programs on southern turf.

The literature on Indian environmentalism elucidates the historical context of environmental movements and NGOs, vis-à-vis their evolution in India. Scholars (Deo et al 2011; Guha 1993; Guha et al 1998; Martinez-Alier 2014; and Narain 2013) examine how environmental activism in the global South is, significantly, different from the global North as it emerged from the colonial practice of binding intense state-society conflicts over natural resources and intra-society politics in developing states. However, environmental advocacy in the global North has been, mostly, confined to distributive justice, techno-managerialism, and rights-based activism (Behar 2019; Dauvergne 2016; Guha 1998). These parallel ideologues are indicative of the complexities involved within and between activist's groups in the global North and South. A closer look at Indian environmentalism will also reveal environmental activism from the purview of Gandhi and how he laid the foundation for early Indian environmental thought prior India's Independence in 1947. Gandhi did not overtly discuss environmental problems or ecological movements in the context of offering advice regarding further action but his philosophical teachings on sustainable economic development have been imbibed by Indian environmental activists from the *Chipko* and NBA movements such as Chandi Prasad, Sunder Lal Bahuguna, Baba Amte, and Medha Patkar since the 1970s.

Thus, while Gandhi's messages do not directly address Indian environmental issues, his speeches and writings are studied to deduce his deep concern for the environment, urbanization, and modernization of the Indian state post-Independence. Reviewing some of his earlier writings will help discern whether southern domestic activists in the present-day can solely rely on his teachings that discourage foreign dependency and promote a self-reliant lifestyle not only to achieve campaign goals but also better socioenvironmental conditions in states. Thus, this section on Indian environmentalism investigates the social, philosophical, and historical underpinnings of India's advocacy sector situating domestic environmental struggles at the forefront of donor interests to help address the research problem, create an appropriate context of the argument, and determine the theoretical framework and scope of the project.

Finally, the postcolonial literature section examines the relationship between domestic and international actors from the purview of the competing literature strands i.e., Indian environmental advocacy and TANs to demonstrate how these archetypes sustain the problem of neocolonialism and Eurocentrism in everyday advocacy. It examines the role of the Indian government within these contexts as it uses various labels such as 'anti-national' and 'anti-India' to repress TANs. The Indian government uses these descriptors to restrict the activity of environmental TANs in the state because of their ability to challenge authority and overthrow governments through democratic participation. The paradox lies in the usages of these terms towards domestic NGOs as well that have no foreign affiliations but are still perceived as working against national interest. This allows the government to coerce domestic and international NGOs alike, but at the same time, also continue to accept foreign direct investments (FDIs) for extractive industrial projects that cause environmental degradation. This reveals the government's hypocritical posture as it projects itself as both victim and contributor to neocolonial problems.

At the same time, these problems also emerge from traditional TANs between the global North and South as northern NGOs tend to prioritize their own interests over southern advocacy issues which renders domestic activists as second-class allies in their own campaigns when they should be treated equitably in these partnerships. Northern activists influence southern advocacies to expand the agenda of northern powers in subaltern realms which is damaging and exploitative as it causes the further marginalization of indigenous activists in the state. Thus, postcolonial theory will illuminate these subjectivities to expand the scope of diversity and inclusion within these neocolonial settings that are also nested in India's imperial history and postcolonial present.

In sum, a comprehensive review of the scholarly literature on TANs, Indian environmentalism, and postcolonialism will help the research study to examine the different forms of structure, processes, and roles of state and non-state actors present within cross-border relationships. There is limited evidence about the mechanisms that forestall or assist the work of environmental activism in India. Thus, this review surfaces these gaps in the literature to better understand the potential risks for participating in transnational programmes with the intent to highlight the research contribution of this study that propose an advocacy coalitions framework to help domestic activists overcome the negative effects of TANs on indigenous communities in the global South.

Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs)

Scholars (Baldwin 2012; Morganthau 1967) argue that states are dominant forces in the international system and act as controlling agents as they possess material power, capital flow, and an influence on the global economy. States exercise coerciveness through their defined territories and available resources over which they have sovereignty (Held et al 1999; Held 1995). On the other hand, critical theorists offer a reorientation of the global political system that enmeshes social structures within nation-states and view them as contributors to wider global processes (Held et al 1999: 27). This evolving nature of the international system introduces other complex arrangements between multilateral economic institutions (such as the IMF and WTO) and global social movements (such as environmental and labor advocacy campaigns) allowing both economic institutions and civil society organizations to demonstrate greater power and authority in the global system (O'Brien et al 2000).

Scholars (Edkins et al 2004; Weiss 2005: 345) refer to this phenomenon as the 'disappearance of the state' as it culminates into the rise of a global civil society that transitions the state-centric system into a decentralized and globalized one. Tarrow et al (2005) refer to this transition from the domestic realm to a global one as a period of 'scale shift' that invokes 'transnational contention' (2005: 121-2). Other authors also challenge the state-centric view recognizing the importance of non-state actors in the international system (Dahl 1971; Keohane et al 1972; 1977; Koenig-Archibugi 2010; Putnam 1988; Risse et al 1995). These scholars highlight how transnational activists are, increasingly, performing the functions of states as demands rise and governments become less able to perform their traditional functions as governments, thus, allowing non-state actors to arbitrate and govern in multifaceted ways (Lipschutz 1992; Rosenau 1990).

Archibugi et al (1998); Held (1995, 1999); and Scholte (2005) propose to study globalization as a "social relation by respacializing the understanding of globality" (2005: 20). In this light, nonstate actors such as 'political entrepreneurs' or 'rooted cosmopolitans' (Tarrow 2005) are given eminence as they shape newfound relationships within globalized spaces to help dismantle the oversimplified role of the state that is concentrated at the center of the international system. The attempt is not to infer a state departure or simplification of nation-states that restrict knowledge surrounding the diminishing role of the state and deducing a 'globaloney' of world politics (Brown et al 2009: 177). But rather it is to suggest that there could be a shifting role proposing credible reconstitution of concepts where a coherent and holistic formulation of global governance could be created for both state and civil society actors (Brown et al 2009).

However, Scholte without drawing a normative claim on state or nonstate actors emphasizes the all-encompassing role of globalizing processes that exhibit the potential to alter the global system (2005: 25). Ergo, TANs have reoriented themselves as redefining agents within the international political system by transforming southern spaces and bringing people to power. Porta et al (2005: 1-2) reckon that post the 1960s, this shift from the loci of political power towards global civil society started to form advocacy networks on important issues such as the environment, human rights, and labour. Bandy et al also point out that, "the process of transnational cooperation generated new understandings of the problems activists encountered fostering new organizing arrangements as well as skills for organizing in the global political arena" (2004: 2). Tarrow (2005: 2) states that the most interesting characteristic of transnational activists is their ability to connect the local to the global. This demands for greater transnational cooperation that seeks to improve southern domestic conditions and North-South relationships (Bandy et al 2005: 4-5).

In sum, the scholarly literature on TANs examines the ways in which domestic and international activists either cultivate and reinforce each other (Haas 1992; Rosenau 1990) or invoke new sets of problems such as political repression by the state authorities (Desmarais 2007: 5-7; Mahon 2008; Risse et al 1999) or northern influence by western powers (Bloodgood et al 2019; Jenkins et al 1986). Scholars (Keck et al 1998; Khagram et al 2002; Tarrow 2005) discuss how TANs emerged with the purpose of reshaping global politics by converging social and cultural norms and bringing domestic-international actors together to work against repressive government regulations that fail to address, more seriously, the sociopolitical and environmental issues of indigenous people. Using the boomerang strategy, Keck et al 1998 analyze how domestic activists form coalitions with international NGOs by 'throwing boomerangs internationally' to pressure states into instituting effective policies in developing economies. Thus, the formation of TANs reinvigorates the closed communication channels between domestic activists and their governments by inducing pressure on home governments and sensitizing them to the socioenvironmental needs of citizens. In doing so, TANs help promote norms implementation, create opportunities for material and financial funding, disclose information, and provide international recognition for southern issues. On the other hand, northern NGOs are advantaged by gaining credibility, validity, and enforcement in the global system (Keck et al 1998; Khagram et al 2002; Tarrow 1994).

Drawbacks of TANs

TANs are rooted in global solidarity models that tread on circumventing inflexible governments to represent the interests of marginalized communities (Keck et al 1998; Khagram et al 2002; Tarrow 2005; Wapner 1995; Smith 2008). However, the transnational literature (Bano 2008; Barnett 2016; Bob 2005; Brulle 2000; De Waal 2015; Eriksson Baaz 2005; Jalali 2013; Rahman 2006) also discusses the disadvantages of transnational advocacies in terms of their oppressive and exploitative nature in the global South. Domestic activists are oft discriminated and further marginalized in their own discourses as they attempt to reclaim their political posture in the state. Northern NGOs integrate domestic advocacies within the preferred frameworks of the global North (Jenkins et al 1986; Piven et al 1977). In turn, domestic activists are compelled to comply by the imperatives set by their northern counterparts to fulfil donor interests that keep southern programs operational, but which also cause the appropriation and abrogation of southern indigenous goals. This also allows TANs to leverage and expand their neocolonial and Eurocentric structures within the global South, whereby, domestic activists are further disempowered and pushed to the periphery.

Florini (2000) analyzes how the efforts of TANs can help resolve southern problems. Florini questions the level of trust one can lay on TANs because their ameliorative claims for southern domestic problems are disputable due to their 'loose agglomerations' and 'unelected' bodies (2000: 3). Khagram (2002: 207) also examines the challenges of geographical, cultural, and linguistic divides between the global North and South creating assimilation and representation problems at the global stage for domestic advocacies to navigate through. Young (2000) and Bandy et al (2005), additionally, extrapolate the major obstacles to TANs whilst building cross-border relationships. They reiterate that distance, cultural diversity, varied political contexts, economic barriers, and power differentials create setbacks within the transnational advocacy space that inversely impact all the stakeholders involved. Rootes (2005: 39) deduces how southern activists have started taking note of these challenges and holding northern states accountable for their actions. Southern domestic advocacies expect greater cultural sensitivity and subaltern knowledge from their northern counterparts while working with them. For instance, Rootes exemplifies how Friends of Earth (FoE) understood these requisites and rejected the idea of setting up its offices in the southern realm. In doing so, FoE facilitated indigenous empowerment by allying with domestic activists from afar without expanding their presence on southern turf (2005: 40). Rootes states that this was unlike Greenpeace that was "insensitive to the local domestic concerns of many who had previously supported it" (2005: 42).

Additionally, Moghadam (2005: 194) points out that TANs imply the ever-increasing reliance on the global North for 'soft money'. Southern domestic advocacies require sustenance for their movements due to lack of support received by internal sources and, therefore, the opportunities made available to them by the northern advocacies assist them in expending their campaign activities more comfortably. Moghadam examines how this growing dependency on northern NGOs for financial support cultivates a culture of complacency and dependency rendering domestic activists further reliant on external actors instead of seeking internal measures to sustain their operations and strive to become more self-reliant in the long run. As a result, this diminishes subaltern creativity, innovation, performance, and the efficacy of doing better under local conditions rather than engaging with northern complexities. Barnett (2016) and Eriksson Baaz (2005) refer to the paternalistic behaviour of transnational engagements in the global South that intertwines power and domination with the practices of compassion, empathy, and emancipation within institutional arrangements (2016: 4-6). Additionally, Bob (2005) and De Waal (2015) illustrate how the effects of transnationalism can be harmful for domestic advocacies such that solutions are required to reconstitute global civil society. Thus, TANs raise concerns about the extent to which actors are democratic, representative, and accountable (Dryzek 2012: 106-109; Sikkink 2002: 311-316). While domestic activists may question the ultra-national practices of states and critique elitist decision-making policies, they also remain susceptible to reproducing the same problems as that of states and elite groups such as democratic unfreedom and non-representativeness.

The case for TANs

Scholars (Bandy et al 2005; Florini 2002; Hathaway et al 1997; Lipsky 1971; Ostrander 2010) advocate that the opportunities for participating in TANs outweigh their associated costs. They argue that TANs possess the necessary attributes to help democratize governance structures (Florini 2002) as they facilitate civil society to directly participate in democratic systems and provide greater visibility to southern issues at the international stage. TANs provide these opportunities through the flow of material and financial aid, manpower, privilege, and leadership (Jalali 2013). However, this set of the literature disregards the drawbacks of TANs claiming that it is erroneous to generalize TANs because the perceived obstacles are obsolete and do not exist in contemporary realm anymore (Florini 2000; Young 1992). Florini states that "there is no easy, one-size-fits-all measure for determining which of the thousands of clamoring voices are pursuing noble goals (or even which goals are truly noble), those means should not constrain the sector's vaunted flexibility. No one model serves for all of transnational civil society, just as no one model serves for all of the private sector" (2000: 237). Young (1992) also points out that the drawbacks of TANs have become less important over time with technology and more effective modes of communication between North and South actors. Bandy et al (2005: 10) state that TANs facilitate cross-cultural understandings that helps increase sensitivity towards interdependency.

Additionally, Khagram et al (2002: 86-8) argue that domestic advocacies such as the *Hirakud* dam movement failed because it wholly relied on domestic advocacy structures disconnecting itself from the transnational realm that could offer them the necessary support for growth and transition in civil society. Instead of critiquing TANs for being too 'western' or a lobby for the 'elite class', Khagram et al (2002) maintain that domestic advocacies should accept transnational support as they are unable to fend for themselves. Khagram et al (2002: 18) also point out that the efficacy of TANs should be determined based on their international (political) opportunity structures and not on their domestic configurations. This is because domestic challenges are complex with oppressive state regimes trying to inhibit TANs from performing well. Khagram et al argue that instead the focus should be on how TANs can persist under such conditions as they steer domestic advocacies towards realizing their goals via these networks (2002: 18-20). For example, repressive regimes in Chile, Indonesia, and Eastern Europe have made transnational activism intensely challenging for domestic NGOs primarily because they belong to marginalized societies and a shift to the transnational realm is a defensive attempt to "reclaim lost levels of empowerment" (Kidder 2002; Ritchie 2002).

Other scholars also highlight the need for domestic advocacies to leverage themselves to gain maximum advantage out of TANs (Bandy et al 2005). Bandy et al extrapolate how transnational challenges can be averted by ensuring that domestic movements are 'well-established' before forming coalitions between the global North and South (2005: 233). As such, the onus of transnational success lies on how well-founded and deep-rooted domestic movements are which absolves northern NGOs of their share of responsibility to better cross-border experiences in the advocacy realm. This is troubling because it urges domestic movements to be 'well-established' and not northern advocacies before any transnational success can be anticipated. Moghadam also contends that the achievements of TANs must be celebrated and not discounted as without TANs "the world would hardly have known about atrocities" (2005: 195). TANs such as the transnational feminist movement have been able to successfully sustain themselves due to the efforts of the UN and World Bank. Moghadam (2005) argues that the efforts of TANs led to the recognition of women in various socio-economic and political spheres. As a result, this led to the conceptualization of ideas such as 'gender equality' and 'women's empowerment'. TANs have also assisted women in building relationships with other state and non-state actors such as the media and intergovernmental organizations. This may not have been possible without the continued support from transnational partners that prove to be effective for government planning and policy influence (Moghadam 2005).

In this light, transnationalism is idolized as an achievement of the western world to help resolve southern problems. The challenges associated with transnational advocacies are, thus, sidelined as they provide greater opportunities for domestic activists to remain politically motivated and push back against inflexible governments. Scholars (Bandy et al 2005; Florini 2002; Khagram et al 2002; and Moghadam 2005) allude how TANs create diversity between various societies and cultures. At an economic level, they provide financial assistance that impoverished southern states can benefit from. They also engage in the social exchange of information and ideas that allows issues of national importance to gain global attention (Keck et al 1998). However, these scholars dismiss concerns about the weakening of advocacy structures that result from transnationalism and which purports blame on domestic NGOs and movements for transnational failure. Schramm et al although acknowledge that TANs are supposed to be non-hierarchal but that power asymmetries are continually found between domestic and international NGOs causing northern advocacies to remain disconnected from the grassroots when they regularly claim to advocate the issues of vulnerable populations and emphasize ‘partnerships’, ‘localization’, and ‘local ownership’ (2018: 666-7). Yet still, Schramm et al claim that not all TANs should be equated with the same yardstick as that of others because some transnational NGOs have started to cater towards the interests of ‘affected advocacies’ and provide logistics, knowledge, translations, and finance not only vertically to their beneficiaries below but also horizontally to other TANs in the same sector (2018: 676). This alludes that not all TANs exhibit paternalistic behaviours as some provide additional resources to help others address transnational problems. It also questions the role of resource provisions in the advocacy realm and how much they dis- or advantage southern domestic causes in the long run.

Other scholars (Barnett 2016; Bob 2005; De Waal 2015; and Eriksson Baaz 2005) do emphasize the need for a reform and reconstitution of the transnational sector but none focus on the possibilities of avoiding TANs altogether because of its negative effects. Instead, they recommend ways to create a safe space for northern NGOs within these structures in the global South such that domestic and international activists can mutually and harmoniously coexist within each other. The next section foregrounds Indian environmentalism within these arguments to provide suitable context for the opportunities and challenges that result from transnational alliance-making. It contextualizes why the India environmental advocacy sector makes a unique case study for this investigative research project as the literature on TANs fails to provide conclusive evidence to suggest how transnationalism may be harmful for subaltern environmental advocacy contexts such as India.

Mapping the Indian environmental advocacy sector

Anti-globalization and environmental movements began in the global North in the 1950s (Kelly 2005) when ecological degradation and global warming became prominent issues necessitating immediate resolution. On the other hand, Indian environmental scholar Guha (1998; 1999) situates the formal origins of environmental activism in India after the 1970s when the negative implications for neoliberal capitalism intensified environmental degradation and conflict in the state. Environmental movements such as the *Chipko* and NBA gained widespread traction in the 1970s and 80s respectively because they revealed the gross human rights and environmental violations of the Indian state on indigenous communities.

In philosophical terms, Indian environmentalism evolved over time challenging the dominant notions of development and informing alternative visions for sustainable growth and development whilst ensuring environmental protection. Guha (1995) revisits the *Gandhian*, post-independence, and neoliberal eras to suggest how environmentalism developed from an intellectual critique of refusing western-inspired ideas of industrialization to forming dynamic resistance campaigns against the ineffective policies of the Indian government. Gadgil et al (1994) also articulate how Indian environmental movements commenced with a firm consciousness for utilizing indigenous knowledge systems and local resources as advocated by Gandhi to ameliorate southern domestic conditions.

Post-independence in 1947 when India gained freedom from the British colonial rule, civil society actors understood the perils of expanding globally, engaging in global markets, and the risks involved with allying with northern powers (Guha 1988). Activists relied on domestic resources as they sought environmental justice and equity. Seeking support from foreign actors would invite neocolonial and Eurocentric problems that many intended to avoid. Thus, solidarity within movements was achieved by drawing alliances between other domestic environmental movements in the region that would help invoke pressure on governments to institute effective policies.

Guha (1988; 1993; 2006) argues that Gandhi also advanced this idea of forming dynamic resistance movements and engaging in domestic advocacy by motivating local communities such as the *Adivasi*[2] to lead their own campaigns. Gandhi encouraged activists to join local marches, non-cooperative campaigns, and hunger strikes to protest imperial state structures. His teachings on resistance, movement building, self-restraint, and local reliance whilst opposing colonialism and the unsustainable developmental practices of the state bore the foundational principles of 'classical environmentalism' in India (Guha 1995). This included the strengthening of local know-how and small-scale businesses to deter India from entering global markets (Guha 1988). In turn, these ideological notions were integrated by domestic activists in their socioenvironmental and human rights-based movements. Environmental activists emphasized the need for strengthening indigenous knowledge systems by empowering the grassroots to be self-sufficient as opposed to blindly copying the West's trajectory of growth that was unsustainable and ecologically damaging (Guha 1988). This would help reduce stress on natural resources, lessen external resource dependency, and promote economic growth in a sustainable manner.

However, post-independence, the introduction of TANs within the Indian advocacy sector compelled domestic activists to internalize global norms whilst dismissing their own interests and motivations for conducting advocacy (Shiva 1989). Tarrow explains how domestic narratives change when transnationalism commences and invokes 'universal' concepts without understanding that they may be far from universal acceptance (2005: 189). This was reflected within the Indian environmental context, as urban-based NGOs, increasingly, started to draw alliances with the global North after the 1990s. In effect, issues of misrepresentation and neglect were cited within southern environmental advocacy structures. For example, campaigns led by Greenpeace Bhopal in the Bhopal gas tragedy movement sought to alter the narratives of the survivors of the tragedy (Mac Sheoin 2012). Greenpeace mentioned its own name 234 times in the reports it published on the Bhopal gas tragedy incident while Bhopal survivors were only quoted 93 times and the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB) (the southern domestic counterpart of the movement) was cited 58 times (Mac Sheoin 2012: 505). This altered the relationship between Greenpeace and ICJB as the latter demanded greater representation in the campaign but did not receive it.

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[2] *Adivasi* is a collective term for various indigenous people in the Indian subcontinent. These tribes are the original inhabitants of the region and include, but are not limited to, the *Bhils, Gonds, Khasis, Mizos, Meenas and Lepchas.* The term *Adivasis* cannot be homogenized within the formal conceptual understanding of 'indigenous people' because not only would this reflect western superiority, but it would also represent the varied colonial histories of 'untouchability' and 'outcasts' unique to the *Adivasis* experience as a community.

Additionally, the campaign led by the *Affected Citizens of Teesta* (ACT) also experienced identity-based grievances that threatened the *Lepcha* tribal community after the movement drew alliances with external advocacy groups (Deo et al 2011). For instance, ACT opposed the construction of several hydroelectric dams along the *Teesta River* in the state of Sikkim because the *Lepcha* community feared it was at the brink of extinction. The construction of the dams would push the *Lepcha* further into the dense forest region, thus, weakening their ethnic and cultural roots in the state. However, ACT's northern counterpart only focused on the environmental aspect of the movement (i.e., the environmental degradation posed by the construction of the mega dams) and not their ethnicity-based concerns. Despite being an ally, ACT's transnational partner made invisible the reasons for complex discourses that were rooted in the politics of the *Lepcha* identity, their daily livelihoods, and intra-*Lepcha* visions (Deo et al 2011).

Thus, the *Gandhian*, post-independence, and neoliberal eras suggest how environmental activism evolved with varied traditions overtime. It began by challenging the dominant notions of economic development that were entrenched in western industrial models to propose the integration local knowledge systems and subaltern know-how. This would help inform alternate solutions for complex environmental problems of political repression and ecological degradation. However, the influx of TANs in the 1990s replaced these ideas with an ever-increasing dependency on transnational advocacy structures that aimed to resolve aggrieved environmental problems through the transfer of material and financial resources. In doing so, neocolonial challenges also intensified during these periods. Domestic activists oft faced marginalization and political oppression in these networks. Neocolonialism sanctioned exploitation, exclusion, and the subjugation of southern domestic activists through the privilege and supremacism of northern powers. Additionally, former colonial laws strengthened this process by disrupting indigenous practices of coexisting with nature or their ability to utilize their own indigenous knowledge system to govern themselves. Instead, the laws adhered to the colonial narrative of commodifying the environment by exploiting it for economic purposes (Ghosal 2011). The continuance of these policies post-independence amplified transnational problems as India continued to suffer from its colonial hangover. In effect, the deconstruction of these varied historical periods will help gauge the implications for neocolonialism on domestic environmental movements that choose to adopt a transnational course in their advocacy structures. The following section extrapolates the different forms of environmental activism in the global North and South to highlight how environmentalism is perceived and practiced differently in states. Based on the competing interests of North-South actors, the literature examines how these groups project their preferences, demands, and visions within their own groups and onto each other differently.

Classifying environmentalism(s)

The global North and South is constituted by a variety of environmental advocacy discourses. Environmentalism in the global South is premised on neocolonial and Eurocentric values whereas in the global North (barring the indigenous environmental movement) environmentalism is predominantly associated with rights-based activism and distributive justice. Scholars examine the roles, impacts, and nature of environmental advocacy networks (Betsill et al 2004; Fisher 1997; Ford 2003; Keck et al 1998; Newell 2000; Park 2005; Wapner 2002) to suggest how groups have grown in size, reach, and influence creating differences in their methods of operation and the scope for effective policy implementation in states (Laferrière 1994).

In the global North, environmental activists, mostly, comprise of the urban middle class while southern societies are, mainly, constituted by a rural population (Hirsch 1997). Gadgil et al (1995) point out that environmental conflicts in southern societies are about access to natural resources and services as opposed to ecological modernization and eco-efficiency that is seen in the global North. Northern environmentalism is centered around environmental sustainability and technological advancement (Martinez-Alier 2004: 14). Additionally, Andrews (2011); Deo et al (2011: 81-2), and Van Der Heijden (1999) examine how environmental advocacies in the global North are more professional, well-funded, and spearheaded by expert-based environmental organizations as compared to southern environmental advocacies that are less formal, poorly funded, and routinely disorganized.

Dauvergne (2016) also states that environmentalism in the global North is dominated by eco-businesses, eco-consumption, and recycling. He exemplifies how these corporate eco-friendly business practices do not resolve the root cause of sustainability problems. Instead, corporations opt to conceal these issues under the garb of 'eco-products' or 'sustainable good practices' which helps them generate more corporate profits and consumption. This, in turn, causes environmental degradation in southern societies as northern states continue to plunder the global commons urging the global South to incorporate large-scale emissions cuts or act as global e-waste dump sites for the northern powers to export their toxic trash to. Northern states face the problem of mass consumption and production that leads to excessive amounts of e-wastage creating wider global environmental disposal problems. This leads to the collapse of subaltern ecosystems pushing domestic actors further to the margins and isolationism. Guha reiterates that:

> "The northern wilderness lover has largely been insensitive to the needs and aspirations of human communities that live in and around habitats they wish to 'preserve for posterity'. At the same time, he or she has been insensitive to the deep asymmetries in global consumption, to the fact that it is precisely the self-confessed environmentalist who practices a lifestyle that lays and unbearable burden on the finite natural resources of the earth" (2000: 370).

On the other hand, Martinez-Alier (2014) extrapolates how environmentalism in the global South is a matter of survival. Environmentalism in southern societies is not occupied by notions of fixing economic growth-related problems or developing ecological innovations. Instead, southern environmentalism is focused on preserving ecosystems and nature against the exploitative practices of business corporations and the state (2014: 240). This form of activism is concentrated on the environment as it seeks to achieve socioenvironmental equity and justice in societies. Southern environmentalism is a 'bottoms-up' approach that incorporates indigenous knowledge systems within policy structures seeking to amplify marginalized voices and bringing people to power (Institute for Global Environmental Strategies 2020). Guha et al (1995) also argue that environmentalism of the global South constitutes of 'ecosystem people' that depend almost exclusively on the natural resources found in their locality, inspiring them to protect forests, meadows, fishing grounds, and other resources key to their survival.

Folchi (2019) also distinguishes how the environment is viewed differently in the global North and South. In the global North, the environment is considered separate from individuals such that they do not reinforce each other, and conservation is not a primary aspect of an individual's or society's well-being even though the 'survival of the human race' depends on ecological stability. However, 'environmentalism of the poor' does not involve people defending 'the environment', 'nature' or 'planet earth'. Instead, individuals are concerned about protecting their 'habitats' that sustains them and offers shelter (2019). Folchi (2019: 102) further adds that, "at the heart of the theory of the environmentalism of the poor lies the fact that the innumerable local conflicts that occur around the world, both historically and in the present, are an expression of a far greater conflict: the conflict between capitalist economics (or market economics) and the environment". While this may also be true for environmental conflicts in the global North that center issues around indigenous rights, leveraging distributive justice and rights-based activism in northern settings encourages profit oriented and corporate run solutions for the ecological crisis. On the other hand, environmentalism in India challenges these contesting notions but also exhibits some of them.

Indian environmentalism

Scholars argue that it is erroneous to target developing economies such as India for being "too poor to be green" even though they lack the analytical toolkit and organizational strength to resist oppressive powers and sustain themselves (Guha et al 1998). Instead, Martinez-Alier suggests that there exists an alternate form of environmentalism (contrary to northern environmental advocacy) that allows indigenous activists to "obtain ecological requirements for life such as energy, water, and a place to live" (1994: 239). Indian environmentalists project an 'ecological conscience' that compels them to protect their environment. Martinez-Alier analyzes this phenomenon as the "intimate understanding of what is at stake by not managing it carefully" (2014: 240). This form of environmentalism not only caters to safeguard indigenous habitats and their natural resources, but also preserves the cultural identities, ethnicity, and social capital of minority populations.

Within these settings, the Indian government also plays a significant role in leveraging or deleveraging environmental advocacy groups in the state. Scholars (Matejova et al 2018; Jalali 2013) highlight the implications for state intervention and increased repression towards environmental activists in India. The previous Indian government formed by the *Indian National Congress* (INC) and the current administration run by the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) have exhibited their intolerance towards dissenting NGOs in the state including TANs. The government represses these networks through NGO clampdowns, incarcerations, surveillance, and in some cases even imposing a threat to human life. The Indian government has also resorted to the use of violence against non-violent movements such the NBA river dam campaign to suppress the democratic freedoms of North-South, urban-rural, bourgeoisie-poor activists alike (Senthalir 2012). Indigenous activists within the NBA movement faced police blockades, false charges, beatings, and forced evictions by the government as a result of organizing counterdemonstrations against the construction of the *Sardar Sarovar Dam* in the *Narmada* valley (Baviskar 1995; McCully 1996; Udall 1995). In other instances, domestic activists also lost their lives. For example, 13 environmental activists were executed in a police encounter during the *Sterlite* protest against the construction of the *Vedanta* copper plant in the state of *Tamil Nadu* in 2019 (Varadhan 2018).

These incidents highlight how the Indian government subdues most forms of democratic participation in the state by stimulating power structures present between state and civil society actors. Jalali (2013) examines how the state has consistently maintained an intolerant posture towards critical voices in the environmental advocacy sector, but also how the state systematically targets advocacy groups when transnational elements are established in these relationships. The state uses the rhetoric of 'anti-nationalism' and 'anti-development' (Intelligence Bureau 2014) to authorize embargo-like measures on transnational environmental advocacies networks that are critical of the government's policies. Targeting such actors becomes relatively simpler because of their 'foreignness' and the threat they pose to the sovereignty of the state through 'western intervention' and their eulogization for 'neocolonialism'.

Domestic NGOs are compelled to tone down their campaigning methods, pull out of transnational linkages, and reorient their ideological motivations (values and interests) to demonstrate their political allegiance towards the state. Rodrigues (2003: 127) reckons that domestic activists need to reconstruct and modernize their strategies whilst seeking constant dialogue, negotiation, and mediation with governments. This can be achieved by operating within the mandate of state laws such as the FCRA if transnational assistance for advocacy-related activities is desired and sought. Compliance through persuasive appeals helps develop critique, understand existing complexities, and deduce alternative frameworks to engage with state powers (Rodrigues 2003).

Sharma (2012) also examines the theological underpinnings of Indian environmentalism to explain how Hindu conservative beliefs (that are intrinsic to nature) inform environmental consciousness, activism, and green behaviour in India. The *Vedic* and *Brahmanical* doctrines in Hinduism reinforce the divine and sacred aspect of nature to help formulate dialogue surrounding environmental conservation, protection, and just transitions. Sharma (2012) states that religion in India helps create the necessary impulse to invigorate environmentalists, mobilize the masses, and advocate for effective environmental standards in the state. For instance, the *Tehri* dam movement led by Sunderlal Bahuguna was premised on cultural religious references of the *Ganga River* and *Himalayan* range as they provide food and water to sustain all life forms. "The *Himalayan* region and *Ganga River* are seen as symbols of a divine force, a thing of beauty and a point of contact with the infinite… giving meaning, shape, and form to activists" (Sharma 2002).

Indian environmentalism is informed by these philosophical leanings, religious tenets, and government's intolerant posture towards dissenting NGOs. In addition to this, Gandhi also strengthened these ideas by focusing on the significance of traditions, culture, and religious tenets. Gandhi romanticized nature and alluded his distaste for western modernism and urbanization. He stated that "all life was sacred and all human beings a part of the divine, living in harmony with other beings" (Khoshoo et al 2009). His insights helped form the foundation for Indian environmental thought in India that helped influence thinking of some of the most renowned environmentalists such as J C Kumarappa and Mira Behn in India.

Gandhian inspired environmentalism

Gandhi is regarded as the "single most important influence on environmental movements" in India (Khoshoo et al 2009: 2). He stressed on the importance of local communities adopting self-sufficient lifestyles to empower themselves and enable others. Gandhi realized that western lifestyles were not only wasteful but also immoral (Khoshoo et al 2009). He stated that, "nature produces enough for our wants from day to day, and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world, there would be no man dying of starvation in this world" (Kelkar 1960). In this light, Gandhi argued that self-reliance was a vital component for village-workers and institutions (Gandhi 1946: 153). Village workers were encouraged to start businesses without competing with others while institutions were instructed to refrain from seeking foreign aid and help from local quarters in their internal matters:

> "Any institution will be considered to be self-supporting if the people for whose benefit it is run provide its expenses. For instance, if the money for Indian Christian institutions comes from America, then the Indian Christians will have proved their incapacity. Those institutions must be supported by the local Christians…I have thought deeply and long about our institutions and formulated a code on the basis of experience. We shall be able to render better service to the extent we are able to live up to it and will not become a burden on others" (Gandhi 1946: 153).

In addition to advocating self-reliant civil society structures, Gandhi was also cautious of the limitations of these frameworks that would invoke new sets of problems for domestic advocacy groups. For instance, he addressed the problem of not limiting oneself to just self-sufficient lifestyles as more work would be required beyond that:

> "The main thing that is necessary is to make the village self-sufficient and self-reliant. But mind you, my idea of self-sufficiency is not a narrow one. There is no scope for selfishness or arrogance in my self-sufficiency. I am not preaching isolation. We have to be humble as dust for a cause. We have to mix with people even as sugar mixes itself with milk. Though the villagers will be self-sufficient so far as it is possible, they will devote their time also to their intellectual development for the creation of the consciousness for the contemplated non-violent society of the future" (Gandhi 1944: 234).

In effect, indigenous communities were expected to develop local knowledge systems for economic development and environmental protection. Self-sufficiency did not, merely, imply a narrow path to growth instead to be self-sufficient meant to never be self-contained. It meant aiming for complete self-sufficiency but producing more local resources in exchange for resources available from the outside world and which were not attainable inside the village:

> "We shall have to produce more of what we can in order thereby to obtain in exchange what we are unable to produce. Only nothing of our extra produce would be sent to Bombay or far off cities. Nor would we produce things with an eye to export to those cities. That would run counter to my conception of swadeshi. Swadeshi means serving my immediate neighbour rather than those far away" (Gandhi 1944: 26).

Gandhi implied that in order to be ecologically pragmatic about sustainable economic systems one had to abide by a self-sufficient lifestyle through the elimination of excessive wants and only reaching out to others for absolute basic needs and requirements. Imposing self-restraint on oneself allowed individuals to rethink about their desires for development and environmental sustainability. Although Gandhi's philosophical teachings do not directly address environmental problems within the Indian state, they provide a rich backdrop to develop an ecological consciousness among domestic actors and the ethics for performing advocacy in the state. Gandhi (1917) maintained robust faith in *satya* (truth), *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *brahmacharya* (self-restraint). Of these, self-reliance was the foundation of independence as it provided political freedom. Gandhi asserted how dependence on external support structures was a 'sign of slavery' (1947: 271). Gandhi stated:

> "One who possesses the spinning-wheel enjoys complete freedom. Whereas those depending on mill-cloth become slaves of mill-owners. Every person should determine his own needs and should himself try to fulfil them and seek other' help only when it becomes unavoidable. Unless everyone develops this attitude and becomes completely self-reliant, we can never be really free" (Gandhi 1947: 30).

In this light, Indian environmental activism was sought to burgeon through Gandhi's teachings of self-reliance, individual-control, and sacrifice. Domestic activists were encouraged to cultivate an attitude of self-discipline by adhering to the principles of *swaraj* (self-rule) (Gandhi 1946: 188). This would avoid external dependencies causing a 'loss of the self' but also resist opportunities for foreign intervention and neocolonial rule. Gandhi also emphasized the importance of *Adivasis* (indigenous peoples) and the role they played in avoiding these externalities. *Adivasis* formed a significant portion of the Indian population and were exploited by *zamindars* (landowners) and forest contractors (1942: 1). By uplifting and empowering them in society a true sense of *swaraj* (self-rule) could be attained because it was through them that real socioeconomic development could emerge as they would impose environmental safeguards on degrading ecosystems.

Gandhi also stated that in the quest for *satyagraha* (the search for truth) activists should employ attributes of self-help and self-sacrifice but also maintain faith in God (1928: 153). Without these components seeking liberty and justice in society would be a challenging task. For Gandhi, advocacy was not a mere exterior quest achievable by extensive lobbying, protests, and marches, but it was an internal evolution of the human heart and mind. This involved inner reflection and self-transformation that would lead to self-purification and self-control (1928: 192). Domestic activists could attain the highest and purest form of life if they strived to incorporate these qualities in their day-to-day lives. This would help them renounce worldly pleasures which were deemed to be excessive and wasteful. Gandhi's philosophical teachings alluded how socioeconomic development and environmental sustainability was attainable through sacrifices of 'the self'. He elucidated how denying the self would allow humans to be of service to the world as opposed to engaging in self-indulgence which was a selfish act and causing harm to other people. On the other hand, exercising self-restraint would direct the human soul to the universal spirit of God (Gandhi 1942: 226).

In sum, the literature on Indian environmental activism offers a rich historical backdrop that situates the predominant nature of environmentalism since its inception in the 1970s. It navigates through *Gandhian* philosophies and ideas of sustainable development following the Indian independence era. It illustrates the challenges that emerge from neocolonial setups such as transnationalism that seek to dismantle domestic advocacy structures that have proven to empower and uplift marginalized groups. At the same time, Indian environmentalism highlights its veneration for Hindu religious ethos that act as a guiding force for domestic activists, but which also exude communal and authoritative tendencies to create greater shocks for southern domestic environmentalists. Examining these varied underpinnings helps conceptualize, neatly, the diverse

Indian polity in terms of its unique subaltern needs especially when TANs and neocolonial framings enter these dynamics.

Postcolonial framings

The colonial process is, partly, shaped by cultural colonialism that aims to create a docile and unresisting minority population. This section, broadly, examines the colonial dynamics of the Indian historical and contemporary context and then, narrowly, situates the same within the transnational advocacy sector. It discusses how postcolonial theory formulates an understanding for the theoretical framework of this research study and advocates for the decolonization of the transnational advocacy environmental sector in India.

Colonial origins

The British colonial rule subjected the Indian state to systematic cultural disintegration, social inequality, and racial exclusion. It controlled India's land and polity for over 300 years (Tharoor 2016). In doing so, the colonial empire eradicated local values and cultural traditions intrinsic to India's social identity. This could help fulfill the British capitalistic agenda of 'divide and rule' (Shiva 1993). For example, the East India Company (EIC) engaged in largescale foresting programs depleting approximately 50 per cent of the Indian forest area (Grove 2002: 54). The Indian railway system shipped this deforested wood to England for the shipbuilding of the Royal Navy and Company Marine (Guha 1983). This system of colonial trade between the Indian state and England along with the 1878 Act[3] forbade indigenous people from accessing their resources. This also caused massive deforestation, the extinction of the state's flora and fauna and it also led to the marginalization of the tribal population. Additionally, the new forest reserve system prevented hunters from accessing traditional resources (Grove 2002) which was a major violation of the pre-colonial act that prescribed the tribal populations as "free men owning the means of production" (DeSilva et al 1979). This loss of control over forests reserves urged indigenous communities to oppose the forest laws and collectively form resistance against state actors. As a result, in 1916, the state de-reserved the forests but continued to impose tight restrictions on the access and management of forest resources (Guha 1983: 1885).

Post-independence in 1947, civil society developed skepticism against the global North's advancements towards India. The colonial trauma of the past and postcolonial recovery programs failed to provide healing and reparations for imperial hubris. Domestic activists would acknowledge the ill-effects of western influence and repression, but they continued to struggle with their ideas of global solidarity and transnational unity. Young (2014: 183-92) states that there are 'five faces of oppression' within social movements masked under the garb of exploitation, oppression, marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural imperialism. Young deduces that such narratives have been pervasive in everyday advocacy discourses because of the interactions formed between dominant actors and their counterparts in social group settings. This helps form the normative conceptualization of movements, their social interactions with external actors and the differences formed between them. These invisible complex notions also normalized oppression and naturalized the process of marginalization in southern spaces (Young 2014). Thus, while domestic NGOs sought to build alliances between the global North and South, their experiences with historical trauma and unresolved grief perpetuated the problem of transnational formation and global integration within the international system, thus, pushing minority groups further to the margins.

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[3] The 1878 Act demarcated forest reserves separately between the local rulers and tribal populations. While the government and British forces controlled a majority of the forest reserves, the tribal community and peasants were stripped of these basic resources violating their rights in forest areas.

Tracing (neo)colonialism

The surge of environmental movements in the 1980s intensified governmental repression on the NGO sector. In turn, domestic activists began reaching out to the global North for campaign-related support as philanthropic and corporate organizations refrained from supporting NGO endeavours. As a response, domestic advocacies not only allied with northern NGOs, but they also juxtaposed their campaign goals alongside the interests of their northern partners. Southern advocacies conditioned themselves to believe that northern NGOs were reliable and dependable such that they would help them improve the environmental conditions of the state. The subaltern 'other' identified itself as 'traditional', 'irrational' and 'depraved' while identifying the northern 'self' as 'rational', 'mature' and 'normal' (Said 1979: 48). Domestic activists perceived northern advocacies as beneficiaries for their movements and relied on them for material and financial assistance that would help effectively lobby and mobilize the masses. These impressions helped govern their understanding about 'the self' vis-à-vis 'the other' where domestic advocacies were deemed as poor, deprived, and disoriented while northern NGOs were regarded as, resourceful, benevolent, and sympathetic.

W.E.B Du Bois (1903) referred to these inferiorized images as 'double consciousness'. The "sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois 1903: 45). Double consciousness expounded on the psychological impact of being subordinated and colonized in an oppressive society where African Americans also looked at themselves through the prism of the racist white society (Du Bois 1903). This term expanded to other experiences of social inequality such as women living in patriarchal systems. Du Bois acknowledges this 'twoness' of the self-other, North-South, orient-occident, and core-periphery to highlight how domestic actors such as indigenous activists are informed of their role and manner of participation in advocacy structures that are resource-deprived and in need of northern NGOs to provide aid allowing themselves to behave as subordinates whilst being governed by their beneficiaries above. This led an understanding for oppression and marginalization where 'otherness' created segregation, exclusion, and social divisions as it sought to erase subaltern experiences, interpretations, and responses for being 'irrelevant' and 'different' (Said 1978: 48). This also perpetuated a culture of subordination that, deliberately, made invisible the social identities of southern domestic activists. But, meanwhile, it also recognized the oppressor's version of subaltern culture and sociopolitical contexts.

Other postcolonial scholars focus on the critical evaluation of the 'self'. Academics (Krishna 2013; Muppidi 2004, 2012; Roy 2004; and Seth 2013) unpack the Indian state to deduce the same duality it shares with northern powers regarding its neocolonial agenda. They argue that the Indian state is no different from the global North as it adopts the same oppressive posture as that of northern powers regarding its treatment and conditioning of the citizenry. This is manifested through various forms of subjugation, plundering of natural resources, and hyper-capitalism. The intent of these state actors is profit maximization and minimization of costs. Simultaneously, the Indian state also advocates for decolonization by condemning TANs for their 'anti-national' and 'anti-development' campaigns that prohibit India from fully achieving economic progress and development in the state. In this light, the state has been able to remain deeply vested in decolonial ideologues (Roy 2004) making India, both victim of and contributor to neocolonial problems as it, paradoxically, adopts the very same posture as that of the West while continuing to critique the global North for its neocolonial interests. For example, Muppidi (2004) and Roy (2004) describe how the Indian state fell into the trap of becoming a hegemonic oppressor the first time after the *Pokhran* nuclear tests in 1998. By conducting these tests, India sent a strong signal within the international community that it was a rising power and should be respectfully dealt with. But earlier it had reproached superpowers such as the US, UK, and Russia for expanding their nuclear program as they were trying to acquire hegemony in the international system.

India's contradictory behavior sent mixed signals within the advocacy sector as it continued to accept foreign investments for extractive industrial projects but reprimanded and reproved TANs for funding domestic advocacy groups causing them to destabilize and disintegrate. In this light, the state became a harbinger of neocolonial oppression itself while it advocated for decoloniality and anti-oppressive practices in the state. Critical scholars such as Muppidi (2004) highlight how such actions of such social actors can have constitutive or transformative effects on democratic participants as globalization is understood in different ways by different actors depending on their spatiotemporal locations.

The neocolonial project in TANs

Transnational scholarship does not fully problematize the impact of colonialism and contemporary forms of neocolonialism on TANs to the extent that it demands a halt in transnational setups within the global South. It fails to effectively offer resolve for the problems of marginalization, racial exclusion, violence, and otherness that results from neocolonial conquests and subjugation in transnational partnerships to advance the need for 'self-governance', 'self-sufficiency', and 'simple living' in the global South. Although transnational studies encourage greater recognition for inclusivity, indigenous empowerment, and legitimize subaltern narratives within advocacy setups (Banks et al 2015; Bob 2005; Choudry et al 2013; De Waal 2015), there is limited engagement about follow-ups and further action. For instance, Banks et al (2015) advocate for the use of traditional knowledge systems within southern advocacies to improve domestic-international connections and 'build bridges' between them (2015: 708). But there is no classification of neocolonial problems that arise from these associations or additional insight into the grievance redressal mechanisms needed and the requirement for decolonizing epistemologies within such advocacy setups.

Non-western scholars (Jalali 2013; Khagram et al 2002) are also more concerned about the transformative role of these networks without delineating with their challenges and identifying neocolonial pressures that constitute power and inequality in these relationships. While recognizing the drawbacks of donor influence on social movements in the domestic realm, Jalali states that northern actors do not have a "hidden agenda to undermine movements" and that most of their controversial activities are "unintended effects of donor intervention when domestic groups rely on those outside their constituencies" (2013: 59-60). Similarly, Khagram et al (2002) maintain the importance for TANs in southern quarters because of resource scarcity in the domestic NGO sector. Khagram et al explain how southern domestic advocacies create complex conditions in the form of oppressive state structures that inhibit TANs from performing well (2002). In turn, these academic narratives dismiss issues of marginalization and oppression on domestic actors that are within transnational frameworks and continue to advocate for TANs in the southern region pushing activists further to the margins of the state.

Consequently, while academics refer to TANs as the ‘sweethearts of development’ (Kamat 2004; Lewis 2005; Murray et al 2011) a few other scholars critique transnational advocacies for their active role in destabilizing domestic advocacy processes (Bano 2008; Krishanraj 2003; Ottaway 2000; Petrescu 2000;). Petrescu argues that in Romania donor-funded NGOs “have lost their tie to the people” as they are too busy writing grant proposals, “rather than organizing a protest rally at a polluting factory to raise people’s awareness” (2000: 233-4). Ottaway also highlights that foreign-funded NGOs in South Africa have “virtually no social roots” (2000: 82). In Pakistan, TANs fail to engage in community mobilization and other forms of democratic participation (Bano 2008: 2307-9). Krishanraj (2003) states that in India extensive NGO-ization supported by northern advocacies have replaced domestic activists from being assertive and active to being dormant and ineffective (2003: 4536). Jenkins (2001) examines how donor aid has detrimental effects on domestic activists as their modus operandi is inherently flawed. Jalali also analyzes how TANs in Europe and Central Asia that propelled the ‘people’s movements’ could not be applied to other states because of their strict domestic-international allyship programs (2013: 58).

In such cases, it has been found that TANs are required to be nonconfrontational, apolitical, and program oriented (Jalali 2013). Other critics argue that TANs are elitist instruments (Banks et al 1997; Mohan et al 2000; Swidler et al 2009), “ladles in the global soup kitchen” (Commins 2000) that fail to ameliorate domestic conditions or achieve any of their stipulated southern objectives (Easterly et al 2017; Mansuri et al 2004). Scholars also note how TANs lead to movement decay in southern spaces where domestic advocacies are often co-opted by their transnational partner (Brulle et al 2005). Brulle et al cite the US’ environmental movement as one such example where domestic actors integrated within the transnational program of their advocacy partner (2005). In turn, the transformative, generative, and aspirational narratives professed by TANs are often substituted by complex and intangible forces that alienate domestic advocacies from their objectives and make them unsuccessful in advocating their cause.

Despite these varied critiques, the scholarship still fails to adequately factor in neocolonial and Eurocentric problems within the transnational discourse. More so, it indistinctly sympathizes with TANs and masks its negative implications for being minuscule and insignificant. Jalali (2013: 68) asserts that transnational problems are unintentional even though in the long run they may harm social movements. On the other hand, Cox (1977) raises the issue of whether ‘intention’ is a significant discourse to be had in academia because intentions may sometimes be proven irrelevant if desired outcomes can be achieved. Cox asserts that “the real meaning of an ideological statement is revealed more by actions than by words or intentions” (1977: 394). The underlying notion is that if intentions are irrelevant then unintentional behaviour can be subject to modification, and which may lead to differed preferential outcomes. Additionally, Jalali argues that TANs weaken southern domestic advocacies unintentionally by creating resource dependency, needling domestic laws, and perpetuating a free-rider problem (2013: 60-6). But, in her view, TANs should still be bolstered because of their ability to lead southern domestic advocacies to fruition in the long run. As such, Jalali fails to analyze how these inadvertent actions can lead to harmful consequences such as exploitation and marginalization of domestic activists.

The aforementioned scholarship helps identify the negative role of TANs in global solidarity models that, inversely, impact domestic advocacies in the global South. It highlights how the notion of self-governance is eliminated from these discussions and dismisses opportunities where the grassroots can lead, govern, and vocalize their own issues. It also analyzes the growth of interdependency within these models persuading domestic activists to, increasingly, rely on northern actors rather than being told that they can develop the necessary mechanisms themselves to resolve their problems and institute better environmental policies and practices in the state. Scholars (Bob 2005; Jordan et al 2000; and Mac Sheoin 2012) also examine the role of agency in the construction of indigenous environmentalism. In doing so, they point out how cultural imperialism stems from these hegemonic power structures and constitutes issues of northern influence on indigenous actors vis-à-vis controlling their cultural systems and traditional practices. They tease out issues of everyday othering, racial discrimination, and their further marginalization in society. They also state that transnational coalitions formed out of hyper globalization exacerbate divergences between the global North and South as opposed to consolidating them into one unifying entity that improves the socioenvironmental conditions of marginally oppressed activists in the state (Bob 2005; Mac Sheoin 2012).

Currently, most of the academic literature refers to TANs in an unapologetic tone alluding that past mistakes can be rectified by northern NGOs and urging domestic activists to incorporate 'cooperative differentiation' (Hathaway et al 1997) and 'flexibility' (Florini 2000) in their transnational engagements with the global North. This is because resource provisions are a vital component for southern advocacies to succeed. They also note that southern NGOs and movements must be 'well established' first for TANs to produce desirable results (Bandy et al 2005). Keeping an 'open-mind' in transnationalism that caters to individual differences without targeting the global North for its failures may also help reduce domestic-international partnership issues in the long run (Khagram et al 2002).

Other transnational scholars that acknowledge the pervasiveness of neocolonialism within TANs and fiercely critique it for its debilitating role in southern quarters (Barnett 2016; Bob 2005; De Waal 2015; and Eriksson Baaz 2005) fail to provide effective recourse from transnational problems. Instead, they highlight how the effects of TANs for some can be 'ambiguous' (Bob 2005) and at times 'sinless' and 'defensible' (Barnett 2016). As such, they do not recommend evading TANs entirely but to 'reclaim' it within the transnational space by reinvigorating domestic and international actors (De Waal 2015). "The task of reclaiming activism consists of returning that primacy to national actors, with Western activists obliged to act in a spirit of self-critical solidarity for effective and ethical advocacy" (De Waal 2015: 8). But these recommendations, merely, act as band-aid solutions for aggrieved advocacy challenges in the global South as they do not fully address the problem of neocolonialism and Eurocentrism that domestic activists continue to grapple with. This is troubling because TANs are still being envisaged as an important condition for conducting advocacy such that an alternate vision without the role of transnational actors cannot be perceived.

This project utilizes a critical approach to analyze these arguments considering the risks and challenges associated with TANs surrounding the oppression and marginalization of domestic activists. It investigates the contemporary realm but also examines the colonial origins and neocolonial framings of TANs that perpetuate sociopolitical and environmental problems for southern activism. As a critical pedagogy within the transnational scholarship, this project will engage with all aspects of the transnational process and not selectively nitpick positive attributes to endorse TANs. It will help theorize a decolonial approach within TANs utilizing *Gandhian* precepts to synthesize and integrate indigenous ideologues that have been, conveniently, erased from transnational literature. It allows activists to rethink subaltern activism from the lens of constitutive injustice and racial bigotry. Young (2011) argues that southern movements should focus their attention on issues of domination and oppression instead of delineating with narratives of distribution, justice, and equity (2011: 20). This helps elevate social group differences and lays importance on what matters most — building social relations, undermining oppression, and acknowledging that some groups are more privileged than others. Jordan et al (2000) also advocate for the need for political responsibility to clarify representation and accountability in TANs.

Thus, utilizing a critical lens in this study will help highlight the manner in which socio-politically constructed norms are perceived and practiced in the global South delimiting opportunities for indigenous growth and empowerment in the Indian environmental advocacy sector. It helps contextualize historical and social conditions to assist domestic activists in leading and governing their own discourses. It offers the necessary toolkit through the formulation of a transnational framework for domestic activists to organize their activities cultivating dialogue not only about the opportunities for transnationalism but also the challenges and risks involved whilst adopting a transnational course for environmental advocacy in the global South. It also advances existing knowledge by analyzing neocolonial problems that have been absent from subaltern advocacy structures. Berman states that "in order to understand the developer's tragedy, we must judge his vision of the world not only by what it sees — by the immense new horizons it opens up for mankind — but also by what it does not see: what human realities it refuses to look at, what potentialities it cannot bear to face" (1983: 68). Critical theory sheds light on the process of veiling the precarious elements of transnational assimilations between North-South actors, exposing hidden biases, and reinforcing the need for decoloniality and reformation within pedagogical practice.

Gaps in the literature

The literature (Bandy et al 2005; Barnett 2016; Bob 2005; De Waal 2015; and Eriksson Baaz 2005; Florini 2002; Hathaway et al 1997; Jalali 2013; Khagram et al 2002) recognizes the inherent flaws present within TANs but largely, still makes the case for transnationalism in the global South because of its overarching opportunities. By leveraging the perks of TANs and selectively critiquing networks, these scholars perceive transnational advocacies as the dominant force in the southern NGO sector. Some scholars also mitigate the problems of TANs as one-offs, issue-centric, and a case-to-case basis (Florini 2000; Khagram et al 2002). Khagram et al (2002) analyze the different outcomes of the *Hirakud* and the NBA river damming movements based on their transnational linkages. He states how the *Hirakud* movement failed due to its reliance on 'domestic structures' while the NBA was effective due to its 'international focus' and ability to ally with northern activists who shared common values and interests regarding their socioenvironmental ideologies. This set of literature dismisses transnational problems for being irrelevant, recommending that southern domestic advocacies need to improve their local conditions and networking capabilities to facilitate better transnational engagement with the global North. In doing so, they are advised to incorporate 'cooperative differentiation' (Hathaway et al 1997) i.e., displaying outward harmony whilst negotiating differences privately. This allows them to "maintain a public face of solidarity towards movement targets but differentiate themselves in communication with constituencies" (Hathaway et al 1997: 67-8).

The literature also narrowly engages with the implications for governmental hostility on domestic advocacy groups as state actors target TANs. There is limited mention of governmental repression and its impact on domestic advocacy structures where the prospect for fragmentation and deterioration is high on these groups as they engage with transnational partners. Governmental repression not only subdues domestic and international activists in states, but it also cultivates a culture of fear and paranoia within the advocacy sector restricting the future growth of domestic NGOs and disintegrating the ethos of movement-building in the state. This has not been sufficiently unpacked by academics and deserves attention to assist the process of understanding TANs and building stronger cross-border connections in the global South.

Finally, the scholarship fails to offer effective, plausible solutions to ensure domestic NGOs can sustain themselves in southern states where transnational actors play a pivotal role in dis- or empowering domestic activists. Despite deliberating the existing challenges of TANs, there is limited mention of coherent explanations for the formulation of an integrated framework that can analyze the dynamic interplay between domestic and international actors within these tight advocacy arrangements. The literature also lacks sufficient analyses regarding the nuances of specific domestic contexts vis-à-vis transnationalism. Southern environments movements have their own independent challenges and weaknesses heterogeneous to that of other states in the global South. While their dealings with northern activists are dissimilar than others it is critically important to gauge these unique and distinct settings for effective problem solving of aggrieved working conditions.

Research contribution

This study responds to the neocolonial and Eurocentric problem present within transnational advocacy structures. It deconstructs the mainstream thinking process, and dominant narratives surrounding TANs that reinforce the commodification of indigenous organizations, augment racial inequality, and hierarchical power structures present within cross-border advocacies. It avoids providing generic solutions for transnational problems by identifying loopholes to work with norther powers within transnational structures. Instead, it exhibits the varied independent challenges of the Indian NGO sector to amplify indigenous knowledge systems and activists' right to self-determination by entirely evading TANs. Besides examining issues of power, hierarchy, and racial inequality, a postcolonial theoretical framework is utilized to help present opportunities for shared collective thinking, repatriation, and healing. It also recognizes the need for decolonization through appropriate representation and justice systems.

This study is significant in the field of transnational studies, postcolonialism, and environmental political science because of the dearth of academic scholarship on the subject. It examines transnational behavior in the Indian advocacy sector to deduce some of the unique challenges posed by TANs on domestic activists. It highlights the interplay of domestic and international activists to discern how neocolonial activities are pervasive in these exchanges. It also deconstructs the dominant notion that TANs offer more opportunities for southern domestic advocacies and provides a rethinking for the unique challenges and threats looming at domestic activists through issues of state repression and northern dominance that undermine the indigeneity and southernness of southern actors in TANs. An in-depth analysis of TANs in the global South using specific examples from past and present Indian environmental movements dispels some of the fallacies associated with TANs that they, holistically, empower and uplift domestic activists.

Finally, the study formulates an advocacy coalition framework with the intention to close these gaps. The framework integrates insights from postcolonial theory and Gandhi's philosophical precepts that avow 'self-reflexivity', 'self-reliance', and 'simple living' as the key approaches to not only conducting domestic advocacy in the state but also take on more robustly western oppression and neocolonial exploitation i.e., a by-product of transnationalism. The framework utilizes these concepts to demonstrate that *Gandhian* ideas can be employed to better understand the varied ways in which domestic advocacies are exploited and exposed to neocolonialism and Eurocentrism by state and northern actors. It informs domestic activists about the effective approaches for conducting advocacy in the global South suggesting the building of momentum against the FCRA, fostering intersectional ties between other domestic NGOs and movements, invigorating linkages between South-South TANs, resisting northern transnational relationships whilst boosting global solidarity. The study provides an opportunity for activists as well as scholars of transnational studies to interrogate the conventional standards of domestic-international partnerships and encourage professionals to recognize atypical approaches within the transnational scholarship to improve strategic decision making before considering transnational partnerships with the global North.

Chapter 4
State Repression

Introduction

This chapter discusses the relationship between the Indian state and TANs. It analyzes the moods, temperament, character, responses, and actions of the Indian government whilst dealing with TANs. It reveals the varied interrelations of the state vis-à-vis TANs and other locally funded NGOs that share an equal degree of intolerance and opposition from the state. It also gauges how the same state can act as a facilitator and a destabilizer for different NGO activities. It historically maps the actions previous and modern-day government(s) have taken against transnational activity and deduces their explanations for doing so. While TANs face greater governmental repression and are critiqued for slowing down India's economic growth, the deceleration of TANs is perceived as the government's attempt to decolonize and indigenize the Indian advocacy sector that is at peril through western neocolonial and Eurocentric practices.

This chapter also analyzes how the Indian state uses various regulatory laws and policies such as the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) to subjugate dissenting TANs. It situates how the FCRA has evolved over time and used by the two main Indian political camps i.e., the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) and the *Indian National Congress* (INC). It historically maps this evolving relationship shared between different governments and the NGO sector since the 1970s through the development and codification of the FCRA law that is subject to debate because the very same governments that instituted the law have also bypassed it. This poses a challenge for TANs that seek to influence policy effectively but are conditioned by an inflexible government that creates an unconducive environment for them to campaign in. Using research participant accounts and various case examples, this study analyzes how state repression inversely impacts transnational environmental NGOs not only in terms of lobbying, mass mobilization, and policy influence but also with respect to weakening the foundation of domestic activist groups and activists in the state. This is done so by uprooting indigenous visions and goals of participating in democratic processes that have been guaranteed to them by the Indian Constitution[4] but are neglected in the wake of national interest.

Examining these state narratives through research participant interviews provides insight into the eminent challenges faced by domestic advocacies in traditional TANs between the global North and South and which are, primarily, seeking to uplift and empower southern activists from exploitation and marginalization. Participant inputs help gauge how regulations and organizational structures impact the relationship of the state with the civil society sector as domestic NGOs face governmental crackdowns and closures. Domestic activists also face disempowerment and are demotivated to continue their fight for environmental justice and transformation in the state because of intense governmental repression. The existing transnational literature explores some of these problems, but it fails to analyze the long-term implications of governmental repression on domestic advocacy structures that hope to engage with transnational actors for a redressal of their problems but seem to diminish or disintegrate because of state repression instead. In effect, this chapter reveals these narratives that play a significant role in understanding North-South equations and helps fill this knowledge gap in the literature by exploring the varied dimensions of setbacks experienced by southern domestic activists vis-s-vis state repression.

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[4] Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India guarantees citizens to 'freedom of speech and expression'. This includes their right to directly assemble and participate in peaceful demonstrations against the policies of the state. They are also permitted to form union and associations and freely move around the territory of India.

Governmental (in)tolerance towards TANs

The Indian government shares a varied relationship with the NGO sector that indicates its neocolonial posture towards dissenting domestic activists in the state. This is exhibited through the systematic curtailment of NGO activity, removal of democratic participants, and the expansion of the state's own neoliberal capitalist agenda. At the same time, the Indian government also maintains a benevolent posture towards NGOs that recognizes the importance of the civil society sector for India's democracy. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) states that "NGOs are essential for the extended work of governments, as feedback and as harbingers of change, and are vital for economic and social systems to thrive" (Intelligence Bureau 2014: 2). In this light, the government acknowledges the importance of NGOs in the state, but it also undermines their ability to explore opportunities for socioecological transformation and advancement in the state. For this purpose, the government has instituted government organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs) that applaud the government's policy initiatives. GONGOs such as the Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES), and Centre of Excellence in Environmental Economics (CoE), among others receive greater leeway from the government as they avail tax incentives and subsidies from the state. They are also directly involved in the policymaking decisions of the state as they corroborate with governments on various sociopolitical and environmental issues. GONGOs receive governmental aid without experiencing intense governmental intervention. This allows them to develop financial and administrative autonomy unlike TANs that experience greater state intervention in their advocacy-related work (Participant 1).

The state also persuades other domestic NGOs to co-opt with the government and further their political interests. This entails remaining nonconfrontational with the government and endorsing the state's ideas and policies on sustainable economic development in India. NGOs such as the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) are not instituted by the Indian government, but they are homogenized to the extent that they provide research information and scientific knowledge to the state to develop relevant environmental policies for implementation. These NGOs refrain from critiquing pre-existing governmental policies and programs. They encourage governments to consider mitigation and adaptation mechanisms but do not contest the approach previous or contemporary governments have taken to reduce environmental challenges in the state. They also do not stage protests to push back against ecologically damaging developmental programs such as dams and mines. Instead, TERI focuses on innovative research-based solutions that the state may optimize and implement through regular consultation. On the other hand, the CSE claims to engage in 'knowledge-based activism' that involves research and communication of challenging climate issues. It also raises concerns and urges the policy implementation of their proposed solutions.

While some NGOs are co-opted by the government to avoid state intervention in their matters, TANs adopt a critical posture to challenge pre-existing policies but face backlash from the government for doing so. Most TANs avoid co-opting with the government and political parties because of the "fear that it would undermine their authority" (Jalali 2013: 62). However, there are also a host of NGOs that refuse to accept transnational donations due to the excessive FCRA compliances involved. Other advocacy groups such as the *Affected Citizens of Teest*a (ACT) reject transnational aid because of their concerns regarding the FCRA amendments in 2019 surrounding increased governmental repression on TAN activity in the state. The ACT has expressed its discontent with traditional TANs in the global North and South stating they lead to issues of domination and subjugation. Participant 14 states: "it is very difficult to comply with the FCRA mandate these days while trying to raise independent critical inquiries on climate-related issues because of the government's intolerance towards foreign-funded NGOs. Instead, domestic NGOs like us have decided to stay local in order to retain our indigenous voice in Sikkim". Other environmental movements such as the *Pathalgadi* and the *Forests Rights* movements have also followed suit by resisting transnational assistance.

On the other hand, traditional TANs between the global North and South are independent, sovereign organizations that transfer material and financial resources from developed states in the global North to southern domestic advocacies that are struggling to realize their environmental goals and ambitions. Transnational assistance helps them combat intense governmental coercion that seeks to diminish indigenous voices and destroy their civil liberties. Being supported by northern powers means that TANs can critically evaluate governmental policies and processes and invoke sufficient pressure on inflexible governments to institute effective environmental norms in the state. TANs premise themselves on global solidarity models that unify, culturally assimilate, and motivate southern activists to emphasize their oppression and marginalization in advocacy processes. However, the government continues to perceive TANs as politically interfering, unaccountable, and lacking transparency, regulation, information disclosure, and social responsibility (Baur et al 2011).

TANs have created an 'anti-establishment' and 'anti-India' image for themselves by focusing on disrupting the status quo. They grant greater autonomy to southern domestic activists and help them to uproot existing developmental structures in the global South through foreign aid (Intelligence Bureau 2014). The government perceives these endeavors as neocolonial attempts to undermine the role of the state and shift focus to nonstate actors in governance systems. This impacts the state's reputation in the international system and challenges their authority as democratically elected representatives. TANs also perpetuate the fear of nonstate actors eroding state heads from positions of power that governments foresee as intrusive and debilitating to their continuation as political establishments in the state.

Thus, the Indian state imposes various repressive tactics to contain dissenting TANs from carrying out their campaign-related activities. This includes various provocative measures such as raids, suspensions/cancellations of NGO registration licenses, surveillance, freezing of bank accounts, beatings, and incarcerations. In addition, the state uses covert methods to subdue campaigners. For example, domestic activists in the *Kudankulam* anti-nuclear power plant campaign in the state of *Tamil Nadu* were engaged in widespread inter-state protests against the construction of the *Kudankulam* nuclear power plant that threatened to uproot their lives and livelihoods causing internal displacement and potential health risks and hazards to the native population of *Tamil Nadu*. In turn, former Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa deliberately created power shortages in 2012 to force the *Adivasis* community into conceding to the construction of the nuclear power plant. However, "after facing acute power shortages for nearly four months and 20 hours a day certain sections of the *Adivasis* community yielded to the government's proposal of the construction of the nuclear reactor in the area" (Participant 5). Additionally, the *Tuticorin* Multipurpose Social Service Society (TMSSS), *Tuticorin* Dioceses Association (TDA), and the People's Education for Action and Community Empowerment and Good Vision Charitable Trust were also charged for violating the FCRA. This resulted in the government freezing their bank accounts for funding the *Kudankulam* protests (FP Staff 2012).

Additionally, Participant 2 highlights how the central government has been diluting environmental laws in India:

> "In 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited New York and stated that he would scrap all previous laws passed by former governments. Later, he set up a committee with TSR Subramaniam i.e., the High-Level Committee that evaluated the relevance of all environmental and forest protection laws in India. The aim was to dilute environmental laws and the foundational principles upon which these laws are established. Following this, the government pardoned industrial corporations from paying a dedicated carbon tax on their carbon footprint. It is evident through this example that the government's intent is not only to dilute Indian environmental laws but to also eliminate all the foundational principles upon which these laws have been established. The state supports business corporations allowing them to self-regulate themselves, but it reproaches TANs for their foreign affiliations. This is hypocritical and unequitable and unethical."

Similar repressive approaches have also been adopted by foreign governments in Australia, Russia (Matejova et al 2018), Ethiopia (Dupuy et al 2015), Mexico (Andrews 2011), Romania (Petrescu 2000), Pakistan (Bano 2008), Bangladesh (Rahman 2006) and the US (Brulle 2000). The attempt has been to prevent nonconforming TANs from raising critical inquiries about the state. South Africa, China, and the US use sophisticated technological measures in the form of bugging, hacking, informal interviews, infiltration, and internet trolls to identify NGO vulnerabilities and subdue them (Rekosh 2017: 30). In the Indian case, 'organizations of political nature' that accept financial assistance from abroad and are 'likely to prejudicially affect public interest' are targeted by the government (AccountAble 31). However, the definition of 'political' and 'public and economic interests' remains ambiguous and were contested in the 1976, 2011, and 2020 FCRA amendments. These measures impact TAN activities, its stated objectives, political affiliations, and programs undertaken. It also provides ample opportunity for the government to attack TANs as "clauses remain overly broad, vague, and erroneous" (Participant 6).

Historically mapping state intervention in India

Following the Emergency declaration[5] in 1975, former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's government became vigilant about political parties and their alliances with northern powers (AccountAble 31). Advocacy-related activities were also gauged with the same yardstick as that of political parties in the opposition. NGOs and political party leaders that were critical of the state's developmental policies were considered to be working against national interest and referred to as 'agents of the CIA', 'anti-national' and 'neocolonial' seeking to keep India underdeveloped (Rekosh 2017: 12). In 1980, the Indian government's concern for foreign political activity grew with tighter legislative norms imposed democratic participants curtailing their right to freedom of speech, expression, and assembly in the state.

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[5] The National Emergency was declared in 1975 to control 'internal disturbances' caused by the general public that were accusing Indira Gandhi of electoral malpractices and demanding a presidential system of governance. This led to civil unrest because of rising unemployment rates in the state which resulted in the declaration of a National Emergency. This included the suspension of all civil liberties, canceling elections, imprisoning political opponents to the Indira Gandhi regime, and censoring the press. This was the Indian government's first lurch to authoritarianism in an independent India where civil society was targeted such that gross human rights violations were committed in the form of mass forced sterilization campaigns, abuse, and torture of detainees across the state's prison cells.

Participant 1 states that, "foreign activity in the advocacy sector grew after the1980s as domestic NGOs struggled to finance themselves and northern activists felt the need for greater mobilization in the global South". Thus, northern NGOs extended their solidarity to build campaigns by providing financial assistance and demonstrating their sympathetic support and recognition for the emerging sociopolitical issues at the global stage. In turn, the Indian government viewed these exchanges as an attack on national sovereignty and state power (Participant 1). Nonstate actors started being perceived as a direct threat to government's voter turnout during election time. TANs had a growing influence on the public that questioned the power, authority, and governance of the Indian regime as they felt increasingly undermined by the surge of these newfound advocacy networks in the state. As a result, approximately 100,000 civil society activists were arrested, and the judicial system was suspended for two years between 1975 and 1977 (Prakash 2019). Additionally, freedom of the press was curtailed, and extra-constitutional powers were imposed allowing the government to further subjugate socioecological campaigns and rights-based movements that were political in nature in India. It was alleged that NGOs were inciting foreign conspiracy that resulted in the curtailment of all civil liberties of democratic participants and who were being treated as foreign conspirators in the state (Participant 6).

In 1991, the state aided economic expansion through its liberalization policies to stimulate growth through import-substitution models and new technocratic leadership (Kohli 1989). Foreign investments were encouraged to revive India's trade and investment sector as foreign direct investments (FDI) increased India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and sustained its economic growth model. However, this also revealed India's duality as it imposed stringent regulations on financial flows from the northern NGOs to southern advocacy groups but accepted foreign investments for extractive purposes in the state (Participant 1). On one hand, TANs were subjected to oppression and violence because of their neocolonial and Eurocentric posture in India but, at the same time, foreign investments for industrial production were seen as endeavors to protect the national interest of the state despite the environmental damages and degradation they caused. Such programs threatened to cause further marginalization and the social exclusion of minority groups in the state — a direct correlation to neocolonialism and Eurocentrism — that reinforces capitalism, and neoliberal globalization through the subjugation and exploitation of indigenous people in the global South. But the Indian government still launched these unsustainable developmental projects for profit maximization and capital-oriented growth.

The INC projected TANs in a negative light. In 2010, former Home Affairs minister P. Chidambaram stated that, "regulations were framed to legitimately allow charitable, social, educational, medical activity to serve public purpose and not foreign money to dominate social and political discourses in India" (Agarwal 2010: 208). Chidambaram asserted that the philanthropic and corporate sectors within India provided sufficient money for charitable and social causes such that if domestic NGOs required foreign assistance, they would have to route it through appropriate regulatory channels instituted by the Indian government (Chidambaram 2010:

274). Similarly, the BJP noted its skepticism towards transnational activity in the state. In 2006, Narendra Modi who then was member of the Gujarat Legislative Assembly stated that TANs were another form of foreign conspiracy that established NGOs, commissioned articles, developed a PR image through the Indian media, and then procured funds from foreign states to build a negative image of the state in the international system (Rajalakshmi 2014).

Thus, the INC and the BJP, during their periods of governance, have aimed to deter domestic activists from forming alliances with international advocacy groups in the NGO sector. These political parties have, thereby, lauded the opportunities for charitable funding and coalition-building through domestic sources but discredited all forms of transnational activity in the NGO sector. Post-2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi exacerbated these concerns by alluding to the 'vicious' display (Rajalakshmi 2014) of transnationalism in the advocacy sector. In 2016, Modi highlighted that these networks aimed to overthrow him and his government. Modi's abject disregard for TANs also stems from some of the earlier ideological standpoints on transnationalism. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) stresses the importance of 'Hindu nationalism' within everyday practices in civil society (Singh 2019). The alliance maintains that there should be a rescription of public thought and action towards the *Sangh Parivar*[6] by establishing a world view and Indian ethos surrounding the "promotion of cultural nationalism, valorization of religion, language, and history to redefine the public sphere" (Singh 2019). This can be achieved by "demolishing the existing consensus about the normative framework of the public sphere and Indian democracy" (Behar 2019: 412-13) and channeling efforts to promote Hindu communal ideas about healthy NGO and environmental practices in India.

Sharma (2012: 24-47) examines these narratives by referring to them as the "saffronization of green movements" in India. The colour saffron is usually associated with right-wing extremist political parties and refers to the implementation of Hindu nationalism in the state. Such environmental activists and propagators of this *Hindutva*[7] ideologue invoke conservative notions of religion and culture to govern environmental advocacy-related discourses. Sharma explains how Hindu precepts of *Vedism* and *Brahmanism* are embedded in environmental movements such as Anna Hazare's campaign in *Ralegan Siddhi* in the state of Maharashtra (Sharma 2012: 64-84). Hazare utilized *Hindutva* concepts to formulate dialogues and exercises on environmental conservation, sustainability, individual responsibility, and consumer practice and choices. He urged domestic activists to abstain from alcohol, adopt vegetarianism, abstinence, and lead ascetic lifestyles to fully cognize environmentalism in its most virtuous state (Sharma 2012: 64-80). Sharma (2012) also states that this intermeshing of religion and spiritualism with environmental philosophies for protection and conservation of nature reflects a communal and authoritarian discourse within contemporary environmental politics and gives more eminence to religious, cultural tenets than environmental ones.

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[6] The Sangh Parivar is a Hindu nationalist organization led by far-right political parties such as the BJP, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS), *Vishva Hindu Parishad* (VHP) and the *Bharatiya Kishan Sangh* (BKS).

[7] *Hindutva* is the political ideology of the Hindu far right extremist groups in India that is represented by the NDA. It seeks to promote Hindu religious tenets and traditions within the sociocultural political environment of the state. This includes the projection of the Hindu identity at the national stage. It also seeks to replace secularism with Hinduism and represent Pan-India and the diaspora as *Akhand Bharat* (i.e., united India) encompassing Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Tibet.

In addition to the religious discourse, casteist symbolisms further problematize this issue of communal tension and intractability between domestic activists and also create ambiguity about environmental conservation in advocacy terms (Sharma 2002). This may shift the focus from environmental concerns to religious and caste-based issues. Sharma (2017) analyzes this problem of upper-caste Brahmanical Hindu ideas being integrated within Indian environmental discourses and, thus, forcing the Dalit community (i.e., at the lower stratum of the caste system) to remain at the margins. In doing so, Hindu nationalism uses religious symbolisms such as the *Narmada* and *Ganga* rivers to signify the importance and sacredness of Brahmanical notions of purity, pollution, and untouchability. Gudavarthy (2019) also exemplifies how "the current political regime in India has adopted programs such *Namame Gange* that promise to clean the Ganga River in order to re-establish the ancient pride of Hindu civilization". These "ecological determinations of caste have provided a rationalization and justification for the caste system through nature" (2017: 16).

Thus, the conservative notions of Indian environmentalism that are represented through religious and casteist doctrines illustrate the status of the lower castes vis-à-vis their interactions with the dominant, and superior Hindu Brahmanical forces. Dalits are perceived as the 'eco-enemy' because they are identified as unclean, impure, and filthy (Gudavarthy 2019). This conditioning not only furthers the marginalization of the Dalit community, but it also creates an ecological imbalance between those that own natural resources and those that can access it. As structural forms of untouchability, and oppression perpetuate within these spaces, a sense of loss and deprivation disempowers domestic actors and helps in the creation of a pan-Hindu identity within the Indian environmental advocacy sector. The aim is to mobilize indigenous masses such that they reject western environmentalism and subscribe to this idea of adopting Hindu nationalism within their environmental narratives of conservation, sustainability, and biodiversity. These narratives also apply to TANs that are perceived as liberal constructs of western civilization that do not intermesh with the Pan-India ideology. Hindu political ideas and worldviews of environmental activism disengage with transnationalism because of its 'northerness' and 'whiteness' that ties into concepts of white supremacy and neocolonialism. These narratives caused Hukil (2019) to recommend international protection for Indian NGOs and movements against this growing Hindu nationalistic banter that further dismantles nonstate advocacy structures. This is because such ideas attempt to create mistrust about civil society in India in order to incite violence and fear in the minds of the public about affiliations between the global North and South (Kumar 2019).

In sum, state repression has been a pervasive feature in India's NGO sector. This posture is not restricted to a particular political party such as the INC or BJP governments. Participant 6 explains how the "Modi government is not exclusively intolerant towards TANs with its Hindu nationalist fervor. The INC has also instilled some of the most stringent measures to leverage national interest in the state through the introduction of the FCRA mandate in 1976 before Modi was elected in 2014". In 2010, the FCRA was amended to strategically quell the alleged anti-governmental sentiments of transnational actors. This not only reduced transnational activity, but it sought to systematically dismantle civil society structures, their ethics, ethos, and credibility as domestic and international activists' groups aimed to disrupt the status quo, offering an alternative vision for sustainable economic systems, and upholding the democratic values of the state.

Foreign Contributions (Regulation) Act (FCRA)

The INC introduced the FCRA in 1976 with the provision that NGOs could receive northern aid without facing governmental intervention should they provide full disclosure of all amounts received and expended annually (Agarwal 2014: 21). The purpose was to regulate all incoming financial assets from foreign sources to ensure transparency and accountability within civil society. In effect, the *Kudal Commission* was set up in 1982 to control and regulate TANs. In the beginning, it was tasked to examine the funding aspect of only four foreign-funded NGOs which later led to an extensive investigation of approximately 100 NGOs in the state. The Commission's research findings noted discrepancies in NGO practices stating issues of 'financial fraud and corruption' (Rajalakshmi 2014). The *Kudal Commission* report noted how foreign-funded NGOs received international monetary assistance to criticize and subdue the government's policies and programs (Rajalakshmi 2014). The Commission viewed North-South exchanges as an attack on state sovereignty and stated that the global North facilitates these anti-developmental programs in India and, thus, they should be ousted. As a result, in 1984, the FCRA was modified introducing several changes to TANs by requiring them to routinely seek registration approvals with the government. TANs were also frequently interrogated by the state for their campaign-related work to gauge their credibility and legitimacy as NGOs in the civil society sector.

Due to its initial shortcomings, the FCRA was once again amended in 2010, receiving presidential assent to subsequently come into effect on 1 May 2011 (Rajalakshmi 2014). The primary purpose of the law was to "regulate the acceptance and utilization of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality by certain individuals or associations or companies to prohibit any activities detrimental to national interest" (The Gazette of India 2011). In turn, the state gained greater control over civil society activity allowing it to regulate NGO operations and decide the scope of their participation in democratic processes such as the extent to which advocacies could campaign and protest in the state. The government could also hold NGOs accountable when they posed as a political threat to the state. Simultaneously, the state also encouraged domestic NGOs and movements to raise funds locally as opposed to seeking foreign aid and supporting western agendas (Chidambaram 2010). The FCRA was used to penalize all forms of TANs that were 'organizations of a political nature' including missionary organizations, political parties, and the media (The Gazette of India 2011: 5). TANs such as those protesting against the construction of dams, nuclear power plants, uranium mines, extractive industries, coal-fired power plants (CFPPs), genetically modified organisms (GMO), and other industrial land-related projects were also included.

India was among the few countries alongside Russia, Venezuela, and Bangladesh that invoked a complete ban on foreign funding for political activities whilst imposing the strict regulatory restrictions on TANs that sought foreign aid for election-related campaigning. These actions were not only opposed by civil society activists in India but also by international NGOs such as the UN that condemned the use of the FCRA and urged the Indian government to repeal the law (Bhatnagar 2016). In 2016, the UN Special Rapporteurs published a report that problematized the FCRA referring to it as an obstruction of "civil society's access to foreign funding, and which fails to comply with international human rights norms and standards" (UNHR 2016).

The UN 2016 report highlights the vagueness and broad usage of terms such as 'organizations of political nature', 'economic interest of the state', and 'public interest' in the FCRA. The FCRA defines these terms broadly without providing substantial clarification or a prescribed aim of their motives, allowing law enforcement agencies to investigate and lay charges on FCRA registered

NGOs that they selectively characterize as working against ‘national interest’ (Kiai 2016: 10-2). Additionally, the report reiterates that the law should refrain from using such broad and imprecise terminologies because it cannot legitimately charge NGOs under the grounds of ambiguity and ambivalence (Kiai 2016: 10). The report also points out that Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) grants “everyone the right to freedom of association” (Kiai 2016: 2-7) but the FCRA violates this clause. Kiai (2016: 3-4) emphasizes that this is also in tandem with Article 19 of the Indian Constitution that provides citizens the “right to form an association”. Thus, Article 19 and 22 of the Indian Constitution and ICCPR respectively were used to provide sufficient ground for repealing the FCRA. The Indian government countered these claims by stating that every citizen is constitutionally allowed to formulate associations, relations, and alliances with other domestic and/or international actors through Article 19 and that the FCRA did not curtail this provision in any way.

In response, the UN defied India’s counterclaims stating that the government was still obligated to conform with international norms and standards for all matters concerning the formation of associations which included the freedom to access resources including northern aid making illegal the restrictions imposed through the FCRA on them as it violated the UNHR’s legal framework (Kiai 2016: 16). The framework of the UNHR obligates states to protect the right to freedom of association irrespective of their signatory status with the conventions:

> “The ability to seek, secure and use resources is essential to the existence and effective operations of any association, no matter how small. The right to freedom of association not only includes the ability of individuals or legal entities to form and join an association but also to seek, receive and use resources – human, material and financial – from domestic, foreign, and international” (Human Rights Council 2012).

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN also stated that “governments must allow access by NGOs to foreign funding as a part of international cooperation, to which civil society is entitled to the same extent as governments” (Kiai 2016: 7).

The vague nature of the law permits the government to penalize domestic and international activists based on their transnational linkages and foreign interests in the state. For instance, in 2005, seven TANs were forbidden from receiving transnational aid because the government asserted that their audit reports were ‘incomplete’ (Jalali 2008). These NGOs had requested opportunities to furnish additional details about their accounts and audit reports, but these requests were turned down by the government stating that such exemptions could not be granted under the FCRA mandate because it had to be strictly adhered to. As such, the government-imposed restrictions on their foreign donations that caused these organization to eventually shutdown their offices.

The state also uses the FCRA to gain votes. For instance, in 2004, the government started a special dispensation for receipt of donor contributions for those TANs engaged in relief works of the 2004 *Tsunami* victims in southern India (Jalali 2008: 175). In doing so, TANs were not required to obtain prior approval from the government if their campaign work centered around the government’s political campaign i.e., the *Tsunami*. This would help them gain the popular vote during elections. However, this clause changed in 2019 when the state amended this criterion in the FCRA and stated that all TANs were now required to establish their eligibility before applying for foreign donations such that specifications regarding campaign work conducted at all times had to be notified to the government with additional proof of their status on religion, sedition, and communal ties (Tripathi 2019). In this way, the government was able to oblige NGOs to engage in their political campaigns when needed but removed all relaxations for environmental movements that were critical of the regime.

Additionally, in 2020, many TANs received a letter from the MHA requesting them to assist the government in fighting the coronavirus pandemic by using their funds to tackle Covid-related work (Johari 2020). The government requested that these TANs would furnish their pandemic-related work on the FCRA portal and intimate the government about their campaign activities regularly. However, Participants 10 and 23 express their concerns regarding this. Participant 10 states:

> "The government can use the submitted data against us in the future. The FCRA amendments have created an atmosphere of doubt and oblivion such that a genuine plea by the government to assist a public health crisis like Covid-19 also raises fear among domestic and international activists that question every move of the government as the state does not share a healthy relationship with the NGO sector".

Participant 23 also highlights how domestic activists were concerned about the negative implications for not complying with these new norms, "being unable to submit the requisite documents on time or inadequately utilizing funds for the ongoing public health emergency is a matter of concern for many activists as noncompliance may also be perceived by the government as dissent allowing them to revoke our FCRA registration licenses" (Participant 23).

Kudva points out that "as a regulator the state seeks to control NGOs and make them accountable and as a funder it seeks to selectively collaborate with groups that can elicit people's participation and make government programs appear more efficient and effective" (2005: 236). Jalali analyzes how a "strong grassroots NGO is a potential threat to power structures" and can expect to share a contentious relationship with the government (2008: 175). The FCRA allows the government to contain TANs by revoking licenses, freezing bank accounts and activists' surveillance so that the government can reassert its position as the sole governing authority and ensure transnational actors do not undermine its power in any way. "This is because the Indian government uses its status as a developing, peripheral state within the global system to assert how the rich and economically advanced global North intentionally seek to keep India destabilized and backward through their neocolonial pursuits" (Participant 10). Participant 10 also notes that the FCRA is a, "draconian law because it aims to dismantle the democratic fabric of the country in an orderly way. Instead, the government should aim to bolster minority voices in governance structures".

Participant 10 also exemplifies how government repression on TANs impacts domestic activism in the long run:

> "The NBA movement did not receive foreign aid, but it was regarded as a transnational advocacy group that was 'anti-national'. The Indian government subjected NBA activists to severe hostility despite being a domestic movement that had no financial linkages with northern NGOs. The movement premised on global solidarity but raised funds through

> local sources. Despite this, domestic activists protesting at the dam construction sites were booked for ‘foreign conspiracy’ and ‘sedition’. We were jailed for more than 12 months. It was the most unconstitutional and barbaric act conducted by the Indian government in the civil society sector till date. Governmental repression towards Greenpeace also diminished the zeal and vigour of southern activists seeking to continue their campaign work. Many domestic activists resigned from Greenpeace and started to look for alternate jobs and careers after the FCRA froze Greenpeace’s bank accounts and cancelled their registration license in 2015” (Participant 10).

Thus, the relationship shared between the state, TANs, and southern domestic activists can be described as a nexus of domestic territorial ordering, a reformulation of civil society structures, state control, and censorship.

Another problematic element within the FCRA is the dearth of information about TANs in the Indian advocacy sector. Currently, the FCRA database is the only repository of transnational information regarding the total number of FCRA-registered TANs in the state (Jalali 2008). This database does not disclose specific names of multiple TANs receiving northern grants and a few listed NGOs are erroneously mistaken for FCRA-registered organizations. The MHA accumulates transnational data based on the research conducted by their own staff which has allowed the state to control its own data surrounding transnational activity, funding sources, utilization of funds, and nature of work (Participant 6). Participant 6 states that:

> “Data helps the government to selectively target specific organizations because only a small portion of the data is disclosed to the public. With lack of research, the government can penalize TANs based on their (mis-) or calculations of TANs. This makes it increasingly difficult for transnational groups to legally push back against the state because they cannot produce sufficient evidence in the courts”.

This failure to procure alternate analyses allows the government to invoke arbitrary action against defying TANs:

> “Greenpeace India and Amnesty International (AI) were targeted for violating the FCRA because of their ‘political activities’ which can be interpreted as anything. The state employed stringent measures to stall their lobbying activities and was successful in it because there was insufficient evidence to counter the claims. This caused Greenpeace and AI to shut its offices in 2019 and 2020 respectively” (Participant 6).

Domestic-international accounts of state repression

State repression has a direct impact on civil society activity in India as domestic activists may struggle to gain material and financial resources to mobilize the masses, conduct legal and technological research, and spread awareness about the socioecological struggles of the state. Furthermore, the state represses activism by demotivating the morale of domestic activists with the intent to hinder their activities. The idea is to impair cross-border coalitions to reduce any form of citizenship participation that challenges national interest. Participant 7 highlights how increased government hostility intimidates domestic activists and, inversely, impacts the efficacy of their advocacy campaigns. Government clampdowns have negative effects on domestic advocacy groups as their ability to keep the masses mobilized significantly deteriorates. For instance, domestic activists in the NBA movement had to persevere governmental repression in the 1990s that forbade them from lobbying effectively and achieving their goals of environmental justice and sociopolitical transformation in the state. Despite this, these activists facilitated their campaign work by walking door-to-door and mobilizing the masses:

> “We used to leave our homes at 0400 hours every morning to search for people willing to join our movement. We would sojourn 30 to 40 kilometers each day from one neighboring village to another, distributing flyers, and speaking to every passerby about the *Narmada* issue we were fighting for. We hoped to motivate people to extend their solidarity to the NBA by joining the movement. At midnight, after returning home, we would contemplate our strategy for the next day. We thought about new and effective ways of motivating and mobilizing people. This went on for several months until the government began to strategically target us. At this time, keeping the masses mobilized was turning out to be the most arduous task because people would easily lose interest as soon as the government violently attacked us. The government-imposed severe repressive tactics in the form of police assaults, forcible evictions, arrests of women, children, and tribal activists. Despite this, we had to muster the courage to return to the campaign sites the very next day.
>
> Activism is a daunting process as you expend time from your job and family. The NBA movement was not even foreign funded, but it was treated like one as the government used the very same oppressive labels that are used for foreign funded organizations such as ‘anti-national’, ‘anti-development’ and ‘anti-India’. At the onset, the NBA campaign was quite challenging because of the limited communication channels we had. As activists we had to travel on foot, use boats and trains as opposed to telecom and digital services that disseminate information much faster today. Simple things such as conveying messages about the government’s law enforcement agencies closing in on us to other NBA activists became, increasingly, difficult because of the technological deficits back then. At the same time, confronting the state’s repressive posture towards us that threatened to restrict our ability to peacefully protest and participate as citizens of a democratic nation was also a growing challenging. The government’s main intent was to dismantle the NBA movement by terrorizing us under the guise of state control and defending the national interest of the state. In turn, many NBA activists withdrew from the movement, as a result, of this eventually” (Participant 7).

Participant 6 further adds that the government’s public reasons for curbing transnational activity are different from their internal ones, and which are not recorded anywhere.

> “The government alleges that TANs need to be regulated because they are responsible for India’s reduced GDP and, thus, justifying that their advocacy-related activities should be stalled. However, the main reason behind the government’s intolerance is that TANs interfere in the state’s policy programs inciting rampant dissent and challenging power structures. The state represses NGOs critical of the government and, particularly, those that use the government’s information to highlight administrative contradictions and fallacies in state policies. This factor is not explicitly mentioned anywhere but known to all. Instead, the government expects all citizens to accept its policies without facilitating debate that

> could create divisions among the electorate and challenge the government's ability to be re-elected again" (Participant 6).

Additionally, Participant 12 reiterates:

> "Leaving the FCRA open to interpretation by using vague phrases such as 'organizations of political nature', 'economic interests of the state' and 'public interest' without qualifying them allows the government to mystify the nature, scope, and typology of these narratives and use the FCRA more stringently against dissenting civil society actors. This allows the state to escape the conforms of international law that guarantees human rights protection to all under the UN Charter."

Subsequently, specific examples will now be presented to denote how state repression regulates NGO activities in India. It will highlight the duality of the Indian government that endorses NGOs as the 'harbingers of democracy' but also represses them for dissenting against the state. This reveals how the state impinges democratic participation, maintains a powerful authoritative presence in India's civil society sector and has negative implications for domestic activists in the long run. The *Kudankulam, Greenpeace, NBA, Niyamgiri* and *ACT* campaigns demonstrate how the Indian state, a critic of neocolonialism and Eurocentrism, also assumes the role of a colonial aggressor oppressing and pushing minority communities further to marginalization. This leads to issues of NGO raids, surveillance, arrests, killings, office, and bank account closures that provide a distinguishable feature in state-civil society relations. Finally, the attempt is to foreground issues of state repression on domestic activists who are not seen as policy influencers trying to improve the socioecological conditions of society. Instead, the government invokes challenges and setbacks on domestic activists for impeding the implementation of state policies and norms.

a) Kudankulam movement (1988)

The FCRA has been used inconsistently by the Indian government in the *Kudankulam* movement. For example, in 2010, the government applied false charges against *Kudankulam* activists for violating the FCRA and protesting against the nuclearization program of the government stating that it would cause environmental degradation, destruction, and displacement of the local population in the state of *Tamil Nadu*. It was alleged that the *Kudankulam* protests were funded by church-based NGOs that received financial aid from abroad. In turn, three NGOs lost their registration licenses for diverting their funds to the *Kudankulam* movement as they directly violated the FCRA (FP Staff 2012). Participant 5 notes:

> "This movement was largely supported by domestic NGOs except Sierra Club that paid for our accruing costs such as legal and research-related expenses. There was no support received from transnational organizations at all. Yet the government considered our activities in violation of the FCRA law. The government attacked us by damaging our properties and homes. We were physically assaulted, imprisoned, fined, and other heavy restrictions and penalties were imposed on us as leaders of the movement. Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa also created fake power shortages in the state that lasted eight to nine hours every day by shutting down all wind turbines. She intended to create a power crisis in the state so that domestic activists would concede to the state powers assuming that the energy crisis problem would be resolved by the construction of a nuclear power plant and, thus,

> *Kudankulam* activists would stop protesting and obstructing the nuclear reactor construction sites. This proved to be beneficial for the state government because it did lead to the creation of two advocacy camps within the *Kudankulam* movement — supporters of the construction of nuclear power plant to resolve the electricity shortage problem and those that opposed the nuclearization program (this included me). Supporters of the nuclear power plant became tired of campaigning and developed movement fatigue. They desired a quick resolution for the protracted struggle causing demoralization and burnout. A grave desire to negotiate and concede with the government was felt and the government was successful in dividing us because of our alleged 'western leanings'".

As a result, the *Kudankulam* movement disintegrated as domestic activists refrained from extensive campaigning in the form of street protests and hunger strikes and "adopted less offensive strategies to deal with the government such as seeking legal recourse, lodging complaints with the National Green Tribunal (NGT), and holding press conferences" (Participant 5). The *Tamil Nadu* government strategically targeted *Kudankulam* activists by first building public trust among a selected group of activists and then fragmenting them from other domestic activists by creating fake energy crisis in the state, swaying public opinions, and creating differences within civil society. In this way, the state was able to gain greater leverage in the *Kudankulam* movement by creating divisions ultimately causing the movement to collapse. It was also able to successfully complete of the construction of the *Kudankulam* nuclear power plant in 2002.

b) Mahan Movement (2013)

The *Mahan* movement was led by Greenpeace India in 2013 protesting coal mining activities and the construction of Coal-Fired Power Plants (CFPP) in the Singrauli district of Madhya Pradesh. Coal India Ltd. (CIL), Essar, and Hindalco established a joint venture called – Mahan Coal Ltd. that would institute the construction of CFPP in the region. It was alleged that this corporation would create environmental displacement for the tribal population. An estimated 1200 acres of *sal* forests were projected to be demolished with the construction of the coal mine in Madhya Pradesh (Niazi 2014). The project was estimated to supply five million tonnes of coal for 14 years to Essar and Hindalco (Roy 2015). However, in 2014, the MHA branded Greenpeace as an 'anti-national' organization working against the development interests of the state (Intelligence Bureau 2014). It stated that, "Greenpeace aimed to fundamentally change the dynamics of India's energy mix by disrupting and weakening the relationship between key players, including CIL" (Intelligence Bureau 2014: 8). The MHA also stated that Greenpeace was responsible for "creating obstacles in India's coal-based energy plans" and imposed a "threat to national economic security" by pressuring the state to use only renewable energy (Intelligence Bureau 2014: 7).

In turn, the government forcibly suspended Greenpeace's activities stating that it was disrupting India's coal mining projects. It noted that, "Greenpeace plans to use the *Mahan* case as a precursor for a ban on all coal blocks" (Intelligence Bureau 2014: 8). This was attributed to Greenpeace's involvement in other activities such as the production of the documentary film titled 'Coal Curse' in 2013. Additionally, Greenpeace funded the Institute of Technology (IIT) report on CFPP's negative impact on irrigation. It also published several reports on the potential health hazards posed by 111 CFPPs in the state (Intelligence Bureau 2014: 8). The government used these reasons to conclude that the *Mahan* movement was an instigator for coal blockades in India allowing the government to intervene and cease its activities.

Participant 1 explains how the FCRA was used to reduce the flow of transnational aid to Greenpeace after 2014:

> "The government's main intent has been to deter Greenpeace from conducting advocacy. It has been freezing Greenpeace's bank accounts, canceling its FCRA registration license and even barred senior campaigner, Priya Pillai from boarding her aircraft to London for a conference to deliver a presentation on the *Mahan* movement and the coal blockade situation in India in 2015".

Participant 2 reiterates that, "the MHA targeted Greenpeace due to its intolerance towards the organization's advocacy campaigns that predominantly concentrated on critical sectors such as coal mining, minerals, natural gas, dams, energy plants, and industrial construction". Additionally, Participant 2 states how other environmental organizations such as Environment Support Group (ESG) also faced repercussions because of Greenpeace's raid in 2015:

> "ESG faced difficulty in obtaining its FCRA license from the MHA after Greenpeace's fiasco with the government of India. This was because the state became increasingly skeptical towards all environmental advocacy groups in India and imposed travel bans on most NGOs including us at ESG. It was a daunting task to obtain those clearances as the Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted rigorous income tax inquiries which lasted seven months resulting in the loss of eminent worktime. The ED, MHA, Ministry of Finance, Income Tax department also coordinated attacks on us and furnished a 35-page document by Directory General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S), under the instruction of MHA. ESG had to respond to these queries which took 3-4 months. ESG was still fortunate to resume its operations later but the MHA's calibrated attacks on Greenpeace fizzled out the organization from the Indian advocacy scene after 2015 and this created fear amongst the rest of us in the NGO sector" (Participant 2).

It was also alleged that Greenpeace employed various tactics to counter governmental repression. For example, the organization established a commercial entity called Direct Dialogue Initiatives India Pvt. Ltd. (DDIIPL) in 2016 to receive foreign direct investments (FDI). This was later partially routed to Greenpeace violating the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). The Enforcement Directorate (ED) alleged that DDIIPL received nearly 4 million dollars in FDI during 2016-8 from Greenpeace International, Netherlands (Shukla 2019). "The ED also stated that certain Greenpeace employees migrated to DDIIPL highlighting Greenpeace and DDIIPL's strong connection with each other as activists sought greater job security with DDIIPL due to the precarious nature of Greenpeace's future vis-à-vis the FCRA and the Indian government" (Participant 4). However, Greenpeace refuted these claims stating that DDIIPL was only established to contact and access domestic actors and that all donations were raised locally and not through foreign sources. They also noted that Greenpeace's finances were directly deposited into its own bank accounts without involving the DDIIPL (Shukla 2019).

Participant 4 states that:

> "Greenpeace failed to furnish its bank account details, submit tax returns, renew its FCRA license on time. It engaged in certain advocacy misconducts which compelled the law enforcement agencies to cancel its registration license. Greenpeace is known to have a confrontational style of campaigning. In Madhya Pradesh Greenpeace engaged in extensive strikes, protest marches, and *dharnas* (non-violent sit-ins) which fuelled the government to impose restrictions on it".

Participant 3 also examines how Greenpeace's bank accounts were reopened on 14 February 2019 due to technical reasons and not ideological ones:

> "As per the Income Tax Act, bank accounts cannot be closed for more than 60 days unless charges are filed. The ED did not file charges against Greenpeace and the Supreme Court stated that under such circumstances Greenpeace's bank accounts would be reopened again on technical grounds. Subsequently, Greenpeace's registration license was also restored after six months of inactivity" (Participant 3).

These events highlight the negative implications for not conforming to the FCRA mandate. Greenpeace's financial fraud and data fabrication tactics created a negative image of the Indian advocacy sector as civil society organizations that were deemed as ethical institutions based on democratic values and practices were now justifiably targeted by the Indian state because of their indulgence in corrupt and unlawful practices. Greenpeace's FCRA violation also resulted in other environmental advocacies such as ESG to face governmental repression. Participant 3 explains:

> "Despite policy lapses within the FCRA, subverting the law is illegal and creates greater challenges not only for the advocacy organization in question but also for other NGOs in the sector. The state is continuously monitoring advocacy groups. If Greenpeace complied with the FCRA and furnished the requisite documents to the government on time without bypassing the law, it would have been granted the necessary registration approval it needed".

Participant 2 also points out that:

> "Greenpeace did not work in congruence with the ethos of movement building in India. Greenpeace's operations inversely impacted ESG's campaign work as the government became more vigilant about other dissenting environmental groups in the state. For example, when both ESG and Greenpeace entered the thermal power plant protests in 2007, ESG advocated for the complete aversion of the construction of the *Chamalapura* thermal power plant. However, Greenpeace negotiated for certain relaxations with the state bargaining the construction of the thermal power plant but with a few considerations. This created divisions between Greenpeace and ESG and their collective advocacy program which the government took advantage of. The state reinforced the construction of the thermal power plant and the campaign failed".

Thus, the *Mahan* movement exemplifies the state's ability to create a narrative shift about the advocacy sector that allows the government to subjugate domestic activists accordingly. In this case, the government subdued Greenpeace by stating it had an agenda to disrupt India's coal mining projects. The state highlighted how Greenpeace corroborated in the production of the 'Coal Curse' documentary. It also revealed how Greenpeace published several reports criticizing the government's development programs such as the report on the negative effects of the CFPP on India's irrigation system. These factors allowed the government to implicate Greenpeace for multiple reasons and repress it by freezing the organization's bank accounts and cancelling its FCRA license. These actions not only affected Greenpeace but other NGOs as well such as ESG that faced difficulty while obtaining their own FCRA approvals. Being unable to receive funds from the global North because of increased governmental setback, Greenpeace was compelled to setup the DDIIPL that allowed it to siphon financial aid from abroad for some time. However, these actions were also deemed unlawful, and Greenpeace was penalized to greater governmental scrutiny and repression after that.

c) Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) (Movement to Save the Narmada) (1985)

The NBA movement has been a domestically led environmental movement that began in 1985. It is based on a global solidarity model wherein international actors unified with NBA activists to fight against governmental repression and press forward their environmental cause but without the provision of material or financial resources through TANs. The movement, mainly, sustained itself through the capacity building support and monetary assistance provided by Indian domestic civil society sympathizers who helped NBA activists to oppose the construction of dams along the *Narmada River*. These dams threatened to displace the tribal population and submerge villages by Narmada River in the states of Gujrat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra. Participant 11 states that:

> "Initially it was difficult to mobilize public support as the movement was undergoing a protracted transition. But increased governmental intervention deterred domestic activists to remain impassioned towards the NBA cause. More than a hundred activists withdrew from the movement as a result of government attacks. The World Bank (WB) as well as some other NGOs even suggested to build the dam at a particular height so that it would not disrupt the lives of the coastline inhabitants. People were also assured grassroots protection, rehabilitation, and resettlement if required. But we were resolute about our stance on the NBA. The looming threat posed by the dam in terms of displacement and marginalization of the *Adivasis* community were grave reasons for us to remain invested to the cause. So, we continued to campaign against the construction of the dams along the river".

Participant 11 points out that these events created discrepancies between NBA activists, the government, and other civil society groups in the early 1990s. The WB withdrew its support from the *Narmada* dam project in 1993. The NBA movement credit this success to the masses as they were able to pressure the WB to retract its backing from the project. Participant 7 also explains how the NBA's success in urging the WB to withdraw from the project can be attributed to its people because they persevered without foreign aid as they were a locally funded movement, and the campaign was subjected to continued governmental attack. Participant 7 states:

> "The solidarity efforts of domestic activists and international actors helped internationalize the *Narmada* issue at the global stage. They helped highlight the atrocities of the Indian government on minority groups. The NBA was not a transnational advocacy group and did not receive foreign funding, but the solidarity received from international actors to advance

> their campaign goals, motivate domestic actors; and leverage their struggles at the global stage helped overcome the government's setbacks and rescinded the construction of a few dam projects along the *Narmada River*" (Participant 7).

The NBA movement offers a nuanced understanding for transnational advocacy and global solidarity in India's advocacy sector. While transnationalism involves the flow of material and financial resources to southern domestic advocacies, global solidarity aims to represent subaltern struggles in the international system by pressuring inflexible governments without the help of foreign aid but through their messages of solidarity, unification, lobbying tactics, and indigenous visions. The NBA story is useful in this regard as it emanates the importance of these varied categories of internationalism for southern domestic activism as some approaches such as global solidarity can prove to be more effective and conducive for domestic activists that provide the same kinds of experience as that of TANs but without financial support which invokes other neocolonial problems.

> "TANs could facilitate scientific and legal research, but it was global solidarity that helped NBA activists achieve considerable success by averting several dams along the *Narmada River*. Global solidarity helped leverage the movement by taking political action, targeting, and holding the key stakeholders accountable, offering moral support, and bargaining for domestic activists at the negotiating table" (Participant 11).

NBA activists accepted the support from foreign media, international NGOs, and other northern civil society groups that helped pressure the Indian government to forestall the dam projects. "Despite inadequate funds, the NBA rejected financial assistance from international actors as a means to pursue its lobbying efforts in the state. This makes the NBA as one of the most exemplary movements in the history of Indian environmentalism" (Participant 11). Adopting a global solidarity approach not only helped the movement to urge the WB and government of Japan to withdraw from the *Sardar Sarovar Project* (SSP) (that was the largest dam project along the Narmada River in 1993) but also build unity, empathy, compassion, and trust among the varied cultural and social identities of domestic, and international actors involved in the movement. Basu (2012) highlights how diverse caste groups, tribal and agricultural communities such as the farmers, *Kahar* and *Kevat* castes, and other *Adivasis* in the NBA movement assimilated to protect the river despite their disparate views and interests enabling a collective social identity for the movement to gain from. Basu (2012) states:

> "A focus on loss of forests due to submergence would resonate with tribal communities but not with farmers across the Narmada. A focus on the river as opposed to a focus on land or forests thus carries very different connotations, so that by emphasizing a community-owned resource, a movement constructed around the river can serve to unify a rural landscape otherwise fractured by class and caste inequalities".

In sum, these efforts reinforced the advantages of internationalizing movements through a solidarity-based approach as opposed to a TANs-centered one in the global South that only invited intolerance and backlash from the state.

d) Niyamgiri movement (2002)

The *Niyamgiri* movement was led by TANs such as Amnesty International, Survival International, and ActionAid that protested the bauxite mining and the aluminous smelter in the state of Odisha in 2002. The government condemned nine FCRA registered NGOs involved in the protests. Among these were Amnesty International (AI), Action Aid, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Survival International, and the Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation (ICCO). The government alleged that the *Niyamgiri* movement received Rs. 64 crores (i.e., approximately USD 9 million) during the financial year 2006-07 and 2011-12 (Intelligence Bureau 2014: 13). During these periods, the *Niyamgiri* movement had successfully persuaded multiple investors to withdraw from the Vedanta project causing including the Church of England's Ethical Investment Advisory Group (that withdrew GBP 3.8 million from the project), the Norwegian government (withdrew $13 million), and Martin Currie Investment Management (retracted GBP 2.3 million) (Intelligence Bureau 2014: 13).

This resulted in the government curtailing the activities of the *Niyamgiri* movement. It resorted to the use of harassment, intimidation, detention, torture, and prosecution against domestic activists. In March 2019, two Niyamgiri activists were killed while 50 casualties were reported at the Vedanta's aluminium refinery after Odisha Industrial Security Force (OISF) attacked the protesting domestic activists for holding peaceful demonstrations demanding employment (Pal 2019). Participant 5 illustrates this ordeal by explaining how the government used coercive tactics such as abductions, false charges, beatings, and homicide to hinder the *Niyamgiri* movement:

> "The protests in *Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu* have ignited the *Dongria Kondhs* tribal community within the *Niyamgiri* movement to protest Vedanta's mining and aluminous smelter projects. These schemes are projected to cause forest land diversions, and displacement threatening public health and safety. But in 2018, 13 activists were killed during a police encounter for campaigning against the copper smelter *Sterlite* Industries, a subsidiary of Vedanta in the state of *Tamil Nadu*. In March 2019, two activists were, additionally, killed leaving approximately 50 activists fatally injured" (Participant 5).

The government also used pacification and other governance techniques to redirect activists from campaigning in the *Niyamgiri* movement. Participant 10 analyzes this phenomenon as the Indian government subjugated AI for their involvement in the Vedanta issue. But on the other hand, also applauded the organization's concerted efforts towards tackling the Covid-19 pandemic. Participant 10 states:

> "The Indian government applauded AI's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. But this is, merely, an indication of the government's attempt to build rapport with the organization and show their support and solidarity towards them. At the same time, the state also anticipates AI to reconcile its differences with the government and retract its support from the Vedanta issue. This is a new narrative shift that scales from violent repressive tactics to pacificism but with the ultimate aim to subvert activists from protesting (Participant 10)".

Thus, the *Niyamgiri* movement illustrates the extent to which the state is ready to go to subdue domestic activists from operating in transnational frameworks. The state also urged AI to retract its support from the anti-Vedanta campaign through pacificism by recognizing the organization's efforts in other sectors such as containing the Covid-19 pandemic. As such, the *Niyamgiri* movement exemplifies the government's intolerance towards its transnational allies. The IB report (2014) titled "NGO activism against development projects in India" enlisted AI, Survival International, and ActionAid as organizations that were allies in the anti-Vedanta campaign. Subsequently, the government began freezing the bank accounts of these organizations and shut down their offices. AI's India offices were closed in 2020 (Yasir et al 2020). While examining this government's hostility towards TANs, Srinath (2020) states that, "like the Chinese government, the Indian government has this notion of good and bad NGOs. Good NGOs provide low-cost, last-mile service delivery…and do not ask any questions about why the government is not performing. As soon as questions like that are raised, you become a bad NGO".

e) Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT) (2003)

The *Lepcha* are a numerically small ethnic minority group i.e., fewer than 30,000 people and termed as the 'most primitive' and 'vanishing' tribe in the *Dzongu* reserve of the state of Sikkim (Deo et al 2011). Both the central and state governments authorized the construction of several hydropower dams along the *Teesta River* to curb the power crisis situation in the state. The *Lepcha* community observe these initiatives as an environmental threat that would diminish the *Lepcha* identity and culture in the region. They claim that the dam projects aim to further push the *Lepcha* to the periphery because they are considered 'backward' and 'primitive', unlike other tribal populations in the state (Deo et al 2011: 88). These state-led projects are considered neocolonial attempts to eliminate the *Lepcha* tribal community from Sikkim and allow other larger groups to persist in the north-east region.

In turn, the ACT was established to represent the *Lepcha's* ethnic and environmental issues at the national stage. The organization is an example of how environmental organizations can evade confrontations with the government by rejecting transnational aid and relying on domestic support structures to sustain themselves. Participant 12 illustrates how the ACT deliberately rejected transnational assistance in 2008-9 from northern NGOs including AI because as a domestic NGO it would have to remodel itself as a transnational organization and oblige itself to the FCRA mandate thus inviting governmental repression.

> "ACT activists chose to continue functioning as a domestic advocacy group and rejected foreign aid from AI because receiving transnational assistance would pose a greater problem for ACT with the Indian government. Transnational assistance helps in the short term but a protracted struggle like the *Sikkim* dam issue could be jeopardized if transnational assistance from international donors was sought" (Participant 12).

As a result, ACT activists adopted a self-reliant approach by raising funds through domestic sources. Urban sympathizers such as political leaders in the opposition, media groups, and student activists in *Sikkim* and across the state provided financial aid to support ACT to campaign effectively. Participant 12 further notes:

> "If ACT activists want to pressure the government to retract the construction of dams along the Teesta River than allying with international NGOs will not place it in a good position with the government. This is because foreign funded NGOs are being, increasingly, targeted by the state. There is an attempt to contain foreign funding in the state through the

> use of the FCRA and, therefore, it is a struggle to function under these aggrieved conditions".

Instead, the ACT raises funds locally from domestic sources such as the media, student unions, political parties, and elite individuals. Participant 12 notes:

> "With the help of our domestic partners, we were able to set up the Weeping *Sikkim* blog to track hunger strikes. This garnered national and international attention and sustained collective action on the dam issue. As a result, the ACT was able to mobilize the masses, block dam construction sites, rally and persuade negotiations with the government. These efforts have also helped the collective bargaining process and defended the rights of the *Lepcha* tribal community".

In effect, the ACT was able to forestall the construction of four out of five *Dzongu* dams (Deo et al 201) through the support of its domestic partners and thus the need for a transnational alliance was not felt. Thus, the ACT exemplifies how it chose to reject transnational alliances with international NGOs to avoid state repression on it. The ACT sustained its efforts by raising funds locally through domestic sources as FCRA approvals were not only difficult to obtain but would also invoke greater governmental repression on them. ACT activists understood these drawbacks involving the FCRA mandate and, therefore, chose to raise resources locally as opposed to leveraging themselves at the global stage and inviting government attention towards them.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates the various ways in which state repression inversely impacts environmental movements and NGOs in India. It exemplifies how there exists a growing intolerance towards TANs in the state that seeks to diminish transnational activity as it interferes with national interest and Indian policy affairs. It not only demonstrates how environmental activists have faced governmental attacks vis-à-vis FCRA cancellations, freezing of bank accounts, surveillance, and incarceration of activists, but also examines how domestic activists have responded to these oppressive treatments using legal services, rejecting transnational aid offerings and in some cases even breached the law. The chapter exemplifies the dual nature of the government that acts as a proponent for democratic participation through NGO activity but also criminalizes TANs pushing domestic activists further to the periphery. This dualism can also be applied to the state in terms of how it attributes TANs with neocolonial and Eurocentric labels stating that they intend to malign India's prospects for economic growth but, at the same, the Indian government also accepts foreign direct investments for extractive purposes that cause the exploitation and degradation of environmental resources and, in turn, exploit the interests of the minority population in the state.

This chapter also examines how environmental imaginaries have been negated since the colonial era and continue to be undermined by the Indian state through its intolerance and macroaggression towards domestic activists. The British monarch structurally organized India's afforestation program and appropriated environmental resources such as land and crops to supplement the needs of the colonial regime. Post-independence, this commodity-centered approach was visible again when the Indian government undertook control over the state's natural resources by emphasizing the importance of nation building and economic growth. Utilizing these resources helped the industrial program grow but, in the process, environmental activists were repressed for contesting these policies and criminalized for their neocolonial propaganda that sought to keep India underdeveloped. This chapter maps the growth of this repression resulting from anti-national and anti-India sentiments brought forward by the state. The first intense move by the government showcasing its intolerance towards TANs was in 2016 when the FCRA licenses of nearly 20,000 out of 33,000 TANs were canceled (Bhattacharya 2016). In 2019, an additional 1807 TANs lost their FCRA registrations (PTI 2019).

The NBA example illustrates the government's ability to regulate domestic and international activism in the state. The government targeted NBA activists for their foreign connections that were based on a model of global solidarity (i.e., non-monetary linkages) and not transnationalism (i.e., financial flows from the global North to the South). The government subjugated NBA activists for pointing out discrepancies in the administration and categorizing who owns ecological resources and who can access them. Additionally, the *Kudankulam, Greenpeace, Niyamgiri,* and *ACT* movements emphasized the importance of socio-environmental justice, dignity to life, and re-imagining equity through narratives of environmental sensitization, inclusion, and culture. These movements were subjected to various forms of governmental repression for protesting the Indian state's development programs. They have been targeted for their transnational connections with the global North and depict how the Indian government has successfully been able to limit their role as civil society participants in the state.

The next chapter furthers this argument by engaging with the problem of northern influence and Eurocentrism that diminishes the positive reinforcing impacts of transnationalism in developing economies and sets domestic activists behind their campaign goals. Breaking away from the former shackles of colonialism, materialism, new traditionalism that rationalized environmental oppression, the following chapter examines broader themes of democracy, authoritarianism, sovereignty, and foreign influence. It investigates how social identities and environmental practices can be shaped without transnational support. The chapter establishes the importance of seeing domestic reliance and opportunities 'within the state' as mediums for the construction of environmental knowledge and thought in India and the global South.

Chapter 5
Northern Influence

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the significant relationship between advocacies in the global North and South that collaborate with each other through TANs in India since the 1980s. It pays critical attention to the role of transnational environmental advocacy networks that marginalize domestic activists when they affiliate with international NGOs in the global North. It focuses on northern powers that have neocolonial and Eurocentric undertones present within transnational networks, and which seek to amplify the interests of the northern powers as opposed to southern ones. Domestic activists face greater difficulties in assimilating within these structures because their social identities emerge from India's pre-colonial history of oppression, exploitation, and marginalization. These activists in transnational frameworks fail to create effective coalition-building that can help them achieve their goals because campaigns from the onset are based on weak and fragmented structures. This chapter intermeshes these notions with the environmental objectives and interests of the *Adivasis* community that seek representation of their indigenous knowledge systems and ideologues within environmental policy frameworks and the law. It analyzes the neocolonial character of northern actors within TANs that subject domestic activists to exploitation through new forms of environmental colonialism and racism.

TANs exhibit their solidarity and allyship towards domestic advocacy groups in the global South by providing material and financial resources to them but, in turn, assert their vested interests by pressuring advocacies to operate within the ambit of international norms. This negates and erases the struggles of the *Adivasis* community that are fighting for their right to self-determination and empowerment. These transnational advocacies display multiple characteristics such as being empathetic towards southern causes but, at the same time, they are withdrawn as well because they fail to integrate subaltern interests within their own advocacy structures. They may appear to be approachable to domestic activists and transparent about their lobbying agendas but are also distant from indigenous goals and ambiguous about transferring advocacy projects from donors to southern actors eventually in the future. They also expect domestic activists to constantly reform and reorient their advocacy pursuits through a more liberalized northern program that is deemed beneficial and favorable to the southern realm. From this, it is evident that TANs mask a "white savior mentality" that embraces the traditions of exclusionary politics. These underlying biases indicate the negative implications for TANs in the Indian environmental sector that may have adverse consequences for domestic movements and NGOs in the long run as they try to advance themselves to become more effective policy influencers in the state. The premise of this kind of activism is not only to absorb southern advocacies within a powerful northern fold but also to normalize and naturalize the process of these exploitative behaviors through financial incentives and other material favors.

Currently, TANs have a dominant resonance in some parts of India's environmental advocacy sector where most domestic NGOs and movements idolize their northern counterparts for advancing their advocacy programs and representing their struggles at the international stage in a way that is often received more seriously by governments than them independently doing so. TANs, as understood today, is a network of domestic and international actors that collectively support processes of "regional and international integration" by "multiplying opportunities for dialogue and exchange" on contentious issues surrounding the environment, human rights, and other sociopolitical concerns (Keck et al 1999: 89). TANs gained prominence in the 1980s when advocacy organizations and movements experienced a dearth of material, financial, and capacity-building resources necessary to invoke governments to institute better environmental norms and practices in the state. Aggrieved environmental conditions that resulted from industrialization, rampant economic activity, population explosion, and excessive the utilization of natural resources prompted domestic activists to question the development goals, economic models, and sustainability standards of states that are necessary for inclusive environmental governance and protection in the state.

In this light, TANs have been promising and appear to be a lucrative opportunity for the masses. Participant 5 explains, "TANs not only provide essential resources to domestic activists to help them effectively campaign and bargain, but they also posit themselves on global solidarity models that internationalize environmental struggles and human rights issues of southern activists encouraging them to challenge political establishments more fervently". Participant 12 stresses on how Indian environmentalists reorient their philosophical knowledge of the environment vis-à-vis community, culture, traditions, religion, caste, nature, and people:

> "Domestic activists assume that TANs assist them in reinforcing their environmental rights and interests in the state based on indigenous knowledge and traditional values when in reality these groups sustain oppressive colonial processes and structures through increased western dominance and Eurocentric entrapment" (Participant 12).

On the other hand, there is also a growing resentment towards TANs as they bring negative implications for domestic advocacies to sustain themselves in the global South. Participant 6 exemplifies how the advantages and disadvantages of transnational advocacies require further attention because they "do more damage than good by reinforcing environmental challenges for southern activists in a self-centered way". Participant 9 states that this is a predominant characteristic of contemporary TANs that fail to comply with subaltern visions of indigenous empowerment, reduced external dependencies, self-governance models, and local know-how.

> "Northern powers cater to their own interests that include saving taxes, boosting the West's image internationally, publicity, and acquiring power to shape southern politics. They have also been successful in concealing their internal interests by maintaining cultural diplomacy and public engagement with their southern counterparts" (Participant 9).

TANs are an intrinsic part of the Indian advocacy sector as multiple domestic NGOs rely on them for sustenance and growth. Approximately 18,000 NGOs in India receive transnational aid from 130 countries on an annual basis with nearly 22,400 registered as FCRA organizations (Ministry of Home Affairs 2021). However, some organizations have also experienced downfall and closure after northern donors withdrew from their campaigns or altered the course of their lobbying techniques. Participant 13 states that:

> "There are many urban-based NGOs that rely on transnational assistance from the global North to sustain their organizations and modus operandi. But some rural-based NGOs have expressed mixed feelings about transnational alliances as they prefer limited involvement

> of transnational actors in their domestic affairs because of their preconceived notions about foreign donors and/or previous negative experiences with transnationalism".

Domestic accounts of northern dominance

TANs create discord for domestic activists because of the unique settings within which environmental NGOs operate and the varied forms of environmental activism that persist in the state. While Indian environmental activism can be defined as "environmentalism of the poor"[8] (Guha et al 1998), "Dalit environmentalism"[9] (Sharma 2017), or "bourgeois environmentalism"[10] (Baviskar 2011) there is limited discussion about the role of TANs in shaping or distorting the formation of domestic environmental advocacy groups in India. Most of the scholarship focuses on environmentalism from below where *Adivasi* groups, women, and other vulnerable sections of society participate in debates surrounding development, sustainability, and equitable distribution of natural resources. However, TANs rarely feature in any of these conversations despite being one of the most influential forces in the NGO sector and having created grave southern dependency for northern aid especially for urban advocacies.

Transnational partnerships, foreign aid, and global solidarity has helped domestic activists engage in everyday politics more frequently, exercise their democratic freedoms with confidence, and sustain the basic needs of movements through capacity building support, funding scientific research, and expending legal costs. Yet still, TANs are blinded by the politics of internationalization and global solidarity, but there is limited discourse regarding the repercussions of these networks in Indian advocacy where northern NGOs partake in a 'civilizing' discourse obstructing western powers from perceiving the sensitivities and subjectivities of southern activists. It also stations them as colonizers and not aides in these exchanges causing a complete departure from the sociocultural promises they make as transnational entities. In this light, domestic activists may develop a complex understanding of transnationalism that offers a safe space for dissent and puts forward their ideas on effective environmental governance and law making but also perpetuates differences between stakeholders in the global North-South on issues of mutual concern i.e., values, culture, and belief systems.

These domestic perspectives on TANs do not sufficiently tease out the exclusion or invisibility of southern environmental advocacies that are fixated on the discriminatory and exploitative behaviours of western colonial powers. Southern domestic activists and research academics have questioned these narratives in light of foreign policy, global linkages, social development, and the effectiveness of influencing policy. But further deliberation is required to investigate the course northern dominance takes place in these setups. This will help fully grasp the opportunities and challenges that arise from TANs and the risks posed towards domestic activists while entering these networks.

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[8] Defined by Joan Martínez Alier (2014), 'environmentalism of the poor' is inferred as resource-based conflicts led by the impoverished sections of the population fighting against big carbon polluters such as business corporations and the state. This type of environmentalism aims to provide justice and equity among the poor as they consider social, environmental and human rights interconnected and interdependent on each other.

[9] 'Dalit environmentalism' is categorized by the perspectives of the marginalized Dalit community that Mukul Sharma (2017) describes as diverse experiences with the environment through the lens of the caste system and its politics. Sharma describes how the Dalit community's ecological experiences have been 'ridden with metaphors of pollution, impurity, and dirt.'

[10] Bourgeois environmentalism' is the ideology of the upper working class that shapes urban spaces according to their priorities and interests. Amita Baviskar (2002) states that this type of environmentalism is 'reserved for white-collar production, commerce, and consumption activities' to 'fuse commerce and leisure' at the cost of 'slum demolitions and labour banishment' from cities.

This problem is further investigated using specific examples of northern influence on domestic activist groups. It highlights the experiences of the *Mahan*, *Pathalgadi,* ICJB, and ACT movements to analyze how TANs not only undermine the ability of domestic NGOs to effectively campaign in the state but also accentuate problems of marginalization and disempowerment on southern activists that are seeking recourse from these internal problems. The cases discuss how the issue of northern influence has manifested in the everyday lives of domestic activists i.e., in terms of their advocacy goals being maligned or their sociopolitical issues remaining unaddressed and neglected or even how contentions are forged between domestic and international actors regarding North-South issues of common concern. These cases illustrate this problematic nature of measuring movement success because final policy outcomes are often perceived as achievements or failures according to the varied subjectivities of domestic activists, academicians, and the grassroots alike. However, the following research participant accounts denote how characterizations of a successful movement by a donor cannot be scaled by the very same yardstick as that of domestic activists who are desirous of continued and overall socioenvironmental justice, action, and empowerment in society. The following empirical cases thus lend themselves as supporting evidence to these claims.

a) Mahan movement (2013)

The Greenpeace-led *Mahan* movement pressured the government of *Madhya Pradesh* to withdraw its coal mining project in *Mahan* Forests. In 2015 when the government cancelled the project, Greenpeace attributed the movement's lobbying efforts to the success of this outcome as it had compelled the *Madhya Pradesh* government to retract the project and rethink its coal production programme in the state. However, domestic activists in the movement were still discontented and did not fully view this as a victory. Domestic activists faced internal issues regarding the representation of their ethnic and cultural rights in the state that remained unaddressed. Participant 3 states that, "Greenpeace concluded the campaign after the government verdict and ignored many of the demands made by *Mahan* activists despite their initial promise of fully safeguarding minority interests". Greenpeace designated *Mahan*'s success to transnational factors stating that it was Greenpeace that demanded the cancellation of the *Mahan* coal block, but domestic activists critiqued the organization for its failure to continue to represent them and fight for their indigenous rights in the state. Participant 3 further adds that, "environmental and social issues cannot be segregated and fought independently because they interconnect natural resources, ecosystems, human security, and health in southern societies". Greenpeace's decision to conclude the campaign after the government verdict indicated its apathy towards the other social issues of indigenous identity, culture, and wellbeing of southern activists leaving them vulnerable and susceptible to change again.

Additionally, domestic activists also complained about not being involved in the decision-making process of the movement. Greenpeace executed most of the standard decisions, proposed amendments, and negotiated with state officials while domestic activists were, primarily, involved in the campaigning activities that included mobilizing the masses. Participant 3 states that:

> "There were differences between domestic and international campaigners in the *Mahan* movement as indigenous activists proposed for greater representation and recognition of their ethnic struggles and social identity at the national stage, but Greenpeace campaigners wanted to be the interface of their environmental problems causing a divide between both groups at various stages of the campaign as issues centering their social identity remained unaddressed".

Thus, the *Mahan* movement is an exemplar of how Greenpeace sought to distort southern domestic interests surrounding their right to self-determination and empowerment. Greenpeace declined further support for any social issues raised by indigenous activists. Participant 3 notes that the organization exited the movement stating that it was an environmental NGO and the matter regarding coal mining had been resolved "rendering no other responsibility on it or obliging Greenpeace to continue to lobby" (Participant 3). This also allowed Greenpeace to remain as the sole custodian of the campaign with domestic activists as secondary participants in their own movement as they forbade domestic activists from the strategic decision-making processes of the movement. While the movement was able to garner significant traction and cause the government to pull out from the *Mahan* project, the ultimate denominator of the movement's success or failure lay with domestic activists and their experiences throughout the discourse.

b) International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB) (1984)

The Bhopal disaster also referred to as the Bhopal gas tragedy was a toxic gas leak from Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL), a pesticide factory in Bhopal, *Madhya Pradesh* in 1984. The natural disaster claimed nearly 25,000 lives and over 500,000 people were exposed to the gas and suffered severe illnesses (Mac Sheoin 2012: 498). The ICJB was established in 1984 to provide rehabilitation and resettlement services to the gas victims. ICJB assisted survivors to hold Dow Chemical and the Indian government accountable for the gas tragedy. The movement operated at three different levels i.e., at the local (Bhopal), national (India), and transnational (Greenpeace) realm. Initially, ICJB was skeptical about affiliating with a transnational partner because UCIL was a foreign transnational corporation (TNC), but it later allied with multiple domestic and international actors because of their recognition for "collective activism that was necessitated by the origins of the movement's grievance" (Zavestowski 2009:386). ICJB partnered with the International Medical Commission on Bhopal (IMCB), Permanent People's Tribunal (PPT), and Greenpeace to address the environmental and health concerns of the afflicted people from the Bhopal gas tragedy.

In 2001, Greenpeace campaigned against Dow Chemical for purchasing Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), a US-based parent company of UCIL. Bhopal exemplified how international companies engaged in hazardous activities to cause chemical disasters in developing states. Greenpeace diverted its lobbying efforts towards the Bhopal gas issue and presented a proposal on Bhopal at the Earth Summit in Johannesburg in 2001. It also donated approximately $500,000 dollars (USD) in its Bhopal campaign. This campaign was Greenpeace's major focus to help increase international attention towards the issue of chemical leaks, safety problems, and environmental pollution. However, Greenpeace's relationship with domestic activists in the movement deteriorated after Greenpeace failed to promote the interests of the ICJB. Participant 3 also states that:

> “Both ICJB and Greenpeace had a mutually benefitting relationship. On one hand, the ICJB gained media attention through Greenpeace while Greenpeace used the Bhopal gas issue to leverage its own image in the international system. But both actors failed to form a formidable coalition that could push the government to institute effective regulatory laws on industrial disaster and community protection from natural hazards such as the Bhopal disaster that killed and rendered thousands of people with severe long-term deteriorating health effects”.

The main problem within the alliance concerned ownership rights and decision-making powers. A Bhopal social movement study reports that:

> “We have refused to work with Greenpeace in Bhopal for various reasons. We would have been quite happy if they had limited their involvement to technical and scientific expertise, and let the grassroots movement take the lead. But Greenpeace started to make statements on behalf of the movement. In a way, Greenpeace used Bhopal to keep itself in the limelight” (BSMS 2009:81).

ICJB also claimed that there were discrepancies with Greenpeace regarding the usage of the organization’s name. ICJB criticized Greenpeace for using its own name in while titling its reports as “Greenpeace and local activists”, “Greenpeace and Bhopal survivors” (Mac Sheoin 2012: 503). Greenpeace did not reference ICJB’s name sufficiently enough in these documents to increase credibility just for itself as an international NGO and not ICJB. In turn, Greenpeace used its name 234 times in all the reports it published on the Bhopal gas incident while “Bhopal survivors” were mentioned 93 times and “ICJB” was only mentioned 58 times (2012: 505). ICJB did not want to lose autonomy over the movement and simply become auxiliaries of Greenpeace (2012: 506) so it quit the alliance. Participant 3 highlights how this trend led to several discrepancies between the two groups regarding the agreed rules of the partnership and which subsequently led to both groups to sever their coalition. As a result, ICJB was able to restore its claim over the movements’ resources including financial, research, cadre, branding, and sociocultural capital while Greenpeace left the movement after gaining significant acclaim for itself as leaders of the movement at the global stage (2012: 507).

Participant 3 refers to Greenpeace as a hegemonic power in the Greenpeace-ICJB relationship:

> “This was because Greenpeace deliberately attempted to dominate the movement by diminishing minority voices and referring to the native population as ‘survivors’ and not ICJB campaigners. This implied a dismissal of ICJB lobbying efforts and minimized the Bhopal gas victims struggles by further marginalizing the already marginalized. ICJB desired to be identified as owners of the campaign, but Greenpeace prohibited this for which they later submitted a written apology to ICJB activists in 2002”.

Participant 3 also notes that, “ICJB had sufficient resources from other foreign sources such as Barrage Dow Day and Amnesty International to support its activities. They eventually pulled out of Greenpeace but had to be endure a toxic relationship for over five years”.

Thus, the ICJB case exemplifies how Greenpeace used ICJB to improve its global image in the international community, but it did not fully represent the interests of domestic activists in the movement that were working towards the rehabilitation and treatment of the Bhopal gas victims. Instead of empowering ICJB actors and bringing their sociopolitical issues to the forefront, Greenpeace was more interested in gaining greater recognition for itself by focusing on their own contributions in the reports and documents that were published. In turn, Greenpeace was also disinterested in transferring the ownership and authority rights of the movement to ICJB. They not only leveraged themselves as custodians of the movement but also displayed no motive or intent to eventually encourage ICJB activists to become leaders of their movement. This indicated Greenpeace's ability to influence ICJB and prioritize their own objectives over their southern partner with whom they were involved.

c) Pathalgadi movement (1996)

The *Pathalgadi* movement began in the state of *Jharkhand* in 1996 after the state's native population expressed their need for self-governance and autonomy. *Pathalgadi* activists expressed their right to self-determination in their governance structures and, therefore, dismissed the idea of the central or state government to institute any developmental policies or economic measures in their region. Participant 14 states that, "the *Pathalgadi* community demanded a restoration of their land acquisition rights and protection of their cultural norms and traditions in the state". The *Adivasis* community placed huge stone plaques at the village entry points with inscriptions from the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution that deals with the right to preserve and protect indigenous property and resources in the state. *Pathalgadi* implies "stone carving", an ancient indigenous practice of engraving tenets and inscriptions on stones. *Pathalgadi* activists carved the Panchayat (Extension Schedule) Act (PESA) 1996 on large stones to prohibit outsiders from entering their vicinity as intruders were considered inadmissible inside the village area. Participant 14 highlights how the PESA protects persons living under the Fifth Schedule Areas of India from political exploitation and grants them the right to self-governance and self-rule. Thus, Adivasis activists of the movement have been rejecting and renouncing government legislations and only following regulations directly executed to them by the *Gram Panchayat* i.e., village council.

Intruders attempting to enter the village arises suspicion among *Pathalgadi* activists such that they are forcibly evicted from the area. This is primarily because all external state and non-state actors are recognized as 'foreigners' and 'alien' to the domestic affairs of the indigenous people. Participant 14 explains how the *Pathalgadi* movement premised its campaign on the core-periphery divide that exists between the domestic and subregional/international realm. The *Pathalgadi* community occupies 26% of the total population in *Jharkhand* where 200 villages reside in four districts of the state i.e., *Kunti, Gumla, Simdega*, and *West Singhbhum* (Tewary 2018). Thus, domestic activists do not require the formation of coalitions with foreign actors as they have a large population of indigenous activists to support their movement. Outsiders are not only rejected for being ignorant and unlearned about the *Pathalgadi* struggles but because of their ability to misquote and underrepresent the internal socioenvironmental issues of natives by external actors.

The government has also commissioned the construction of several land mining projects in the *Pathalgadi* tribal areas with the Usha Martin Group and Tata Steel worth approximately 40 billion dollars (USD) (Singh 2019: 29) that *Pathalgadi* activists have opposed. These activists emphasize that local empowerment and economic development should be determined by the *Gram Panchayat* i.e., village governance systems and not state actors as they do not represent the interests of the *Adivasis* community in *Jharkhand*. Additionally, the *Chotanagpur Tenancy* (CNT) (1908) and the *Santhal Pargana Tenancy* act (SPT) (1949) were instituted to protect native land from being used for commercial purposes. The acts also prohibited the transfer of tribal property to non-tribal entities. However, in 2016, the BJP government amended these acts (Maanvi 2020) permitting the Indian government to procure indigenous land for commercial reasons without requiring them to seek the permission of *Gram Sabhas* (an agency of the village governance system). *Pathalgadi* activists perceived this move as an attempt to strip local village actors of their constitutional rights and entitlements guaranteed to them by the Indian Constitution.

Participant 14 states that:

> "*Pathalgadi* activists fear losing their cultural traditions, community-based natural resources, and dispute resolution mechanisms with the admission of foreign actors into their village spaces. Preventing foreign actors from entering the villages allows domestic activists to safeguard and preserve their land, resources, and cultural identity which is at stake when a foreign actor is granted admission".

In turn, *Pathalgadi* activists aim to promote their cultural heritage by empowering the *Gram Sabhas* and *Panchayati Raj* (i.e., local village councils). They entrust these agencies to take care of the domestic issues of the indigenous community that entail the land acquisition problem, rehabilitation, and resettlement of the tribal population. Participant 14 also notes that, "*Pathalgadi* activists believe that state and non-state actors are withdrawn from the peripheral problems of minority groups such that any involvement of the Indian government or other non-tribal actors would invite deterioration and decline of the *Pathalgadi* resources, cultural identity, and local values of the tribal community". As a result, domestic activists in the movement have developed a heightened sense of self-regulation and governance. Foreign actors are viewed as dominant and persuasive entities with neocolonial agendas. This cautions domestic activists to protect themselves from the Eurocentric advances of these neocolonial powers.

Participant 1 explains how during imperialism, *Adivasis* were subservient to the British colonial powers such that it led to the amalgamation of village councils into state governance structures. Participant 14 adds that the *Adivasi* population lost control over their forest reserves and were forced to pay higher taxes over their own resources during the British colonial conquest. This resulted in widespread protests which pressured the government to pass the CNT and SPT acts to safeguard the rights of the tribal community over their land but also allow the government a fair share of control over indigenous resources. But due to the legislative amendments in 2016, *Pathalgadi* activists felt threatened and began reclaiming their tribal rights by protesting the colonial inquisition of the state over their village (Tewary 2018). Since then, *Pathalgadi* activists have been advocating for their constitutional right to construct and develop the village themselves. "They plan to raise funds locally through the support of rural sympathizers. *Pathalgadi* activists run their advocacy campaigns and encourage other village locals to remain self-sufficient, resist foreign intervention and mobilize each other" (Participant 14).

However, Participant 14 also examines how *Pathalgadi* activists are apprehensive about foreign involvement as it invokes setbacks onto the campaign and *Adivasis* community. "*Pathalgadi* activists are finding it increasingly difficult to gather sufficient resources to run the movement. They rely on their own material and financial resources which makes sustenance an issue when outsiders are refrained from extending financial aid and material support to them" (Participant 14). Isolationism also leaves *Pathalgadi* activists vulnerable to political seclusion. Restricting civil society actors from entering the village premises does not eliminate the possibility of governmental force and aggression. The government is still capable of intimidating protestors by using physical force on them. For example, the Sterlite protests led to the killing of 13 activists by the police in 2018 in *Thoothukudi* (Varadhan 2018). *Pathalgadi* activists are also wary about drawing solidarity ties with other NGOs and movements as they feel that others may not understand their social, economic, and environmental interests subjecting them to change their ideology or undermine their concerns at the local and national stage. They fear that external actors have a foreign agenda which may interfere in their campaign objectives in the long run.

Failing to see the benefits of global solidarity (that does not involve financial aid) and assists in research, mass mobilization, spreading awareness, campaign execution and planning, the *Pathalgadi* campaign operates in isolation. This poses the risk of political violence and fails to reap the same benefits as that of global solidarity networks. The government of *Jharkhand* also declared the *Pathalgadi* movement as an unconstitutional and anti-national movement with a means for *Naxal/Maoist*[11] terrorism in the state (Ekka 2018). In 2019, it was reported that more than 10,000 tribal activists were booked for sedition under Section 14A of the Indian Penal Code for participating in the *Pathalgadi* movement (Sharma 2019). In January 2020, seven *Pathalgadi* activists were also decapitated by the police administration and by those in opposition to the *Pathalgadi* movement (Kiro 2020).

Thus, the *Pathalgadi* movement presents a challenge to the idea of transnational advocacy in India. Discouraging external actors from allying with the movement reduces the possibility of western influence and presents activists with a decolonial approach towards environmentalism in the global South. It also allows domestic activists to take independent decisions and be the sole custodians of their movement, protecting the interests and aspirations of the *Pathalgadi* tribal community. *Pathalgadi* activists practice self-rule rejecting all forms of external intervention influenced by foreign subjectivities and standards. This helps them keep the state and non-state actors at a distance, maintain the identity of the *Adivasis* people and offer empowerment instead of power. Participant 14 illustrates this trend of the *Pathalgadi* community:

> "The *Pathalgadi* movement has rejected all forms of coalitions with international NGOs that have extended support to the campaign through various solidarity efforts and have contradicted the ethos and principles of the *Pathalgadi Adivasis* community. This group

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[11] Naxalite-Maoist insurgency is a far-left extremist militant conflict between the Maoists (also referred to as Naxals) and the Indian state in northeast India since the 1960s. This separatist group is supportive of the political ideology of Maoism and fights for the improvement of land rights, employment opportunities and social conditions of the tribal population in the Red Corridor [i.e., the influenced zone (West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh)]. They originated from the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) split in 1967 and re-emerged post the formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI-ML). The Indian government refers to 'anti-national' entities as 'urban naxals' or 'Maoists' to illustrate the trajectory of dissent in the state and the anti-India, anti-Hindu approach certain nonstate actors have taken and which must be delegitimized and controlled.

> upholds values of self-rule and builds on the traditional practice of assigning more power to *Gram Sabhas*. Despite facing challenges regarding the sustenance of its movement, *Pathalgadi* activists have been able to reinvent the system of reclaiming native rights over indigenous community resources i.e., *jal, jangal*, and *jameen* (tribal, water, forests, and land)".

e) Affected Citizens for Teesta (ACT) (2003)

In 2003, the ACT was established to protect the *Lepcha* tribal community's social identity and human rights in *Dzongu* reserve of the state of Sikkim. The government of Sikkim proposed the construction of several mega hydro-electric power projects including *Teesta* I to VI, commenced by the National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC). This raised concerns regarding the ecological and sociocultural impacts of the dams on the indigenous population residing along the *Teesta River* and which are at threat because of their 'vanishing' and 'diminishing tribe' status. The *Lepcha* recognize Sikkim as their ancestral land, belonging to the *Lepcha* tribal population (Deo et al 2011). Participant 12 explains how ACT compelled the Sikkim government to scrap two out of the total six hydel projects in the state that posed as a direct threat to the indigenous *Lepcha*. *Teesta* V was commissioned by the NHPC while *Teesta* VI that was initially intended to be constructed by Lanco *Teesta* Hydro Power Ltd., collapsed due to technical reasons. ACT has been protesting the post-commissioned *Teesta* III project (i.e., the largest dam with a cumulative capacity of 1200MW) and the *Teesta* IV and V dam projects.

The *Teesta* V project is the first among the series of dams that was built. It is the most controversial dam and has also been granted an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) approval without investigation or any comprehensive analysis determining the developmental impacts of the dam on the *Lepcha* community and the ecology of the state (Kohli 2010). Additionally, five other dam projects have also been granted environmental clearances by the Sikkim government which raises concerns regarding ecological denialism and dismissal of *Adivasis* rights in northeast India. Participant 12 notes that, "the dams are intended to displace the *Lepcha* tribal community as they will erode our identity and threaten to devastate the state's ecology including its natural resources and biodiversity". Nearly 168 hydropower dams with a cumulative capacity of 63,328 MW have already been planned to be constructed in the region (India Water Portal 2008).

Participant 12 highlights how ACT activists have protested these projects:

> "We have engaged in *ahimsa* (nonviolent), *satyagraha* (peaceful protests), hunger strikes, and street marches to campaign against the government's rudimentary system of development which includes the installation of these large-scale hydroelectric projects in the state aiming to further marginalize us. ACT's advocacy efforts have garnered increased media coverage on the Sikkim dam issue especially after the announcement of an indefinite hunger strike by Dawa Lepcha, founder of the ACT, who fasted for 65 days in June 2007".

International NGOs such as ActionAid have also extended their solidarity towards the Sikkim dam movement, but this generated some discontent. Participant 12 states:

> "Advocacy exchanges between the ACT and ActionAid India deteriorated from the onset because of their moral and ethical foundational differences. ActionAid India wanted to partner

> with ACT, but *Lepcha* activists exhibited their reservations about foreign aid and how that would impact the movement in the long run vis-à-vis the FCRA and influence of western powers. ACT is financially supported by local activists but accepted ActionAid's solidarity as it resonated with the cause of the *Lepcha* at the time. However, ActionAid had a unique approach that was unidimensional, top-down, and linear. ACT activists felt their interests were being misrepresented in the partnership that stalled the coalition midway" (Participant 12).

ACT and ActionAid India's transnational partnership demonstrates the implications of TANs on domestic NGOs and the discriminatory, exploitative practices used by northern NGOs on small-scale, less-resourced, advocacy organizations that are trying to grow in the global South. Participant 12 analyzes this with an illustration:

> "After the hunger strike in 2007, ACT began a digitization programme to digitally document, monitor, and record all campaign-related work on the *Teesta River* dam issue. This project was funded by ActionAid India, but ACT activists identified certain problems with ActionAid India's approach. The reports and documents finalized for publication were proofread by ActionAid India that had deleted multiple issues including the connections drawn between the *Lepcha* ethnic identity and the environment, the importance of saving and preserving the *Lepcha* dialect, and maintaining other cultural traditions of the state. These issues were formerly discussed with ActionAid India, but they ignored these concerns and chiefly focused on the hydroelectric dam issue. Other concerns intrinsic to the *Lepcha* community such as social identity, cultural values, and community building were eliminated from ActionAid India's vision and this led the two groups to part ways".

Multiple identity-based issues of the *Lepcha* activists were ignored by ActionAid India in their campaign reports as the organization solely focused on the negative impact of the dams on the environment. They failed to highlight the threat posed towards the *Lepcha* ethnic identity which became evident when Sikkim merged with India and the *Lepcha* were recognized as the earliest inhabitants of the state along with the *Bhutia* and *Nepali* tribes (that migrated from Tibet, Bhutan, and Nepal). The *Lepcha* were classified as the "Most Primitive Tribe Group" in the Sikkim Assembly in 2005 (Deo et al 2011) because post-1975 the *Lepcha* were pushed to the state's dense forest areas as the *Bhutia,* and *Nepali* communities scaled economically in the workforce. This changed the ethnic and demographic composition of the state leaving the *Lepcha* economically, culturally, and politically far behind (Gorer 1938: 36).

The *Lepcha* view the construction of the *Teesta* dam as a major threat to their social identity and existence because approximately only 7000 *Lepcha* natives live in the *Dzongu* region (Deo et al 2011). "*Dzongu* reserve is identified as the cultural heritage site of the *Lepcha* where the traditions and cultural practices of the *Lepcha* community have been preserved for years" (Participant 12). The reserve was declared a specially protected area in 1956 with the state allotting entry restrictions to outsiders including non-*Lepcha* and non-*Dzongu Lepcha* (Deo et al 2011). These groups are prohibited from entering the reserve by the state because the *Lepcha* perceive that an ethnic erosion of their identity is taking place. In effect, the construction of the hydel power projects along the *Teesta* River by the Sikkim government would threaten to uproot the *Lepcha* ethnic identity and culture in the region. However, these concerns were not shared by ActionAid India. Participant 12 highlights:

> "ActionAid India failed to leverage the ethnic problems of the *Lepcha* community in Sikkim. Not only did they misconstrue and forge their struggles in the reports they published by focusing their attention only on the environmental impacts of the construction of the dams, but ActionAid India also deliberately ignored the identity and culture-based issues of the *Lepcha* community that are in tandem with their fight for social equity, justice, human rights, and ethnic conservation in *Dzongu.* It became evident that there existed a hierarchal relationship between ActionAid India as the donor and ACT as their recipient. ACT's interests were not fully being represented and as a small-scale, advocacy organization ACT deemed it in its best interest to stall their union with ActionAid India. This was essential to reclaim and restore their identity and culture which is diminishing at an alarming rate in Sikkim".

Subsequently, ACT rejected all forms of foreign support and relied wholly on domestic sources of funding i.e., through political parties, university student unions, local media organizations, and urban sympathizers across the state. ACT held awareness camps on the *Lepcha* dam issue that were supported by the International Rivers Network (IRN). It also received support from other domestic NGOs in India such as Kalpavriksh Environment Action Group, Pune, and the Intercultural Resources, New Delhi. ACT has also been approached by several northern NGOs to partner with and document their struggles through cinematography and other visual art forms, but ACT declined all these propositions because of their intent was unclear. Participant 12 explains that:

> "An American NGO approached us for a documentary on the Sikkim hydroelectric dam issue. But we rejected the offer because the film script eliminated important elements of the movement including ethnic cleansing and threat to *Lepcha* social identity and cultural traditions. ACT activists could also not disclose certain information about the campaign that was required for the film. This entailed details about ACT's relationship with state powers that could have jeopardized the campaign and harm the *Lepcha* community. Thus, even though allying with the NGO would have proven to be a lucrative opportunity for the *Lepcha* in terms of documenting their struggles at the global stage but *Lepcha* activists rejected this offer".

ACT activists not only rejected transnational support and sought help from internal sources, but they also altered their lobbying approach after ActionAid India's exit. Participant 12 examines how ACT began sending appeals and legal notices to the Sikkim government instead of the Central (federal) government to avoid the Center's attention on it. Appealing to the *Sikkim* government and refraining from dissenting against the Indian government allowed ACT activists to leverage their socioenvironmental struggles vis-à-vis the dams and ethnic identity issue in the state. They raised concerns regarding various issues such as road construction, infrastructural development, preservation of the wildlife, and the biodiversity of the state. This allowed them to emphasize the *Lepcha* struggles and urge for the rehabilitation and resettlement rights of affected *Lepcha* populations. This also eventually resulted in the cessation of several planned hydel power projects along the *Teesta River*.

In sum, the ACT was able to identify the neocolonial and Eurocentric advances of ActionAid India. ACT successfully disassociated itself from ActionAid India when it noticed that the two organizations had varied objectives. ACT refused to accept monetary assistance from ActionAid India that sought to diminish its ethnicity and socioeconomic status in the state. Instead, it accepted the solidarity extended to it by other local NGOs in the state. Following the second phase of the hunger strikes that lasted for 95 days, ACT was able to pressure the Sikkim government to withdraw 4 hydroelectric power projects from *Dzongu* reserve. "A total of 13 out of 29 hydropower projects have been scrapped because of ACT's initiatives" (Participant 12). ACT's experiences with the influence of ActionAid India helped the organization realize that its interests were being maligned and subjugated by a northern power. Allowing ActionAid India to determine the course of the campaign would reduce the significance of the *Lepcha* problem on moral and ethical grounds instigating exploitation of the *Lepcha* tribal community and pushing them further to the periphery. However, ACT recognized these problems early on that helped it opt out of the alliance and utilize a self-reliant, less resourced, and South-South TANs approach based on principles of group solidarity that allowed ACT activists to empower and create new opportunities for themselves.

The next section outlines the divide between North-South activists in collective advocacy forums that seek to empower subaltern NGOs but instead reinforce problems of southern oppression, discrimination, and marginalization onto domestic activists. These activists already embody colonial memories of their past and are subjected to revisiting their violent and exploitative history by dealing with the neocolonial advances of transnational actors in the global South. It examines the origins of Indian environmental thought that premises on Hindu religious tenets and *Gandhian* philosophies on environmental protection and self-control. These ideas formulate the foundational principles of Indian environmentalism that distinguish it from northern powers. It also analyzes the problem of transnationalism from the perspective of western hegemony and depicts how global solidarity models are deemed better for the Indian environmental advocacy sector.

North-South divide

NGOs in the global North and South are significantly different from each other. Domestic NGOs and movements are described as traditional advocacies that are shapeless, inexperienced, and directionless. This permits northern actors to play a key role in reorganizing and remodeling these domestic groups by marginalizing them and placing them within broad advocacy frameworks that are often outlined by northern powers. This also exhibits the hierarchal relationship between traditional TANs between the global North and South where southern domestic groups become unequal stakeholders in their own discourses abiding them to the diktats of northern NGOs. Northern donors maintain greater leverage and control in these partnerships as they are entitled to make strategic decisions regarding campaign activities and modus operandi. This leads to issues of power exploitation, domination, and inequality as northern actors gain greater control in these alliances and domestic activists become subordinates. Such arrangements cause the dismissal of subaltern ideological interests, a misrepresentation and misquotation of socioecological struggles, greater power assertion of northern objectives, and the marginalization of indigenous people.

Participant 22 states that:

> "The general perception of domestic advocacy in India by northern NGOs is that they require the transfer of northern expertise and resources to carry out their day-to-day

> functions. Financial aid deepens the impression that domestic activists are resource deficit making them vulnerable to the system of dominance and dictation. This causes increased dependency on the global North for material and financial aid reducing their independence and control over their campaigns because from the onset power dynamics are lopsided".

Additionally, southern NGOs continue to rely on TANs for their ability to resolve domestic matters and sustain movements through resource provisions. The general perception is that NGOs would disintegrate without transnational support as governmental repression increases and democratic participation becomes progressively intolerant in the state.

Participant 1 states that:

> "Typically, TANs are perceived as 'well intentioned' because they elevate southern domestic struggles at the international stage, transfer technological/financial resources, provide capacity building support, and pressure inflexible governments for policy change. But TANs are not entirely altruistic because they bear limitations as solidarity groups, advocacy partners, subaltern visionaries, and facilitators of decoloniality in states. Thus, gauging the opportunities and challenges associated with TANs are important to holistically understand the role TANs play in developing states such as India".

Participant 15 also points out that:

> "The primary challenge for most domestic NGOs in India is funding. Domestic activists seek foreign assistance in financial matters, but they also require instruction and support for capacity building, fact-based lobbying, and a cultivated understanding about the precarious nature of governments. This requires external assistance which is deficient in India because philanthropic organizations and other elite groups shy away from funding the NGO sector for the fear of governmental repression".

These factors compel domestic NGOs to ally with foreign actors because these partnerships not only garner resources, but they also provide a reduced amount of stress as actors operate in collectives as opposed to campaigning alone. Participant 16 also reiterates that:

> "There is a growing trend for TANs in India because of the amount of financial, technological, and capacity-building support international advocacies offer domestic NGOs. This kind of support is not available within India's domestic quarters and thus helps accelerate the process of mass mobilization, awareness, and redressal for the aggrieved socioenvironmental problems of indigenous communities in the state. However, disputes arise when such transfers take place without the acknowledgment of India's colonial past that suffers from a brutal history of exploitation and injustice at the hands of western powers".

TANs operate in India under the pretext of resolving contemporary environmental problems. They seek to improve southern conditions by providing various mechanisms for socioecological advancement and growth. But most northern NGOs have weak roots in these societies as they face pressure 'upwards' from their donors to be accountable to them rather than being focused on their beneficiaries 'below' (Banks et al 2015). These functions have allowed TANs to excel in their home countries but fail in southern states as domestic NGOs increasingly assimilate within the hegemonic production of neocolonial and Eurocentric frameworks. On the other hand, northern NGOs have been leveraging their goals and objectives in subaltern realms. Participant 22 notes:

> "TANs are unable to discern India's colonial history within their advocacy models facilitating them to deepen the disparities and structural imbalances that exist between traditional TANs in the global North and South. This imposes various restrictive practices on southern NGOs rendering domestic activists as subordinates in movements, keeping them away from strategic decision-making, amplifying northern priorities whilst ignoring the subjectivities and struggles of indigenous peoples".

For instance, ActionAid India devalued the *Lepcha* community's concerns regarding their ethnic identity being intrinsic to the *Teesta* dam issue. ActionAid India sidelined these concerns by only focusing on their campaign objectives which entailed aversion of the construction of hydroelectric dams along the *Teesta River* and to protect the environment. In turn, ActionAid India remained blinded to the lived realities and subaltern subjectivities of the *Lepcha* community. This dismissal and selective nitpicking of cultural and environmental issues informed an attitude of racial and social injustice where northern actors engaged in social discrimination and the further marginalization of their southern allies to the periphery.

Domestic advocacies also possess greater knowledge and expertise about their local contexts but there is less realization of this in the transnational domain. Participant 18 elucidates:

> "Domestic activists possess the ability to translate the lived experiences of the southern realm in a more lucid and proficient manner than that of their northern counterparts. Yet, northern activists are opportune to present this knowledge at the international stage in purely transactional terms. In doing so, they lay primary focus on the larger geopolitical interests of the global North as opposed to delving deeper into the living conditions and humanistic needs of southern advocacies".

Additionally, participant 22 reiterates that:

> "Northern governments fund their civil society organizations to enhance their image in the international system. Ergo, NGOs redirect those funds in southern spaces to redress the problems of minority communities facing communication issues with their respective governments. But they adopt a standardized approach that does not fully represent domestic interests or provide an accurate representation of subaltern struggles. In turn, domestic activists are unable to participate and exercise their democratic freedoms in these North-South arrangements but also underperform their function of decentered governance systems in the state as the Indian government is hostile towards them for which they require northern assistance".

Northern powers integrate domestic activists into a totalizing discourse governed and dominated by northern NGOs. These structures are embedded in everyday advocacy where indigenous people are pushed to the margins. Participant 16 exemplifies that, "a predominant feature in contemporary advocacy discourse is the symbolic act of grant giving which is grounded in concepts of empathy, oneness, and global solidarity. But it also portrays arbitrary relationships of authoritarianism and exploitation". Northern NGOs do not share the same value systems as that of southern advocacies. They fail to provide platforms for equal participation and exchange of ideas and information for subaltern upliftment and empowerment. This leads to the creation of lopsided relationships reducing the autonomy of southern activists. Participant 17 also states that, "transnationalism is globally predominant but offers a surfaced reality of indigenous policy objectives that paradoxically renew and reinforce western neocolonial problems through the cobweb of troubled transnational advocacy structures and archetypes".

In turn, domestic activists pursue transnational advocacy as a valuable recourse to find resolutions for their aggrieved environmental conditions despite the challenges posed towards them by TANs. The financial aid offered by northern organizations is large enough to attract southern NGOs to ally with them and overlook the associated problems of TANs vis-à-vis state repression and northern influence that results from foreign funding. Participant 22 elaborates on this:

> "Domestic NGOs and movements may cease to exist if a transnational partner pulls out of these alliances due to FCRA reasons. Increased northern dependency often reduces the scope of domestic advocacies to fend for themselves. Domestic NGOs lose their autonomy and opportunity to ever self-govern their movements because northern advocacies enter such coalitions without an exit plan. There is also no strategic thinking about the long-term sustenance and growth of southern advocacy groups. Northern NGOs should deliberate over events that may involve domestic advocacies to takeover and transition into self-governance roles causing them to become the sovereign bearers of their advocacies once transnational support is retracted from them. They should also envision a decolonial realm where domestic activists can independently run their movement minus donor assistance in the long run to help empower them and promulgate indigenous knowledge systems".

Indian environmental thought also foregrounds some of these notions as Guha (1993) asserts how Indian environmentalism is impacted by India's colonial history with environmental degradation and the unequal distribution of its natural resources and land. Sharma (2012) analyzes India's relationship with nature as it emerged from Hindu religious tenets and cultural beliefs about a Hinduized green lifestyle. This ideology aimed to develop eco-villages and natural ecosystems that focused on conservation, biodiversity, and ecological protection. Guha and Gadgil (1989) argue that there existed an ecological equilibrium due to the customary practices of local communities during the pre-colonial era that leveraged local knowledge systems and self-reliant growth strategies as advocated by Gandhi.

Participant 16 explains: "these activist groups are defying modern environmentalism by practicing self-reliance, minimalism, and conscientious living. They evade all forms of transnational assistance because it involves the same problems that they are confronting and challenging the state with". Guha discerns how Gandhi was against the idea of western development because of its unsustainable model that was resource, capital-intensive, and environmentally destructive (1995: 107-12). Gandhi's moral framework included that India had to be self-sufficient and self-reliant in order to be economically prosperous. "The difference between the West and the East is what I have explained it to be, and it is a great one. The civilization of the West is based on self-indulgence, ours on self-control" (Gandhi 1918: 150). "Self-control meaning deliberate refraining from the use of certain things. No one is under pressure from anyone else in this matter. This cultivates strength of the *atman*, takes one higher" (Gandhi 1919: 187).

Gandhi's philosophical teachings led to the foundational thinking of Indian environmentalism that many urban and rural-based advocacies emulated. Gandhi exemplified how western industrialization was the reason for massive ecological degradation and social exploitation such that Indian indigenous communities would have to adopt a self-reliant approach in order to avoid the mistakes of the western world and help create more sustainable societies. In this manner, southern environmentalists would refrain from external engagement by avoiding foreign dependency and thus relying on 'the self' for all their resource needs. This was because northern actors were not only responsible for India's violent colonial past, but that transnational groups also exhibited calculative and selfish behaviours that failed to compound the subjectivities and lived experiences of the state's indigenous people.

Thus, TANs pose as an impediment for southern activists disempowering and pushing them further to the periphery. Gandhi also urged the production of indigenous knowledge systems for the socioeconomic and environmental development of India. He states, "movements are likely to develop more rapidly and to have a broader basis, if they draw their strength from the people of the State, produce self-reliance in them, and are in tune with the conditions prevailing there, and do not rely on extraneous help and assistance" (Gandhi 1938: 124). Gandhi exemplified this by citing the importance of the spinning wheel which was a product of local Indian origin and modelled as a substitute for western goods and services demonstrating how India could adopt self-sufficiency by relying on their own knowledge systems. "The spinning-wheel is the greatest instrument for bettering the condition of the poor. It gives a ray of hope and a sense of self-respect. It is a means of binding together all the many millions of people in India. One should not rest content merely making a donation which would be of no use if they did not wear khaddar[12]" (Gandhi 1927: 186).

Additionally, Guha and Gadgil (1992) trace the role of local communities in north India to discern how indigenous communities supplied to local knowledge systems by ecological observation and conservation of resources. For instance, they engaged in nature-worshipping, agricultural deities, and fertility cults. These rural communities perceived nature in terms of judiciously utilizing natural resources and relying on traditional methods of conservation to better understand the human ecology. Participant 11 explains that "indigenous environmentalism also meant the mobilization of masses within the rural belts by incorporating the livid realities, spiritual experiences, and ideological beliefs of local communities that aimed to protect the environment against neocolonial activity". For example, the adoption of various symbolic gestures such as 'hugging trees' as exhibited by the *Chipko* movement or 'carving stones' as practiced by the *Pathalgadi* activists and other nature-based sacrifices as demonstrated by the Bishnoi community indicated the ways in which indigenous environmentalism was performed by southern tribal groups in India. Environmental protection is intrinsic in neo-Hinduism that led to the conceptualization of India's foremost thoughts on environmental best practices, states Sharma 2012. Hindu religious doctrines entailed concepts of *dharma* (duty) towards the environment, *karma* (implications) for environmental degradation, and *ishavasyam* (divinity in all infinite forms of life i.e., paganism). These rural communities protected local ecosystems by building *vrikshamandiras* (tree temples) and *nirmal nirs* (water harvesting sites). They used neo-Hinduism to practice environmental restoration and imbibed the philosophical teachings of Gandhi to advocate 'simple living', '*ahimsa*' (nonviolence) and self-reliance to attain *satyagraha* i.e., the ultimate form of *moksha* (freedom of the soul).

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[12] A traditional hand spun clothing item made out of cotton in India.

TANs have changed these narratives with the advent of new transnational partnerships in the Indian advocacy sector after the 1990s. Subaltern structures have also been replaced by northern processes premised on global solidarity models but entail the vested interests of transnational actors. Thus, the conditions for conducting environmental advocacy in the global North-South are disparate from each other intending to achieve varied policy outcomes. Transnationalism sets barriers for domestic activists resisting globalized hegemonic processes and powers. They reinforce the conditions for neocolonial oppression and exploitation as transnational actors form collective advocacy groups to redress southern environmental problems. They fail to acknowledge the subjectivities and sensitivities of colonial India drawing on their own interests and priorities to meet 'upward' northern expectations. Due to the varied value systems, transnational activists also discount India's philosophical leanings on Gandhi and neo-Hinduism that led to the emergence of environmentalism. Environmentalism is perceived and conducted according to northern ideology which, in turn, disempowers activists and furthers their marginalization in the state.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates how certain TANs validate their power by covertly conceptualizing a neocolonial framework within southern advocacy discourses to appear more environmentally conscious about domestic issues in the global South. TANs attract domestic advocacy partnerships by luring activists with their financial resources and scientific technology and innovation to formulate alliances between the global North and South. These efforts are welcomed by southern NGOs as they presumedly deliver on policy outcomes in challenging campaign missions. For instance, the Greenpeace-led *Mahan* movement in the state of Madhya Pradesh coerced the government to stop the construction of the *Mahan* coal mine project in 2015. *Mahan's* activities were regarded as a democratic victory for other socio-environmental movements in the state that have been facing similar roadblocks with the Indian government. However, participant 3 states that, "the same movement reported instances of Greenpeace integrating its own values and norms while representing the ethnic and cultural rights of Mahan activists in the state". Participant 13 also notes:

> "The environmental concerns of the *Adivasi* community did not cease with *Mahan's* success as domestic activists continued to protest the forest rights act and the land acquisition bill amendments post-Greenpeace's exit from *Mahan*. But these discourses were not ruminated by Greenpeace because they had already advanced the *Mahan* campaign resulting with considerable success".

TANs may denote a sympathetic language of global solidarity that seeks to resolve southern problems but instead entails a deceptive modus operandi that reinforces northern hegemony and the marginalization of minority groups in the state.

Northern NGOs reckon that southern domestic advocacies require the expertise and knowledge of northern powers to guide their campaigns. Lewis (2017) examines how northern activists recommend the flow of innovative ideas from the global North to South. Northern activists assume that they know the needs of southern advocacies and prefer transferring (rather than exchanging) knowledge, technical know-how, and capacity-building support to their southern counterparts (Lewis 2017). They provide a roadmap for southern advocacies to follow which is based on their conceptual knowledge of how domestic NGOs should function. Northern activists self-proclaim themselves as 'more skilled' and 'experienced' actors that can employ effective advocacy strategies for influencing governmental policies on behalf of their southern allies, states Participant 22. These normative assumptions emphasize that campaigning can be taught from those above. It internalizes and naturalizes the processes of northern actors operating from positions of power through which southern activists can gain training and expertise from.

But domestic environmental NGOs and movements have demonstrated their capability to effectively conduct advocacy by mobilizing masses and sustaining their movements through local support whilst rejecting transnational assistance. TANs, on the other hand, continue to deprecate domestic advocacies through their neocolonial agendas. Participant 3 exemplifies how ActionAid and Greenpeace reject individual donations and raise funds through bilateral agencies situated in the global North only. The reasoning is that individual donations create problems of donor influence and greater state repression which is not experienced in bilateral agency structures as bilateral agreements refrain them from influencing organizational policies. However, rejecting individual donations from domestic sources and focusing on bilateral agencies only reinforces the hegemonic dominion of northern organizations in southern advocacy groups causing northern influence over the subaltern interests of indigenous activists.

Participant 7 also highlights the importance of TANs as "they provide effective strategies for domestic advocacies to influence governmental policies in the global South by adopting an internationalist approach which includes creating global recognition, redefining power dynamics, motivating and unifying other activists towards achieving sociopolitical change in societies". On the other hand, global solidarity should not be combined with the western notion of transnational advocacy in the global South because these two approaches are disparate and have very different goals, meanings, and agendas. While the former is enriching, invigorating and favourable for southern advocacies, the latter is contrarily deprecating and has neocolonial origins. Global solidarity models do not involve monetary flows but assist southern NGOs to achieve their desirable sociopolitical, economic, and ecological outcomes by pressuring inflexible states into instituting effective policies in the state. They are based on notions of empathy and unity such that domestic movements can achieve effectual results without the need to partner with transnational actors.

For instance, the NBA movement adopted a global solidarity approach and was able to persuade the World Bank to withdraw from the *Sardar Sarovar* dam project. The movement did not involve any monetary transactions between advocacy groups which allowed activists to behave as allies and not custodians of the campaign. A global solidarity model does not accentuate conditions for external allies to dominate southern advocacies because there are no obligations to return favours. Instead, activists can organize campaigns according to their will and pressure allies to consider their interests more seriously. However, the drawback of this model is that global solidarity does not bind domestic-international activists together. Since there is no legal agreement between the two groups, foreign actors are easily able to quit campaigns based on their impulse. On the other hand, TANs adopt a transactional approach obliging southern advocacies to northern prerogatives by offering them financial aid, technology transfers, and research and development (R&D) support. This makes it more challenging for northern NGOs to suddenly exit movements. TANs legally bind NGOs in the global North and South together, but in the case of global solidarity activists are able to withdraw support at any time rendering domestic activists vulnerable and weak in their movements.

A global solidarity model is also likely to invoke the influence of northern powers on southern advocacies as that of TANs. But the prospect for this to happen is low. This is because there a limited stakes involved in these exchanges between the global North and South. Since there is no flow of material and financial aid from international NGOs to the domestic ones, the plausibility of northern dominance is also small. More so, such cross-border relationships between the two groups takes place based on feelings of empathy, compassion, and unity. Therefore, building solidarity with each other situates issues of common concern more effectively and pushes back against repressive governments as actors are fully able to comprehend southern problems and willing to help them represent their cause in all respects. This is unlike TANs that occasionally neglect some campaign objectives of southern NGOs to meet their needs.

Rural-based movements that adopt a *Gandhian* approach such as the *FRA, Pathalgadi,* and the *NBA* have been able to guard themselves against these frailties and redefine the notion of transnationalism and global solidarity in India. Participant 2 states that, "Indian environmental movements such as the *NBA* have reinvigorated the frontiers of domestic ecological systems in the global South". Financial assistance is a mere aspect of transnational advocacy, but global solidarity and the internationalization of movements benefits indigenous activists without relying on external actors for their support. Global solidarity among activists helps garner national and international attention. It fosters global cooperation and offers greater credibility and augmentation of movements. It also advances viable solutions for challenging environmental problems in states without the steadfast expectation to deliver on the campaign front that monetary transactions with TANs implicate. Global solidarity initiatives invoke greater pressure on governments to implement tighter policies in the state while TANs carryout the same functions but at a service delivery cost. Participant 5 states that, "urban-based NGOs such as Greenpeace, ActionAid, and Amnesty International have created greater dependability on foreign logistical support making domestic advocacies increasingly reliant on northern actors for the advancement and sustenance of their operations". They are lesser dependent on their own internal structures and processes for existence causing them to engage in other pursuits such as traveling frequently and living grandiose lifestyles through the transnational support they receive which are damaging impressions for the movement-building space in India.

Chapter 6
Advocacy Coalition Framework

Introduction

This chapter devises a new strategic framework for southern domestic advocacies to resolve their problems associated with transnationalism in the global South. It premises on the understanding that domestic activists are often left disadvantaged when they ally with transnational actors situated in the global North embodying neocolonial identities and the state's concerted efforts to diminish the rise of TANs in India. While the state considers NGOs as 'democratic institutions' and 'harbingers of change', TANs are understood as a constructed western, postcolonial entity fostering negative growth and development in emerging economies. TANs are referred to as 'anti-national' and 'anti-India' and, therefore, suppressed by the Indian state that critiques them for their colonial mentality towards the country. The perception is that TANs create conditions for domestic activists to be less accepting and considerate of governmental projects that are seeking greater economic expansion and growth in the state. Instead, TANs are purposed to repress minority groups through the FCRA mandate that institutes states to control transnational activity among NGO participants.

TANs are also recognized as propagators of northern ideologies. In postcolonial societies, they tend to marginalize and disempower indigenous actors whilst creating a normative consensus for transnationalism to form greater understanding and acceptability for it in subaltern regions. Showcasing how southern domestic experiences with transnational activity have fostered characteristics of power, hegemony, and dominance, this dissertation brings forth new dimensions of collective advocacy without valorizing the transnational standpoint. Rather than looking for coherent explanations of TANs, this chapter explores rich and diverse Indian intellectual resources of domestic advocacy such as *Gandhianism*, global solidarity, South-South TANs, and intersectionality that can strengthen, improve, and sustain local advocacy structures. This reveals the quest to find deeper and meaningful solutions for the transnational problem that can help liberate domestic activists ridden in the neocolonial grip of northern powers and who, until now, have been marginalized due to antagonistic domestic-international linkages.

In this light, it is important to produce new environmental questions, especially in the context of norm entrepreneurship, domestic advocacy, subalternity, identity, ethnicity, and democracy. Domestic-international encounters have been strenuous, but some internal solutions can be provided to diminish the threat of transnationalism and complement domestic advocacies with each other in complex situations. Discerning these approaches that domestic activists should adopt to strengthen their advocacy programs and mobilize the masses whilst augmenting the movement-building space in India can offer qualitative research to academics, but also the pragmatic steps needed by domestic activists at this time to counter transnational challenges. Using traditional forms of environmentalism and southern environmental politics can provide new visions and insights for indigenous communities within the Indian polity. It is unlikely that transnationalism will diminish and transform in its purpose or that ongoing issues will be amended. However, new strategic insights and measures of Indian environmentalism and academic thought can urge domestic and international actors to begin to attentively hearken to India's indigenous presence and minority voices that have been muted and invisibilized via TANs.

The data collection chapters 3 and 4 in this dissertation are an attempt to reveal this glaring reality of TANs that impose costs for domestic activists who adopt a transnational approach to acquire economic assistance and solidarity but, in turn, face government repression and northern dominance. These issues have made it more challenging for southern domestic activists who are torn between choosing to accept financial and material resources from the global North or opting for autonomous control over their movements but battling resource scarcity. Both urban and rural-based advocacies have demonstrated varied approaches in their understanding of transnationalism such that they have devised their own frameworks to work with international NGOs or without them. These strategies can offer guiding principles to provide a starting point for analytical solutions of the transnational problem. They highlight the methods urban and rural activists have adopted to combat resource deprivation or the negative implications of TANs on them. A fair number of urban activists are relatively more accepting of material and financial support from international NGOs to sustain their organizations in metropolitan cities. These areas maintain a higher cost of living and regular inflation rates urge activists to seek help from varied sources to expend their staff salaries and other lobbying endeavors.

Some rural-based advocacies that follow Gandhi's ideologies, on the other hand, do not consider TANs as a viable option for conducting advocacy because of their sociocultural inhibitions surrounding the formation of coalition building with transnational actors. These rural activists perceive TANs to be discriminating and exploitative because of their tendency to neutralize and subdue the efforts of southern advocacies. Activists in these collectives are directly impacted by the weak policies of governments as environmental issues pose a direct threat to their livelihood. In turn, the lucrative opportunities provided by foreign actors to meet indigenous resource needs are rather perceived as exigencies requiring southern servility and exploitation. Narratives of these rural activists are complex and configured by the politics of their colonial past where their villages have been impacted by the brute force of extractive industrial projects and development programs. These schemes have been devised by previous and present-day colonial governments and are compounded by feelings of insecurity and skepticism towards external actors. It is challenging to analyze the practicality of adopting an isolationist approach in advocacy structures but there seems to be a systematic exploration of these narratives in the rural sector. These contexts will help develop a comprehensive framework to understand the unique needs of southern environmentalists in peripheral areas.

As a result, the research participants in this study have helped theorize these contexts by alluding to the debates amiss in transnational studies. Participant 1 states that:

> "Transnational actors are considered as foreigners alienated to the *Adivasi* community struggles because indigenous perspectives are configured by environmental policies, management of ecosystems, and the livelihoods of those dependent on it through the lens of identity, culture, and southernisms. But foreign NGOs fail to reflect on these narratives within their mainstream ideologies weakening domestic movements and strengthening neocolonial motives".

Participant 8 also adds:

> "Numerous environmental struggles have been fought by native communities with limited attention paid to oppressive structures in the global North-South. While intolerant states lead successful campaigns to squash dissenting civil societies organizations in the state, foreign funded NGOs have also simultaneously appropriated domestic movements and colonized tribal groups".

In the light of scripting *Adivasis* visions of environmentalism, this chapter has attempted to critically evaluate TANs and excavate key strategic recommendations to conceptualize indigenous environmentalism into mainstream southern environmental thought reflecting over the contemporary relationship domestic-international activists have with each other and nature. It upholds these ideas as an important theoretical foundation for domestic advocacy in the global South. This new theoretical framework can be a synthesis for various movements: orienting their ontologies, positively transforming activists, bolstering ethnic identities, universalizing visions, and forming dynamic unities. Deconstructing these propositions allows southern activists to incorporate changes into their current advocacy frameworks encouraging them to reduce dependency on TANs and become more reliant on self-governing systems to carry forward their environmental programs.

Implications of TANs

The research findings of this dissertation highlight that transnationalism maintains strong roots in India's environmental advocacy sector, but it also poses a problem for southern domestic advocacies. It is also true that there has been a degree of failure to regard the successful experiences of indigenous environmentalism as an obvious and recognizable feature in Indian environmental thought and from which inspiration can be drawn. This is because TANs have a dominant presence in the global South that has changed the urban and rural landscape of India. Unconventional forms of environmentalism led by domestic advocacy groups have challenged persisting concerns surrounding oppressive administrative structures and neocolonial praxis but also offer futuristic insights into sustainable modes of advocacy conduct. In this sense, transnationalism has urged southern activists and the academic community to focus more on the sociopolitical traditions of indigenous environmentalism that can subside the transnational problem. Participant 26 emphasizes:

> "International NGO interests' conflict with the environmental needs of minority communities because multiple events have triggered this theorization that northern powers exploit local activists and create severe roadblocks for campaigners by curtailing freedom, imposing grassroot bondage, and instigating governments to perpetrate violence through the FCRA amendments against peaceful democratic campaigns in the state".

Further, governmental repression on TANs in India reveals how domestic movements are incompatible with transnational frameworks and place indigenous activists in more inhumane conditions with the environment, state authorities and their own futures to run campaigns in the long term. The *Kudankulam* and *Niyamgiri* movements demonstrate how governmental intolerance towards domestic activism increased after transnational alliances were formed. These cases point out instances of erroneous government allegations, hostility, incarceration to a point of homicide as the state sought to subdue foreign activity. It is evident from the examples provided that transnationalism augments governmental surveillance on domestic NGOs which otherwise can be avoided if such connections are not drawn in the first place. Most often, campaigns also dwindle away if a transnational actor is pulled out of a North-South coalition. Domestic advocacies find it more challenging to sustain themselves after dissolutions take place as it leaves them vulnerable, disadvantaged, and incapable of fending for themselves. The Indian government also meticulously applies the FCRA on ambiguous grounds to legitimately target democratic institutions by providing broad, open-ended concepts eliminating the scope for contestation and rebuttal by civil society actors. They do so, by using generic phrasings and terminologies such as 'organizations of political nature', 'economic interest of the state', and 'public interest' (Kiai 2016). These abstract qualifications permit law enforcement agencies to attack dissenting 'anti-national' and 'anti-India' heretics in the state.

Additionally, right wing Hindu political leaders also attack TANs due to the challenges they pose to the hardliner *Hindutva* ideology of the BJP government. This government advocates the practice of environmentalism through the lens of Hindu nationalism that premises on notions of imposing certain moral authoritarian codes of conduct, a desire for *Brahmanical* doctrines (i.e., religious social system of orthodox upper-caste Hindus), ultra-nationalism, eco-traditionalism, intolerance towards other religious sects, social order and discipline in society (Sharma 2012). This kind of environmental activism is divergent from transnational environmental advocacy networks that import western moral codes, liberal values, higher tolerance levels, modern outlooks, and democratic freedoms. In this way, the government controls the activities of TANs that divert focus from *Hindutva* nationalist ideologues that are deeply entrenched in ecological narratives, advocacy framings, and community relationships. But, in doing so, this also creates a regressive notion of environmentalism for others to follow that are disparate from Gandhi's philosophical teachings on environmental rights and justice. In lieu, TANs challenge mainstream Indian environmental thought by focusing on western liberal democratic values and urging activists to lead green movements with a focus on environmental action and protection, distributive justice, democratic participation, and rights-based activism. This attempt to redefine and replace traditional *Hindutva* conventional beliefs of environmentalism with a new futuristic vision that may topple the BJP out of power is a rumination the government takes seriously. Oddly enough, both transnational and Hindutva narratives are unconducive for the movement-building space in India as the former creates setbacks for domestic activists in terms of state repression and northern influence while Hindu nationalism invokes a heightened sense of communalism and sectarian divisions that disregard secular practices within environmental action.

Contemporary environmental thought in India is saturated and dominated by narratives of the hardliner right-wing perspective of the BJP government that purports Hindu nationalism on environmental movements but also creates clout for itself among majority groups to sustain and develop the continuities of these ideologues. This has, primarily, resulted from the sweeping victory and revival of the BJP government in 2014 when Prime Minister Modi was re-elected with a majority vote transforming the democratic status of the country from a liberal-centrist political posture to a conservative, nationalistic, culturally religious, and reactionary one. Besides the government, supporters of this right-leaning ideology have developed greater intolerance towards TANs as they perceive them to be neocolonial agents working in the interest of western powers that seek to keep India underdeveloped. Western liberal values of secularism, civil rights, and freedom of speech and expression that undermine the dominant political narratives of conservativism in the state are also seen as threats to Hindu nationalism requiring banishment. A

Gandhian approach is also not a legible option for these groups to pursue as it advocates for religious freedom, human rights, environmental justice, and democratic liberty which contradicts the basic tenets of Hindu nationalism that aim to control and regulate advocacy according to religious precepts in the state. In turn, environmental advocacy groups find it challenging to not only pursue their campaign activities and represent their struggles to political actors in the state but also adopt a *Gandhian* approach that encourages democratic participation through self-discipline, peaceful dissension, religious tolerance, self-governance, and the advancement of indigenous knowledge and systems.

On the other hand, concern for indigenous protection from northern influence also places TANs in a negative light. The neocolonial interests of western organizations prohibit domestic activists from empowering themselves and exercising freedom over their movements, natural resources, communities, and polity. Transnational coalitions promote dependency on the global North for various resources placing northern actors in leadership roles reinforcing their hegemonic power on the global South. Northern actors exploit these dominant positions by compelling domestic activists to honour northern priorities and, thus, push them further to the periphery. This practice sustains asymmetrical relationships between domestic-international actors that are deeply hierarchal in nature and exhibit power imbalances. It also enables and normalizes the process of neocolonialism and Eurocentrism perpetuating problems of socioecological oppression, unsustainability, and marginalization. Participant 10 states:

> "Urban environmentalists have invisibilized these narratives by encouraging the transfer of material and financial resources into the economy. They foresee financial aid as a necessary condition for movement success and sustenance. In turn, issues of oppression, exclusion, and exploitation have been sidelined as the new age neocolonial rhetoric surges which does not challenge the status quo and/or produce positive environmental change that domestic activists seek".

However, drawing on these claims perpetuates the problem of advocacy malpractices and injustices in the form of environmental racism and classism that segregates and opposes environmental groups based on their race, identities, and socioeconomic status in societies. While urban activists may see no harm in the delimiting effects of transnationalism on southern advocacy groups and pursue their own paths with transnational actors, it is clear from the research data that there exists some form of influence from the global North that places minority groups at relatively lower governing roles in their movements than that of their foreign counterparts. In this light, it is vital to envisage an alternate paradigm that rejects the entry of TANs in southern spaces allowing domestic activists to execute local indigenous knowledge systems to assert their environmental rights and freedoms in the state. This will allow domestic activists to become more self-sufficient as opposed to being externally dependent on northern powers. It will also help them discover new innovative pathways to addressing domestic advocacy-related challenges for which southern actors routinely seek the North's assistance in developing solutions to improving mobilization techniques, lobbying methods, spreading environmental awareness, and maintaining interactions with the state.

It can also help domestic activists to reimagine their praxis based on *Gandhian* approaches of self-reliance and limited interdependence. This will help activists re-evaluate their critical needs versus their wants and eliminate excesses from their advocacy structures. Gandhi urges domestic activists to find passion in purpose and avidly devote themselves to remain woke and fortified in their missions towards fighting political struggles. This includes a conscientious rejection of assimilating with external powers that create the need for resource dependency and institutionalization. This systematically deprives southern advocacies from social resilience and further marginalizes grassroots activists to the periphery.

Notions of oppressive, domineering, and exploitative North-South advocacy structures are evolving concepts in transnational studies. They not only allude to domestic-international relationships that are problematic in nature but also highlight how domestic activists need to develop a better working arrangement with each other through consensus and coordination. This can be facilitated by adopting *Gandhian* approaches, resisting the FCRA, encouraging South-South TANs and global solidarity that display lesser-known challenges than that of North-South networks. Gandhi helps one to think deeper about political struggles — not just in terms of 'the other' but also in terms of 'the self'. Gandhi advocated for the transformation of the human mind to look inward for answers and seek change from within in order to reap results for positive sociopolitical and environmental change. Similarly, South-South transnationalism also create a common ground for various activists to assimilate and facilitate their advocacies together. They promote southern participation in networks, strengthen innovative technologies, research development programs, and leverage indigenous knowledge systems to govern political economic structures in states.

Additionally, a global solidarity model that is based on non-monetary flows and invokes unity, empathy and compassion among North-South actors would motivate domestic activists to collaborate with foreign advocacies without creating financial dependencies on them or obliging them to return favours later (Participant 24). It provides opportunities to build collective power against socioenvironmental injustices in the state. It fosters a harmonious relationship between equal partners and promotes feelings of unity that allows sociocultural and political prejudices to diminish. Activists optimize their efforts when they ally with likeminded actors to oppose oppressive regimes creating opportunities for growth, resistance, and mass mobilization. Lastly, resistance against the FCRA will urge governments to revisit and possibly revoke repressive legislation. Since there is currently limited push back and less momentum in civil society to protest such laws, governments easily introduce amendments regularly to contain activism in the state.

1. Gandhi based activism

Gandhi illustrated the ability to lead simple lifestyles without the desire to acquire excessive wants and practice modest living. Gandhi advocated that domestic activists should derive a sense of satisfaction from the limited resources they possess (Gandhi 1983: 203-5). This included conducting critical self-inquiries and constantly striving for truth and justice to better understand the conditions of 'the self' before understanding others. Gandhi noted that the western models of industrialization were unsustainable and corrupt as they caused human exploitation and environmental degradation during the imperial era. In turn, Gandhi asserted that it was important to revisit the modern path of development, socioenvironmental advocacy structures and embrace an all-encompassing indigenous system of information and knowledge to sustain economies, conserve the environment, protect native communities, and leverage subaltern subjectivities. Gandhi denoted that "true morality was based on ethical rules, which does not consist with conformity but discovering the subjectively true path and fearlessly following it" (Gandhi 1948; Weber 1991). This meant that while trying to hold governments and northern powers accountable for their actions, it would also be vital to understand the unique, natural, and spontaneous standpoints of domestic activists and reimagine the sacrifices and commitments one had to make to attain ultimate *moksha* (freedom of the soul).

Gandhi examined how the highest form of morality could be attained by practicing altruism. This entailed developing the understanding and passion for self-help, simplistic desires, and self-dependency. In doing so, domestic activists were not only obliged to question and dissent against administrative powers but also delve into the depths of their own malice and wasteful thinking that brought them further away from the truth. For Gandhi, the true virtue of an individual was to impose self-restraint on oneself. And it was this 'spirit of self-sacrifice' and simplicity that stemmed from human moral consciousness that would create better humanistic conditions for domestic societies. In this light, Gandhi (1948) stated that instead of being a slave to one's own body, individuals should rather strive to be masters and maintain self-control by eliminating selfish desires from the heart whilst constantly seeking truth.

As an affluent individual, Gandhi began realizing the futility of excess and denounced wasteful lifestyles. He taught these principles by exemplifying the changes he made to his personal life. These included cutting down expenses on clothes, self-care, and even giving up the consumption of salt (Gandhi 1948).

> "We must resist the superficiality of mass-produced, pop culture, and the way it threatens to displace local indigenous cultural production. We must abandon imitative lifestyles that seek to replicate hedonism, waste, and decadence of the West" (Patti 1981: 52).

Besides this, Gandhi encouraged domestic activists to strive for an intellectual training of the spirit because the human spirit-built character by immersing oneself into self-realization (Gandhi 2011: 315-17). Individuals including domestic activists, students, and minority communities were encouraged to think about the virtues of *satyagraha* (force of truth) and *ahimsa* (nonviolence). Gandhi taught these principles as the ultimate objective of life which would strengthen the human spirit, and, at the same time, help achieve sociopolitical and environmental justice in economies (Guha 1995).

Gandhi engaged in political dissent through various symbolic methods and images that asserted his ideological resistance to contest the British colonialization program. He demonstrated his insubordination through the salt march as the British Salt Act (1882) oppressed the domestic population by forbidding them to sell or purchase salt from any other vendor except British officials who charged them an exorbitantly high salt tax. Gandhi's civil disobedience campaign in 1930 was emblematic and appealed to the diverse ecological polity of the state. He also spun cotton on a *charkha* (wheel) asserting his non-compliance with the British economic system and emphasized the creation of local knowledge systems and indigenous innovative practices to sustain India's economy. Salt marches and the spinning of the wheel act played a significant role in pan-India (Sharma 2012). These tactics highlighted the symbolic notion of defiance, passive aggression, and the power struggles of the grassroots against the British colonial system in the 1930s.

Additionally, the act of spinning the charkha; salt marches; fasting; practicing abstinence; leading a modest lifestyle; avoiding exuberance and wastefulness; and rejecting British goods and services invoked India's national identity and cultural ethos through these symbolisms. Gandhi's philosophical teachings reoriented domestic activists into believing that self-reliance and self-governance could resolve some of the systemic problems inherent in India's social structures. It would help mobilize the masses, empower the grassroots, create ecological awareness, and develop local leadership to facilitate domestic needs. This would also help reduce socioeconomic inequalities in the state and transition activists from being controlled, exploited, and marginalized by their European colonizers to uplifting minority communities and developing an ecological nationalism in the state (Gruzalski 2002; Guha 1995).

Gandhi taught the grassroots to advocate for themselves and not just be subordinated to the ruling class. His idea of self-reliance stemmed from village *swaraj* that implied freedom from various socioeconomic and political bondage. Gandhi also referred to the establishment of village republics that were centered around the local population, decentralized and non-exploitative in nature (Gosalia 1979: 80-1). Basic human needs were to make provisions for food, clothing, and shelter. Other traditions of moral decay and ecological destruction were lamented by him. This simple village economy system of unpolluted villages corresponded to Indian values and practices that could revive ancient India and its cultural lifestyle (Sharma 2012).

Gandhi's teachings also premised on the implicit assumption that strengthening indigenous knowledge systems and small-scale enterprises would be beneficial for the newly independent Indian state. He projected an environmental utopia for India if it could establish local self-reliance, maintain clean and hygienic environments, and foster collective management as a precondition for ecological self-rule (Guha 1995). These precepts also helped build *swaraj* (freedom) from the British Raj. Guha (1998) conceptualizes *Gandhian* ideology into the formulation of southern domestic everyday advocacy in the environmental sector. Revisiting consumerist lifestyles, resorting to self-sufficiency models, rethinking industrialization, resource use, and incorporating a nonpartisan model for activism Guha asserts would help domestic activists not only combat neocolonial oppression but also establish self-governance at the national level. Certain advocacy groups also deduced a *Gandhian* ecological course within their movements that drew on nonviolence, truth-seeking, and strengthening the relationship between human beings and nature. This included but is not limited to the NBA*, Forests Rights, Chipko* and *Pathalgadi* movements.

Sunderlal Bahuguna also incorporated *Gandhian* precepts to formulate the anti-*Tehri* Dam movement in the state of Uttarakhand. He utilized religious symbols and mythological references in an endeavor to protest the environmental violations of the state. The anti-*Tehri* Dam movement referred the *Ganga River* as 'holy mother', 'divine', 'infinite', and 'beautiful'. The *Himalayan* range was referred to as a sacred region, a place of solitude and tranquility. These underpinnings formed the bedrock of the movement as cultural values and religious tenets were cited to explain the integrals of Hindu nationalist thought within the framework of environmentalism and ecological protection and conservation. Nature was not to be treated as a commodity and society was not reserved solely for human beings (Sharma 2012: 109). Rather these entities were transient, fostering deep connections with all living beings alike and not just humans. Bahuguna maintained that life's fulfillment could never be achieved by industrial projects, material growth, and the accumulation of wealth. Instead as Gandhi advocated that there should be an attempt to transition from *prakriti* (nature) to *sanskriti* (culture).

This environmental consciousness and awakening among activists helped forge grassroots mobilization and organize struggles more lucidly and effectively. The anti-*Tehri* dam movement also utilized various cross-cultural, scientific, and religious symbolisms to engage with varied stakeholders and political actors alike. Bahuguna emphasized the use of the human imagination, stressed emotional truths, and sought enlightenment to prevail through Hindu religious precepts that may act as a guiding force for the formulation of Indian environmental thought. This emoted to the extent that the focus of the movement shifted from environmentalism to communal politics. Sharma explains that there was a 'saffronization' of Bahuguna's anti-*Tehri* dam movement. He states that the movement initially premised on 'green' ideologues but later transitioned into the Hindu nationalist worldview that made it less environmentally driven and more communal in nature (2012: 115). Although this may have deviated from certain advocacy-related aims and objectives, it also created mass mobilization and environmental consciousness among civil society towards the ecology and its fundamental elements.

Additionally, movements such as the *Chipko* and *Pathalgadi* in India have drawn inspiration from *Gandhian* principles by establishing the traditional structures and processes of indigenous activism within the foundational confines of contemporary Indian environmental movements. The *Chipko* movement's 'hugging trees' and *Pathalgadi's* 'stone carving' methods were lauded for their tenacity to approach inflexible governments and leave a symbolic resonance with the masses that would unify, empower, and mobilize them in order to sensitize themselves against the discriminatory environmental policies of the state. In turn, this also helped build character and meaningful definition to these movements. The *NBA* also demonstrated its ability to self-govern the movement despite forging domestic and international allyship through global solidarity. It utilized *Gandhian* techniques of non-violent protests and resistance against western industrialization that would cause environmental degradation and negatively impact human life (Guha 1995). The *NBA* also contributed towards the reimagination of economic growth in India and what that meant for indigenous knowledge systems, cultural development, and local leaderships.

It may be possible that by practicing self-reliance and employing a range of symbolic measures to advertise their campaigns, domestic activists can challenge the restrictive barriers that inhibit their growth. They can optimize and judiciously utilize local resources to become less dependent on northern actors and move towards cultivating and protecting their identity, cultural beliefs, and values in the advocacy sector. This will also cater to a broader audience that can understand complex identity-based problems and the nuances of working within a southern advocacy more effectively. Gaining leverage in the sector may also boost their goodwill as independent stakeholders that are not pawns of northern NGOs and their governments.

Practicing self-governance and using symbolic measures to demonstrate non-compliance to the government's instituted policies and programs will also strengthen and invigorate the domestic advocacy space in India against state actors. A Gandhi-based approach will not entirely protect domestic NGOs from governmental repression as the state can target non-TANs as well. But adopting *Gandhian* methods will decelerate the process of the government targeting domestic activists for their 'foreignness' or 'northern allyship'. It will permit campaigners to confront the government on political matters more confidently as they will lead by example. Since most contemporary TANs are rebuked for their extravagant disbursement of donor aid, Gandhian-based NGOs will not be critiqued for the same as they will campaign modestly, constantly introspect, and epitomize simple-living. Governments will also have fewer opportunities to target activists for their 'foreign' mediated activities. Domestic NGOs can effectively engage in democratic processes by symbolically illustrating nonviolence, peace, and rights-based activism which are guaranteed rights protected under the Indian constitution. The FCRA uses 'nationalism', 'economic growth', and 'development' as a measure to target TANs. NGOs that raise resources locally and symbolize their movements through India's sociocultural emblems will discourage the government to repress activists under the same labels through which they target foreign-funded NGOs. As a result, this may also shift the power dynamics between the state and NGO sector legitimizing their presence, allowing them to build a stronger base in the polity and conclusively become strong policy influencers for environmental conservation programs and norms in the state.

Domestic advocacy methods of resistance involving performative arts, narratives, and retelling stories (Roy 2003) stem directly from the ways in which activists' understand society, culture, tradition, and history. It helps in the dissemination of information by identifying and conveying complex narratives of environmental injustices and the marginalization of minority groups to the masses. These emotive expressions prove to be effective as they invoke ideas of solidarity, unity, and justice among the advocates of the cause. It also channelizes activists to ideate, develop innovative strategies to create, and facilitate new forms of activism that cater to the development and empowerment of the grassroots. These efforts also threaten to dismantle the western notions of development that are deeply rooted in objectifying nature as a commodity meant for human exploitation and expropriation.

By deconstructing norms and conceptualizing ideas of identity, power, and neocolonial oppression domestic activists are able to understand a variety of unique southern experiences. These practices help foster memorability and serve as a reminder for many of the environmental injustices that marginalized communities have faced. Indian environmental campaigns such as the *Forest Rights* movement and the *ACT* movements are examples of self-reliance and self-determination against neoliberal oppressors of the capitalist order. Domestic activists in these movements set goals and dedicate themselves in the service of environmental conservation by rejecting all forms of individual and societal resource needs that perpetuate extravagance, wastage, selfishness, and plunder. They situate present-day needs as a mere construct of the human mind that desires to accumulate resources without gauging the long-term negative implications for these actions. These notions underlie new pathways for the future that idolize the idea of a utopian society where advocacy can be conducted openly and without any external intervention involved. By discerning the differences between excessive desires and important needs, domestic activists are able to delineate what is essential to them and avoid extravagance and excessive consumption that is also pervasive in traditional TANs between the global North and South. Participant 23 states that "a *Gandhian* approach objectively develops a rational relationship between the environment and its end users i.e., human beings".

In sum, mythology, tradition, history, and religious beliefs reinforce the varieties of environmentalism in India. This stems from the innate connection formed between humans and the environment which has transcended from ancient India's worldview on nature as an ever-evolving process of lividness, beauty, and divinity. However, while these interpretations are commonly used among rural-based environmentalists they are not as common amongst urban ones (Participant 23). This is because pre-colonial societies in rural areas are premised on the organic nature of the environment that paved way for sociopolitical and economic life (Maria et al 1993). Rural activists maintain greater harmony with nature and reiterate their desire for ecological upkeep and protection as it also reinforces their identity as agrarians and culturalists in the state.

On the other hand, some environmental activists based in urban areas observe an idealistic vision of ecological conservation and protection that largely emulates western environmental practices and processes. Gandhi's philosophical teachings helps domestic advocacies to delve into the traditional indigenous symbolisms of conducting everyday advocacy in the environmental advocacy sector. This is because India requires indigenous and not western environmental norms and standards for ecological protection and sustainability. It needs Indian culture and folkways of practicing environmentalism and not any other template for conducting advocacy (Shiv 1997). In effect, deconstructing environmental activism from the prism of spiritual morality, self-restraint, and truthfulness as advocated by Gandhi can facilitate the process of indigenous environmentalism in the southern realm. It helps emphasize the importance of environmental protection but from the purview of subaltern ideological narratives that premise on spiritualism, human morality, and ethics. These intersections have been absent in many contemporary environmental discourses in India that are currently consumed by distributive justice, techno-marketing, and western principles for advocacy conduct in southern societies. A revival of *Gandhian* philosophical underpinnings will protect domestic advocacies from the ill-effects of TANs and reorient activists towards finding truth and social justice in all human conditions.

Thus, emphasis should be on decolonizing western scientific notions of development and ecological conservation for the global South whereby the grassroots are self-reflective, critical of western materialism, consumerism, and their ramifications on indigenous societies. TANs have dissuaded domestic activists from taking these vital steps. They have created a dependence culture that relegates activists to subordinate and subservient roles rather than building strong, independent leaders that can manage their own struggles. TANs permeate into the global South with a vision of solidarity based on the liberal values of equality, liberty, rights, freedoms, and justice but the relationships manifested between North-South activists embody a hierarchal nature of resolute power dynamics that further push peripheral communities to the margins. These alliances are based on top-down, graded structures that situate northern activists in governing roles whilst relegating southern domestic actors to the periphery and with fewer managerial functions.

2. South-South Transnational Advocacy Networks (SSTANs)

South-South TANs are defined as the "subcategories of TANs whose information, symbolic, leverage, and accountability politics derive primarily from the cross-border activities and interactions of southern actors, including grassroots social movements, research and advocacy organizations, and local and national NGOs" (Moreira et al 2019: 80). SSTANs are better suited for the southern advocacy realm as they do not invoke the same kinds of problems as that of traditional northern transnational networks. Since these alliances are coordinated and formed by activists situated in the global South, problems of neocolonial and Eurocentrism cease to exist because domestic activists are not obliged to southern diktats and formalities. SSTANs do not exhibit a neocolonial agenda as that of northern powers that seeks to subjugate and marginalize southern domestic activists because they often are products of imperialism and neoliberal capitalism themselves.

In the event of such occurrences, Moreira et al point out that SSTANs find it easier to highlight the neocolonial characteristics of such networks causing indigenous exploitation and marginalization because they have the compassion, humaneness, civility, valor, and zeal to continually confront neocolonialism with decoloniality by emphasizing subalternity and indigeneity in the movement-building space (2019: 89-91). This is unlike traditional TANs that negate neocolonial and Eurocentric challenges posed by North-South transnational linkages. At the surface level, northern activists claim to 'share values', display 'common discourses' and provide a 'dense exchange of information and services' (Keck et al 1999: 89) but they fail to delineate with questions of ethnoculturalism, individual versus collective identity, traditional value systems, indigenous language, and everyday lived experiences and realities of domestic actors.

However, SSTANs share a greater understanding for southern 'culture of struggles' providing safe spaces to dialogue, innovate, exchange resources and develop alternative visions that help in countering neocolonial and socioecological challenges in states (Lambert 2013). Von Redecker et al (2020) examine the success of the *La Via Campesina* movement to illustrate how radical democracy can be transformed by emphasizing the ethical foundations of human dignity, nature, ethno-political values, democracy, and the everyday realities of the peasant population.

La Via Campesina's resistance movement is testament to the power of the global solidarity efforts of southern domestic activists that erode the traditional bonds of North-South actors perpetuating neocolonial problems. *La Via Campesina* addresses the problem of food sovereignty by focusing on opportunities decolonize western frameworks of democracy. This was achieved by thinking about relevant campaign strategies about the implications of these approaches on domestic activists to include indigenous voices and develop alternative visions, future prospects for southern emancipation. In turn, Connell (2014: 219) urges "northern intellectuals to, more than anything else, start learning in new ways, and in new relationships' as that of southern collective advocacies".

Moreira et al (2019) also describe how the Amazonian Hydroelectric Collective (CAH) successfully pressured the Peruvian government to rescind Brazil's hydroelectric project that aimed to change the energy landscape of the state but at the cost of deep socioecological problems for the Asháninka community in terms of forced displacement and migration impacting the ecology, community, employment opportunities and social livelihoods of the minority group. Thus, Moreira et al (2019) argue that CAH offers insights for environmental advocacy conduct in the global South as:

> "It was instrumental in pressuring targets transnationally and 'from below' to abandon projects on Peruvian territory. Rather than strategizing around a boomerang pattern, CAH hedged its bets by executing a triple-target strategy, simultaneously pointing its sights at the Peruvian and Brazilian governments, Brazilian transnational enterprises, and Brazil's national development bank".

Shipton et al (2021) also examine the power of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa South TANs (BRICS-STANs) in opposing BRICS corporate extractors in the global South. They state that BRICS-South advocacy networks have been able to successfully oppose BRICS extractive projects in Ecuador, Ethiopia, and Mozambique. Shipton et al argue that if the conditions for conducting advocacy in southern societies are conducive and favorable than SSTANs can achieve campaign goals and outcomes as desired, without the support of northern allies who may be able to connect them with additional networks (2021: 257). But these examples denote that even without traditional TANs, SSTANs have been able to successfully mobilize against extractive corporations provided they had a suitable politically non-oppressive environment to operate in.

But SSTANs also exhibit several challenges. First, it is difficult to evaluate movement success in terms of self-professed victories versus realistic positive outcomes. SSTANs are better able to identify neocolonial characteristics present within environmental movements but the degree to which these concerns and challenges are averted is not for SSTANs to deduce. Rather indigenous actors need to surmise the impact of movement success in terms of their livelihood, community, homes, nature, identity, ethnicity, culture, tradition, economic status, and democratic freedoms. Additionally, SSTANs would still have to acquire the FCRA license to conduct advocacy in India. The FCRA is mandated for all 'organization of political nature' and, thus, does not distinguish NGOs based on their North-South origins. Since the FCRA amendments are difficult to comply with, SSTANs would face challenges in terms of maintaining and renewing its FCRA license while dissenting against the state. SSTANs are still relatively new and building momentum in the global South unlike traditional TANs between the global North and South that have been in the international system for long and have stronger networks, community ties, resources, innovative technologies, and research and development techniques. As SSTANs continue to develop their toolkit to conduct activism in the global South they may find it more challenging to confront inflexible governments to achieve desired sociopolitical and ecological outcomes. For instance, Moreira et al state that CAH helped accomplish certain political outcomes by averting the construction of the hydroelectric dam, but it failed to impact Brazil's Economic and Social Development Bank's (BNDES) lending policy which was also a crucial campaign goal in the SSTANS mandate.

In sum, SSTANS may pose some challenges as they are a relatively new and less resourced as compared to traditional TANs between the global North and South, but they offer themselves as a fitting alternative to the traditional forms of transnationalism in India that are predominantly motivated by northern interests, western ideologies, and hegemonic visions centering neocolonialism and Eurocentrism. More so, the Indian government mostly targets traditional TANs because of their neocolonial nomenclature that originates from India's historical colonial past and its interrelation with western hegemonic actors. Since SSTANs are a collective of southern activists that do not have imperialistic and hegemonic roots in the global South, the Indian government may find it harder to use the same repressive labels it uses on traditional TANs to repress domestic activists in South-South transnational structures, thus, allowing SSTANs to more freely conduct advocacy in the state.

3. Global Solidarity

Global solidarity has been defined in this study as the ability to form collectives between activists in the global North-South without the transfer of financial flows. It allows activists to create conditions for harmonious civil society engagement, challenging inflexible governments through persuasion and instilling hope to confront everyday advocacy challenges. Wilde (2013: 1) describes solidarity as "a feeling of sympathy shared by subjects within and between groups, impelling supportive action and pursuing social inclusion". There is a dearth of this level of conceptualization that forms associations and empowers activists within the Indian advocacy space. Creating intersectionality between various socioenvironmental and rights-based movements can help domestic activists fight against state repression and northern dominance. Instead of adopting a transnational approach that leads to the exploitation and marginalization of domestic activists, global solidarity can create a common forum for open dialogue and inclusivity that interconnects, reinforces, motivates, and fortifies each other. Domestic activists are also likely to develop a strong culture of subaltern indigenous visions based on mutual grievances and shared advocacy interests resulting from neocolonial power dynamics that maintains the status quo if they commit themselves to global solidarity networks.

Indian advocacy groups are hesitant to ally and build solidarity ties with other civil society organizations in the global North-South due to India's colonial history with foreign actors[13]. Instead, domestic advocacy groups should reckon the need for global solidarity that is not monetary in nature, but which aims to resolve collective action problems[14], and neocolonial issues including, but not limited to, environmental racism, classism, oppression, exploitation, marginalization, and inequity. It should foster a transparent environment where stakeholders can improve their credibility and build trust with each other by sharing their interests, motivations, goals, and future visons of conducting advocacy. They should resist transnational opportunities and refrain from competing with other advocacy groups for external aid and support that place activists in rivalry and contestation with each other instead of allyship and cooperative ties. TANs may offer greater work opportunities, but it also leads to neocolonial and Eurocentric issues as activists face northern dominance and government repression. Domestic activists are also competing for limited resources that accentuates problems of 'survival of the fittest', 'prisoner's dilemma', 'tragedy of the commons, and 'individual action.'

Drawing intersectional ties between various advocacy groups will create the impetus to unify networks, advocate through solidarity platforms, and oppose politically oppressive policies in the state (Goldfield 2019). It will help activists fight against systemic exploitation and provide opportunities for sociopolitical and environmental redressal without the obligation to fulfill any expectations or return favours of allies that often stem from transnational coalitions. It will assimilate groups and reinforce the overlapping struggles of indigenous people by bypassing the regulatory law (i.e., the FCRA) as advocacy groups would not have to register themselves as FCRA organizations (Participant 28). It will also highlight the discriminatory practices of the global North and southern governments that create barriers for democratic participants in states, despite regarding them as the 'torch bearers of change' and 'harbingers of development'. It will develop solutions for varied socioenvironmental problems that allies can employ, strategize, communicate, and pressurize governing bodies to legislate into policies (Participant 28).

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[13] The East India Company proposed to build trade and commerce ties with India during the 1600s through silk and spice trade. This business later transformed into an aggressive colonial pursuit causing suppression, plunder, and militarized conquests across the state for over 300-years.

[14] Collective action problems are issues when individuals fail to cooperate with each other due to personal interests and gains. The ideology is that collective action on issues of mutual concern can resolve various sociopolitical problems, but actors still choose to avoid such assimilations because it may not incentivize them in any substantial way.

A global solidarity approach also provides a settling ground for decoloniality to disrupt the hegemonic and exploitative narrative of TANs. It aims to tease out the neocolonial problem emanating from transnationalism and sends a strong signal to northern actors that there needs to be a decolonial approach in the southern advocacy sector that allows minority groups to empower themselves and leverage their indigenous knowledge systems enabling them against state repression and northern dominance. It offers domestic activists to be the owners of their own discourse instead of being subservient actors to neocolonial powers. It allows domestic activists to revisit the normative and epistemological meaning of solidarity vis-à-vis decolonization that pushes for social and ecological change in repressive environments where there is significant opposition from state and non-state actors, but the goal is to leverage indigeneity and traditional knowledge to achieve sociopolitical ends.

Global solidarity is conceptualized as shared cultural norms, information exchange, capacity building, mass mobilization, and decolonization. It instils humanity, empathy, and faith within advocacy structures through which domestic activists have been able to gain confidence, motivation, and power to push back against oppressive regimes that seek to terrorize and uproot the democratic fabric of nations by controlling civil society groups. Global solidarity networks are based on non-monetary terms with minimal liability and have demonstrated considerable success in the past as advocacy groups mobilize masses across the world to create national and international stir on issues of socioenvironmental significance. For instance, the NBA movement articulated its concerns to activists in the global community and received considerable support from domestic and international quarters to push back against the Indian government's developmental projects along the *Narmada River*. The movement did not receive transnational aid, nor did it register itself as a transnational organization but through global solidarity it was able to achieve considerable success as it pressurized the World Bank to pull out its investments from the *Sardar Sarovar* dam project in 1993. Participant 10 notes that:

> "NBA's collective action on the Sardar Sarovar dam issue led the World Bank to withdraw its support from the project in 1993. This demonstrated the power of mass mobilization and public pressure that has the ability to change the developmental policies of even big international lending corporations such as the World Bank".

Additionally, NGOs such as the *ACT* have also demonstrated how global solidarity can be an effective medium for conducting advocacy in southern spaces without transnational aid. ACT broke its partnership with ActionAid India after problems surrounding northern influence were surfaced. Post this, *ACT* allied the International Rivers Network (IRN), Kalpavriksh Environment Action Group, Pune, the Intercultural Resources, New Delhi, and other civil society actors. This collective formation urged the government to cancel the construction of four out of five dams along the *Teesta River* (Participant 12).

The NBA and ACT examples demonstrate that global solidarity not only helps evade neocolonial problems but also proves how transnationalism is a redundant and futile exercise because global solidarity can achieve significant success without drawing transnational linkages between domestic-international actors in the material and financial sense. Global solidarity is able to pressure governments in the same way without invoking problems of western influence and the FCRA. Domestic activists can ally with foreign actors, gain research and technological expertise, spread informational knowledge, leverage environmental struggles at the international stage, and mobilize the masses by extending solidarity with each other. In turn, southern domestic NGOs and movements need to build a safe space for assimilation and contestation against the government's malpractices. They need to share their struggles with like-minded activists facing similar challenges in terms of state repression and northern oppression or with those that just have an empathetic understanding towards southern struggles and desire to help. In this way, advocacies can participate in solidarity exchanges with each other to provide solutions for indigenous socioenvironmental issues. An intersection between advocacy groups not only offers collaborative opportunities that are beneficial for positive advocacy outcomes but also instills values of unity, hope, compassion, humanity, and ambition among domestic activists. Activists are offered a safe space to voice their struggles in the international system and gain a unified platform to opportunistically utilize their traditional knowledge systems for conducting environmentalism, to subsist, and engage in political activity.

4. Resistance against the FCRA

The FCRA is used to perpetuate the neocolonial program of the Indian government in the environmental advocacy sector. It helps impose stringent clampdowns and restricting campaign activities to regulate the growth of TANs in the state. Since northern powers are actively engaged in the Indian advocacy sector, seeking to sustain dissenting NGOs and amplify critical voices against the government, the government seeks to control them. The state maintains that foreign-funded NGOs intend to keep India underdeveloped and economically backward by funding domestic advocacy groups who, in turn, institute blockades on various developmental projects deemed beneficial for the economic growth of the state (Intelligence Bureau 2014). Invoking pressure on TANs through the use of the FCRA allows the government to stifle dissent, curtail lobbying, expand the government's neocolonial ambitions in the state.

Since its inception in 1975, the FCRA has been amended over the course of several years highlighting the political persuasiveness of the government to impose even tighter measures eroding democratic participation of North-South activists in policy discourses surrounding socioenvironmental issues in the state. Participant 30 states that:

> "On paper, the aim is to ensure greater transparency and accountability in the NGO sector to reduce the influence of northern powers in southern domestic politics but, in reality, the main motive of the government is to subdue dissenters in the state, dismantle foreign-funded NGOs, and reduce critical dialogue against the government's policies and programs".

Consequently, approximately 20,000 foreign-funded NGOs have lost their registration licenses in 2016 (Bhattacharya 2016). Additionally, 4800 and 1807 TANs were forced to shut down their operations by the state in 2017 and 2018-19 respectively due to FCRA violations (PTI 2019). In 2020-21, nearly 12,000 TANs lost their foreign funding license including Oxfam India (Srinivasan 2022).

In 2020, the FCRA was further amended and placed a 20 per cent cap on administrative expenses of foreign funds, compelling activists to open an FCRA-specific bank account in New Delhi's State Bank of India for all financial transactions (FCRA Online 2020). The amendments prohibited activists from accepting grants from their donors even if they had the FCRA approvals. Domestic activists were also obligated to provide regular disclosures of their activities and any change in board members, addresses, and/or bank accounts required immediate updating and disclosure. In turn, TANs were compelled to oblige with the new FCRA norms and cooperate with the government or simply shut down their offices. NGOs such as Voluntary Action Network India (VANI) referred to these FCRA amendments as a 'death blow' to the advocacy sector (Bhardwaj 2020).

Additionally, the Indian government revoked Greenpeace's FCRA registration license in 2015 for failing to disclose its financial statements to the government (Mathur 2015). The government imposed several measures to curtail the organization's activities in the state. This was done by freezing Greenpeace's bank accounts, impose surveillance on activists and shut down its offices in the state. Senior campaigner Priya Pillai was also forbidden from flying to London for a conference the same year (Menon 2015) as she was going to deliver a presentation on the Essar's coal mining issue that the government did not want her to share. Menon (2015) states that the government continued to 'bully' and 'intimidate' Greenpeace officials until they stopped objecting to the government's developmental programs (Menon 2015).

As a result, TANs have perceived these repressive activities as an attempt to destabilize and uproot their ability to challenge the existing status quo and participate in democratic systems. TANs critique this duplicitous character of governments that accept foreign investments for extractive industrial projects causing environmental degradation and posing a threat to the livelihoods of vulnerable populations living in affected areas. But, at the same time, they repress transnational advocacies for receiving foreign aid to protect communities and ecological systems. This alludes to the neocolonial program of the Indian government that acts both as a victim and contributor to neocolonial problems in the global South (Muppidi 2012). On one hand, domestic activists are perceived as harbingers of democracies and leaders of social change, but they are also repressed by being labelled as 'anti-national' and 'anti-establishment' through the use of the FCRA that creates a complex political environment for activists to persist and disseminate important information to the masses. Participant 4 notes:

> "The government relaxes the FCRA for certain co-opted TANs that comply with state polices without flagging issues but imposes tight measures on those that question the government's programs and threaten to overthrow contemporary establishments from their positions of power".

Domestic activists are also perceptive about the approach they should adopt in terms of allying with transnational partners and by complying with the FCRA norms or opting out of transnational coalitions and raising funds locally. Domestic NGOs that decide to register themselves as FCRA organizations find it difficult to raise critical inquiries about the government's socioenvironmental policies and end up co-opting with governments. This is because the FCRA disallows these organizations to question the government's motives. It does not grant FCRA approvals to civil society organizations that are 'of political nature' or deemed to be working against national interest of the Indian state. Thus, this eliminates their scope to critique governmental policies and improve community life (Srinivasan 2022). Similar to GONGOs, these NGOs may also find themselves providing government-vetted policy recommendations instead of critically weighing in on these policies. In doing so, these organizations focus on service-delivery models and become conformists of the system rather than being disrupters of the status quo by employing methods to better environmental management, developmental schemes, and economic conditions by utilizing the opportunities provided to them under Article 19 of the Indian Constitution to freely engage in democracies and counsel states on policymaking from time to time.

Further, domestic-international activists in the global North-South also fail to extend their solidarity to Indian advocacies that face FCRA problems. Northern activists have the capability to extend material aid, provide capacity building support and train domestic activists to resist government repression. Failure to provide this assistance leaves southern activists isolated as they deal with the challenges of the FCRA imposed by the Indian government alone. In turn, domestic advocacies such as the ACT and *Pathalgadi* movements search for alternative options, avoiding the transnational route that cripples their advocacy structures in the long run. Participant 20 notes:

> “It is easier to campaign as a domestic NGO then receive funds from abroad and go through the strenuous process of renewing your FCRA license each year that requires you to submit multiple documents and still live with the fear that the government can shut you down because it holds the discretion to do so if they think you are not a legible corporation. We did not renew our FCRA license this year because of the recent amendment that have made it more difficult to obtain funds from abroad and practice every day advocacy openly”.

On the other hand, northern NGOs also prefer to ally with domestic NGOs that have already sought FCRA approvals. Northern NGOs may refrain from funding organizations in the global South where regulatory laws create an unconducive environment for conducting advocacy (Dupuy et al 2018; Dupuy et al 2015). Without FCRA approvals, NGO programs can be abruptly forestalled and cancelled by the Indian government and donor NGOs that provide financial resources to domestic advocacies may not want to participate in such conditions. Therefore, northern NGOs may avoid coalescing with organizations without FCRA approvals and seek to draw alliances with those NGOs where such challenges do not exist. “For instance, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) specifies that research grants allotted to Indian domestic actors are subject to approval upon receiving FCRA clearances first” (Participant 27).

These concerns highlight the absence of civil society solidarity towards domestic activists in the global South. Instead of supporting domestic actors and helping them confront tough FCRA procedures, northern NGOs refrain from strengthening resistance programs against the FCRA law which reduces the scope of drawing North-South linkages, leveraging indigenous struggles at the global stage, unifying movements with southern allies and informing governments about the problematic nature of their policies. In effect, domestic advocacies diminish as they fail to receive this support from North-South allies which would help them defy the FCRA. They are urged to do this in silos engaging them in protracted legal battles that may take several years before justice is served. Participant 25 reiterates:

> “Domestic NGOs would rather reject adopting a transnational approach and raise funds domestically reducing resource-based opportunities by allowing them to engage in critical dialogue and policy reflection than being echo chambers of the system”.

The FCRA also does not face substantial resistance from civil society actors in the domestic and international domain who can resist the frequently introduced amendments of the FCRA that make it even more stringent and over-bureaucratic. Domestic and international activists understand the optics of working as a nonstate actor in a highly volatile environment that is repressed by regulatory laws, so they do not consolidate movements or create mass mobilization to oppose the FCRA’s strict restrictions on transnational NGOs (Participant 4). Northern NGOs fear challenging the Indian government as it would be a waste of their time if campaign projects were to eventually end. In such cases, these NGOs would rather conduct political activism in environments where their entrance is not barred. Participant 25 explains how “international NGOs are willing to protest governments on socioenvironmental matters, but they are not willing to challenge the FCRA because it does not fall under the campaign mandates of northern powers”. Without sufficient opposition, the government is granted greater legislative powers to stifle advocacy groups by executing clampdowns on TANs and repress activists through the use of the FCRA.

In turn, domestic and international advocacies should seek to oppose the FCRA by building momentum through movement formation and critique the FCRA’s oppressive posture that curtails democratic participation in the state. There is need for resistance organized by activists in the global North and South that can defy government legislation through noncompliance, protests, hunger strikes, sit-ins, and lockdowns. It is imperative that activists demonstrate their persuasion and dissonance through collective advocacy efforts that can help averse the negative implications of the FCRA on TANs. Both domestic and international activists need to ally with each other to challenge the foundational principles of the FCRA that impedes constitutional rights, democratic freedoms, and assembly with other actors in the state and abroad. Focusing on the rigidity of the act that restricts transnational aid for advocacy groups who are trying to defend environmental and human rights but permits the extractive, defense, media, and alcohol industries to obtain financial assistance from abroad is discriminatory and unfair.

By pointing out the FCRA’s stringent norms that are described as maintaining regulation and transparency in the non-profit sector, domestic activists can prevent the fragile working conditions of civil society actors in the state. It will also reaffirm their right to dissent and freedom of assembly and association as guaranteed to them under Article 19 of the Indian Constitution. However, the absence of an impassioned form of activism encourages the government to continue to throttle dissenters by misusing the FCRA and permitting them to subjugate activists as per their will. Behar (2018) explains how contemporary NGOs are, primarily, concerned about techno-managerialism and the social enterprise function of Indian advocacies that helps them improve their lobbying techniques. But there is need for a narrative shift that can emboldens domestic-international activists to strengthen and fortify each other. Not only will this help resolve complex political problems created by state powers, but it will also hearten activists with the confidence to push back against any weak legislation formulated by the state and compel inflexible governments to reverse undesired policies and rethink environmental norms.

Currently, there is no such impetus to form resistance against the rigidness of the FCRA in India's civil society sector. Barring a few NGOs such as Amnesty International, TANs largely abstain from pushing back against the FCRA and have expressed limited desire for state engagement on this front because of fear of the government. Civil society does not want the Indian government to repress opposing political groups that may cease their activities, curtail movements, and subjugate activists. Thus, they evade interactions with the government in such matters. However, if activists were to repel the FCRA and form a strong resistance force through social lobbying tactics against the FCRA mandate and its amendments it would highlight the lived existential threat posed to democratic groups and processes in the state by the strict FCRA rules. This can be achieved by acknowledging the problematic nature of the FCRA amendments, preparing for unprecedented events instead of displaying reactive behaviors. In effect, developing strategies, training methods, and recovery programs to combat governmental attacks in terms of clampdowns, surveillance, and censorship will help activists to protect themselves from being targeted by the government and improve their modus operandi while lobbying in the state.

In sum, while resistance against the FCRA may reduce the negative implications for TANs on domestic environmental NGOs causing organizational deterioration and the subjugation of activists in the long run, domestic advocacies also need to develop a clear analytical approach to confront transnational thought and ideologues. Sharing histories and experiences about state repression and exploitation by hardliner political groups (BJP) and the proponents of liberalism (INC) within collective networks can bring together overlapping views causing activists to reimagine and express the kinds of environmental advocacy discourses they wish to pursue while moving forward. This sensitivity is credible in terms of advocacy experiences that have evolved over time and grown from it.

Conclusion

This chapter proposes several measures that domestic activists can employ to avoid a transnational approach and conduct themselves as effective policy influencers without the transfer of material and financial resources. Domestic activists are encouraged to adopt a *Gandhian* approach in the formulation of contemporary environmental thought because Gandhi has been a central figure in India's political history. His teachings have been emulated for the emancipation of indigenous communities and other minority groups in the global South. Gandhi's ideas and praxis on political struggles, identity, indigeneity, justice, freedom, nationalism, development, and sustainable economies helps shape the relationship between individuals and nature. Gandhi stresses the importance of affirmative action vis-à-vis the transformation of the human mind and soul. Many scholars such as Guha have articulated Indian environmental thought from his views on western modernity but Gandhi's engagement with the transnational and collective advocacy question has been left relatively unexplored. Thus, this chapter attempts to shift the spotlight on Gandhi who provides a more nuanced and critical understanding of domestic advocacies and the approaches they should take towards their northern counterparts.

Further, the chapter delineates with the opportunities provided by South-South TANs as they differ from those of North-South TANs. South-South TANs adopt a similar approach as that of the North-South, but they are inclusive of the environment, identity, community, natural resources, and democracy. South-South TANs do not induce the same problems of foreign donor influence and state repression as that of traditional TANs. Activists are more cognizant of cultural norms, traditions, value systems, and indigenous knowledge allowing domestic activists to self-govern their movements and be effective policy influencers in the state. Since governments cannot prescribe neocolonial attributions to southern allies, it makes it irrelevant for states to target South-South TANs in the same way as that of northern transnational networks. Additionally, global solidarity provides the opportunity for activists to counter governmental repression and northern influence by drawing linkages with foreign actors on non-transactional grounds that does not involve the flow of material and/or financial resources. Domestic activists can elevate their struggles in the international system and garner global attention on issues of pivotal concern that may consecutively pressurize inflexible governments to instituting effective policies in the state.

Finally, the chapter focuses on the FCRA problem that represses domestic NGOs and activists on ambiguous grounds. It highlights the problematic nature of this regulatory law as international NGOs including the UN have referred to the FCRA as an attempt to ‘stifle dissent’ in the state. International actors have condemned the FCRA amendments and prompted the Indian government to revoke it by stating that it is unconstitutional and discriminatory in nature. Since the Indian government has rejected these appeals on ‘contravention’ grounds, NGO activists should question this perceived problem of the FCRA that suppresses advocacy structures from effectively campaigning and come together to collectively resist the newly introduced amendments of the FCRA. They should engage in critical dialogue surrounding the draconian nature of this law and support advocacy groups that are attacked by the government as a result of it. The study contends that the Indian environmental advocacy sector requires a unified forum to collectively challenge the FCRA. This can be achieved by developing an intersectional approach between domestic NGOs and movements that are impassioned about protecting the democratic freedoms and constitutional rights of civil society actors in the state.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

Introduction

Indian environmental activism maintains its individualism and uniqueness through the cultural influences it has on state and non-state actors. The *Chipko* and *Narmada* River damming movements helped in the conceptualization of a green consciousness through the symbolic forms of self-reliance and collective action. This form of environmental politics emanated from Gandhi's philosophical teachings on sustainable economies, industrialization, urbanization, and modernity. However, the contemporary Indian environmental landscape is a departure from these traditional ideological trends prescribed by Gandhi and shifts a focus towards other disparate forms of environmentalism, governance, equity, resource distribution, and justice. Contemporary environmentalism adopts a posture of being value-focused, possessing material interests, and which is capable of producing rapid results, quick fixes, and maximizing the longevity and value of advocacies in the international system. This type of environmentalism is embedded in the works of distributive justice, techno-managerialism, and rights-based activism pivoting the 'corporate' and 'clinical' posture of advocacy responsibility and changemaking.

A Gandhi-centered approach involves resistance against these sociopolitical narratives. It problematizes the very notion of 'the self' in these collectives and deduces how activists can apply basic principles to improve the conditions of themselves and of those around them. Gandhi's philosophical ideas have not fully been adapted into advocacy-related discourses and remain absent from the larger framings of Indian environmentalism today. Domestic activists acknowledge the human dimension in these participations but predominantly galvanize on the 'principle of equity', 'just transitions,' 'distributive justice,' 'rights-based activism,' and 'common but differentiated responsibilities' which are western constructs imported by environmental stakeholders in the global North. Indian environmentalism romanticizes these disparate notions and links a wide variety of alternate visions for the Indian subcontinent and its standardization of environmental norms and best practices in the state without considering their own knowledge and acumen on these matters.

However, the hardliner right-wing Indian government ideates and valorizes Hindu nationalist beliefs within the theorization of Indian environmental movements. Sharma (2017) states that *Hindutva* conservative narratives dominate environmental notions of advocacy through the encapsulation of power, religious doctrine, and cultural tradition. Environmental movements such as the *Tehri* dam movement have been established on the fundamental notion that the *Ganga River* and *Himalayan* range hold a cultural and religious significance for domestic communities in the state of Uttarakhand. These religious and casteist symbolisms of Indian environmentalism have long-term detrimental effects as they create ambiguity surrounding environmental conservation in advocacy terms (Sharma 2002). These ideologies are not only embedded in Hindu nationalism but also found in the Indian caste system. Malhotra (1985) emphasizes that:

> "The caste system... was actually based on an ancient concept of sustainable development which disciplined society by partitioning the use of natural resources according to specific occupations (or castes) and created the right social milieu in which sustainable patterns of resource use were encouraged to emerge".

Drawing on these conservative notions of Indian environmentalism and the political attempt to supress southern domestic environmental advocacies, it becomes clear that there exists ‘superior’ structural forms of control and authority administered by the *Hindutva* right-wing government and northern NGOs that set limitations on domestic advocacy groups to organize advocacy and mobilize indigenous groups in either traditionalist religious forms or western ideological ways. In this light, issues of indigeneity, identity, ethnicity, culture, democracy, development, religious freedom, subaltern knowledge, local infrastructure, and resources collide with the other grounding realities of external actors in terms of their theological, sectarian, and neocolonial views. Other forms of Indian environmentalism that have a resounding impact on advocacy structures include “bourgeoisie environmentalism” (Baviskar 2011) that eliminates the scope for domestic activists to develop their own individualism and collectivism regarding environmental practices as they reclaim resources of the urban middle-class, ignoring the needs of the impoverished. Narain (2002) also refers to “utilitarian conservationism” to describe environmentalism in the global South in terms of how indigenous communities directly survive on natural resources. This is different from the West’s conception of “protectionist conservationism” i.e., rooted in the protection of habitats, forest covers, wildlife, and the ecology. Southern environmentalism lends itself to the interconnected relationships formed between communities, nature, water, landscapes, flora, and fauna.

Finally, a Gandhi-centered approach also raises the question of whether *Gandhian* precepts can successfully be applied to South-South TANs without invoking harmful conditions for domestic activists in their home countries. Gandhi draws on this aspect by urging domestic movements to strive for self-sufficiency in their campaigns but also incorporate allyship and intersectionality with other likeminded actors in the same field (Gandhi 1944: 234). In doing so, domestic actors could “devote their time also to their intellectual development for the creation of the consciousness for the contemplated non-violent society of the future” (1944: 234). They would also be able to leverage their issues nationally, draw international attentional on them to pressure their local governments, and gain prominence in the international system. Gandhi pointed out that remaining sovereign while advocating for one’s rights did not necessarily imply following a path of isolationism. This would, invariably, confine actors to their own settings and disengage them with the rest of the world. In turn, Gandhi suggested that it was in the best interest of domestic actors to draw alliances with one another to increase their repute and stature but, in doing so they would also have to carefully assess their needs as excessive wastefulness and extravagance was unfruitful.

Theoretical Contributions

This research study makes a number of theoretical contributions in terms of *Gandhian* approaches, South-South TANs and global solidarity. It helps fill the empirical gap in the literature surrounding transnational advocacy in global governance systems. The proposed domestic advocacy model for environmentalism helps activists and academics to reimagine and renovate domestic and transnational approaches within the southern advocacy context. A significant effort of this dissertation has been to move debates surrounding transnational risks and challenges in the global South onward and highlight the neocolonial, Eurocentric negative implications for domestic activists. This has remained amiss from the scholarship as domestic-international advocacy discourses enumerate several limitations of transnational advocacy processes in the literature but leave issues of oppression, discrimination, exploitation, and marginalization relatively unexplored.

The existing literature theorizes the importance of transnationalism in global governance as it supports struggling domestic advocacy groups and norm entrepreneurs to find ecological answers and seek a common ground with their respective governments. But it does so to make the case for transnationalism within southern spaces eliminating the scope for advocacies to self-govern, empower, promote independence, and reduce northern dependency.

Academics (Khagram et al 2002; Bandy et al 2004, 2005; Florini 2002; Hathaway et al 1997; Lipsky 1971; Ostrander 2010) highlight the drawbacks for transnationalism in the global South stating that they can be 'ineffective', 'disorganized' and 'unsuccessful' at times, but they still allude to the importance of these network formations between traditional TANs between the global North and South since they pivot domestic struggles at the international stage, help mediate ecological challenges with inflexible governments, and provide material and financial resources to the less resourced southern actors. These scholars use a broad brushstroke approach to restate the opportunities for transnationalism by dismissing their limitations and failing to draw linkages between transnationalism and neocolonialism/Eurocentrism in southern advocacy spaces. They also fail to offer solutions for existing transnational problems and holistically regard transnational opportunities as positive for southern advocacies. In doing so, they refrain from teasing out the important role of indigenous knowledge systems and the creative approaches offered by southern environmental thinkers such as Gandhi, to draw ideological and political ideas from.

In contrast, this study has demonstrated several accounts where neocolonial and Eurocentric elements have been pervasive within transnational advocacy networks, questioning the credibility of such North-South exchanges in southern systems as domestic activists are further marginalized and pushed to the periphery. The research participant data highlights incidences of marginalization and oppression where domestic activists felt subordinated in their own movements and were controlled by their northern counterparts that governed them according to northern interests. The research dissertation not only identifies and problematizes neocolonial problems within transnational networks but also attempts to change the mainstream thought on the nature and role of transnationalism within southern advocacies that embodies this 'emancipatory' and empowerment character of TANs. The empirical data helps contextualize the problem of neocolonialism within transnational advocacies that marginalize and push domestic activists further to the periphery instead of empowering and promoting their independence in domestic movements. It suggests a refocusing of the scholarship on transnational limitations in the southern spaces from the purview of exclusionary politics and domestic marginalization.

The dissertation also draws on the normative and empirical differences between global solidarity and TANs. Global solidarity is described as the formation of collective advocacy groups based on feelings of mutual concern, shared norms, values systems, and cultural traditions. But these exchanges take place without any monetary transaction between the global North and South. Global solidarity allows domestic activists to ally with foreign actors, pressure inflexible governments, develop capacity building support, mobilize the masses, and obtain information and knowledge from northern actors without seeking FCRA approvals. It also diminishes the scope of northern influence and dominance on domestic activists as actors are not obliged to recompense their partners situated in the North. However, a global solidarity-based approach does not bind international actors to southern causes. Foreign actors can pull out of local campaigns at their own discretion leaving domestic activists isolated in their discourses as they fight against oppressive state actors. But this may not invoke serious setbacks on domestic activists because the absence of material and financial resources does not stagger structures as much as it does with them involved. On the other hand, TANs may emote the same levels of passion, empathy, and promises at the surface level but the transfer of material and financial resources from northern NGOs to the South binds domestic activists to northern diktats and imperatives. It hinders their ability to eventually lead their own campaigns and protest for themselves as transnational associations are long-term coalitions that do not specify when a northern ally intends to pull out from an alliance in the future.

The dissertation also analyzes the varied responses of urban and rural-based activists vis-à-vis the transnational approach they adopt in terms of their lived experiences and values. With the question of transnationalism being largely an urban problem, rural-based activists that follow *Gandhianism* have also highlighted the absence of transnationalism in peripheral areas because indigenous activists are cautious of forming transnational linkages with foreign actors. Domestic activists have shown their apathy for transnational assistance because of the pervasiveness of neocolonialism in TANs. Issues of northern dominance and subjugation have been expounded to spotlight the global North's failure in representing the interests of their southern allies despite promising to empower domestic activists and alleviate their socioenvironmental conditions.

The examples of the *Pathalgadi* and *ACT* movements make it clear that domestic advocacies can sustain themselves by raising resources locally. Participant 13 examines how:

> "Transnationalism is a gimmicky product of the western world that misleads southern domestic activists into believing that foreign-funded NGOs work in the best interest and welfare of developing economies. But in reality, these NGOs seek to dismantle democratic structures and processes of indigenous people by disempowering and marginalizing them".

On the other hand, some urban-based domestic activists value the importance of TANs as they provide material and financial resources to conduct advocacy. This support helps movements in the urban sector to sustain themselves without worrying about logistical and operational needs. Most urban activists identify the challenges for transnational engagement but believe their opportunities outweigh the associated costs and challenges for practicing in transnational forums.

Thus, this study urges for a reconstitution of these groups within the pedagogy because there exists no discourse regarding the distinctions between the two varied sectors and the experiences they share with transnationalism. While these categorized binaries between Gandhi-based rural activists and urban actors remain missing from the existing literature, this study is the first of its kind to draw analyses from the lived experiences and narratives of varied domestic activists' accounts and their dealings with TANs. In doing so, the project engages with prominent theories of Indian environmentalism that examine southern environmentalism from the purview of the global North's understanding of environmental advocacy in India. The research study points out how Indian environmentalism can also be distorted, varied, and fragmented within southern quarters but this interpretation does not imply that a transnational approach constitutes success. Instead, domestic activists can employ *Gandhian* principles, form global solidarity networks, and engage in a South-South TANs to fight against socioecological injustices, political repression, and neocolonialism in the state.

The examples of Greenpeace and the NBA highlight the different preferences for transnational involvement in the internal affairs of domestic advocacies. While Greenpeace sought support from its main office in the Netherlands, the NBA preferred to raise funds locally but seek domestic and international solidarity in its anti-dam campaign against the government. The *Pathalgadi* movement also reveals Hindu conservative ideas about environmental conservation and protection. *Pathalgadi* activists carve erected stones to preserve the ancient Indian tradition of recognizing the birth or death of community members. This practice helps them defend and preserve their cultural traditions to control their own land resources and push state actors to consult indigenous activists before proposing any industrial developmental programs and policies in their area.

Other examples of the International Campaign for Justice in *Bhopal* (ICJB) and the Affected Citizens of *Teesta* (ACT) illustrate North-South differences regarding the modus operandi for environmentalism in varied geographies. The ICJB and Greenpeace broke their partnership over ownership, accountability, and ostracism concerns. Despite repeatedly intimating Greenpeace about the nature of these problems, Greenpeace continued to deny credit to ICJB by eliminating the mention of its name from official reports and documents and highlighting its own efforts to improve the brand's image internationally. Additionally, the ACT also broke ties with ActionAid after the latter failed to represent the *Lepcha* ethnic issue alongside the *Teesta* anti-dam struggle.

This project theorizes an advocacy coalition framework for Indian environmental advocacies that exhibit unique, individualistic, and innovative ways to resolve the transnational problem. It engages with prominent advocacy-related theories whilst also contributing to them. On one hand, it builds on the strong body of existing literature that mostly associates itself with the critical works of Bano (2008); Brulle (2000); Jalali (2013); and Rahman (2006), analyzing the limitations of transnational advocacies in the global South. On the other hand, it advances this discussion by offering further insight into the neocolonial and Eurocentric conditions of TANs that drive domestic activists to the margins by disempowering them. The study extrapolates these critical arguments about transnationalism by interjecting the need for decoloniality in the transnational advocacy space where issues of indigeneity, identity, culture, ecology, democracy, development, and sustainability can be unpacked and teased out to not only point out contradictions and fallacies in transnational structures but to seek recourse, mediation, and justice. This dissertation seeks to emphasize this aspect of Indian environmental advocacies contextualizing Gandhi's philosophical teachings on contemporary modes of activism in India that are further challenged by the politics of the *Hindutva* brigade which seek to dismantle environmentalism in new sectarian ways.

However, the research study also purports that the proposed advocacy coalition framework for environmental activism in India does not, necessarily, imply that domestic challenges thereafter will be diminished or non-existent. Domestic NGOs may still face government oppression and other advocacy-related challenges that impede their goals in the long run. Howbeit, the study does make the claim that adopting a Gandhi-centered approach within domestic environmental groups will eliminate some of the risks for conducting advocacy in the global South such as the influence of northern powers in everyday advocacy affairs that sideline and marginalize indigenous interests. It will also cancel the negative impact of the FCRA on domestic activists that eventually disintegrate southern advocacies. Domestic NGOs tend to dismantle as it becomes difficult for them to sustain themselves after their support structures are suddenly withdrawn. In effect, domestic activists in the global South will need to conduct a risk analysis before setting the parameters of their modus operandi. They will have to weigh the pros and cons of domestic environmental challenges vis-à-vis state repression but also logically deduce the drawbacks of TANs in terms of the influence of northern powers on them should they choose to adopt a transnational approach.

Empirical Contributions

In addition to the theoretical contributions of this dissertation, this study also seeks to fill an important empirical gap in the discipline of political science. Existing empirical accounts indicate that India is an understudied area in the field of transnational studies. It is recognized by a few scholars (Deo et al 2011); Jalali 2013; Martinez-Alier 2004; Matejova et al 2018; McCully 1996; and Udall 1995) but there is no focus on transnational environmental advocacy networks. Thus, this study attempts to fill this knowledge gap in the academic literature.

This study encourages southern domestic activists to be optimistic about the futuristic trends regarding environmental advocacy in India. It urges them to think beyond the mainstream rhetoric of transnational discourses being identified in an opportunistic light and compel domestic activists to holistically consider the aspects of working within closed compartmentalized spaces dominated by northern NGOs that, in turn, prejudicially discriminate and oppress them. It encourages the grassroots to respond to these normalized and naturalized processes through quintessential push back that also persuades northern advocacies to recoil their neocolonial propaganda in the global South. The analysis shows that domestic leadership minus northern intervention is required for any policy change to effectively take place without maligning the interests of marginalized communities. It suggests that hyper transnational participation is not a necessary condition for the success of movements. While academics (Keck et al 1998) have emphasized the importance of transnationalism for advocacies to influence global norms and represent indigenous struggles at the global stage, this study illustrates how transnationalism is not a valuable resource for domestic activists as it creates setbacks for the minority communities involved and pushes them further away from their predetermined goals making the entire process of transnationalism futile and excessive.

Relatedly, the study challenges these assumptions that are popularly discussed in the academic literature by highlighting the centrality of state intervention as the surge of transnational advocacy networks in southern states arises. It analyzes how the Indian state utilizes the FCRA to dismantle TANs which, in turn, shuts down the opportunity for domestic NGOs and movements to continue to represent their struggles at the sub-national and national stage. The FCRA also reduces the scope for domestic activists to exercise democratic freedoms as it strategically aims to target dissenting advocacy groups. For instance, in 2019 the state shut down Greenpeace's India offices in the states of Delhi and Bihar. Nearly 40 employees were laid off and Greenpeace's bank accounts were frozen (The Hindu 2019). The state uses its legislative machinery and regulatory mechanisms such as the FCRA to suppress domestic activists from pursuing advocacy discourses as foreign-funded organizations are seen as 'antinational' and 'neocolonial' proponents.

In contrast, the dissertation suggests the possibility for northern advocacies to sensitize themselves in southern domains by offering to pursue a decolonial transition for southern domestic activists to regroup and collectively discern their missions moving forward. It helps them to rethink about their role as external facilitators of these highly aspirational movements that are seeking effective environmental policymaking in states and encourage grassroots empowerment and representation. This study challenges the myopic conclusion that southern domestic advocacies require transnational assistance for the realization of environmental objectives without which their endeavors will fail. Instead, it urges domestic activists to advance their thinking about indigenous knowledge systems and process and utilize them to pursue their mission and not wholly rely on northern support structures that reproduce coloniality and indigenous marginalization.

Similarly, the transnational advocacy community should not assume that southern domestic activists are incapable of sustaining themselves or realizing their goals and objectives successfully. Global solidarity narratives posit that North-South, domestic-international, and core-periphery alliances can assure movement success and affirmative action. However, such assumptions distract attention from the success stories of southern advocacies and their ability to self-sustain and self-govern their movements. It also distracts from the underlying causal limitations of transnationalism warped under the garb of 'changing state behavior' and 'positive policy outcomes' because of the 'shared principled ideas and values' of domestic and international advocacies. Conversely, this may have nothing to do with the internal capabilities of domestic advocacies that may find greater results from running their NGOs and movements independently.

The analysis on state-led intervention suggests that domestic activists are discouraged from participating in TANs if advocacies receive foreign funding. The government uses the FCRA to repress dissenting TANs and curtails activists from throwing 'boomerangs' internationally (Matejova et al 2018). In turn, this dissertation argues that if the primary focus of domestic activists is based on a *Gandhian* approach that incorporates principles of self-reliance, self-reflection, truth quests, and the negation of externalities then the efficacy of domestic environmentalism can be established through decoloniality and the liberation of Indian environmental thought. Decoloniality in transnationalism will lead to the empowerment and upliftment of marginalized groups and allow the emancipation of indigenous knowledge systems and cultural values within the environmental advocacy systems.

This dissertation urges domestic activists to not campaign in isolation. It proposes that domestic activists should strive to build connections with like-minded advocacy groups and actively pursue South-South TANs for support whilst relying on 'the self' to facilitate their advocacy objectives. Thus, the findings of this project analyze the conscious approaches for self-sufficiency, as advocated by Gandhi. It helps eliminate complacency on the global North for the material and financial wealth as it urges domestic activists to reduce excessive wants, practice minimalism, and rely on indigenous approaches for environmental reform instead of eulogizing the global North to attain these outcomes for them.

The Dystopic Side of Gandhi

After outlining the contributions of this study, it is also important to discuss the potential concerns regarding Gandhi and his model that recommends domestic reliance within environmental advocacy structures and reducing dependency on external actors. Although the dissertation has identified the crucial need for domestic activists to remain independent and local within their environmental campaign approaches, there are potential dangers and pitfalls involved with relying on domestic environmentalism in India.

Relying on southern knowledge systems and processes poses the problem of exclusion and violence that is inherently involved with domestic advocacy groups (Dasgupta 1996). Gandhi advocates for individual freedom as opposed to state sovereignty which would be the 'purest form of anarchy' if practiced through non-violence (Mishra 2005). Gandhi's insights opposed the validity of the state as it professed the material well-being of society at large and the use of brute force for sovereign gains in the international system. These notions pose a challenge for domestic activists that face governmental hostility due to the transnational support they receive. While Gandhi's thoughts may have been progressive for his time, they are ill-conceived especially regarding the nature of the state in the contemporary democratic realm. Gandhi fails to offer nuance on how domestic activists can protect themselves from government repression and leverage themselves as effective policy influencers in the state whilst keeping themselves distant from external players.

A *Gandhian* theoretical framework thus does not cater to external contingencies that are capable of disintegrating campaigns. Domestic activists can face exclusion and isolation in these protracted endeavors without seeking support from external actors. It is important to note here that developing a shared sense of solidarity does not necessarily imply neocolonial or Eurocentric tendencies. Global solidarity fosters strong group identification and channelizes relatability, empathy, and healing. On the other hand, intersectionality between movements and other civil society participants promotes nationalism and the feeling of 'one-ness' inspiring a self-sacrificing love for others, society, and the environment as a whole. While domestic activism may be threatened by state repression, the unity and stability fostered by cross-national advocacies, philanthropists and other civil society actors will help formulate the necessary conditions to thrive and sustain movements.

The characterization of Gandhi as a 'champion' for indigeneity and subaltern empowerment is also a troubled one because of Gandhi's racist, casteist, and violent leanings. Krishna (2019) argues that "Gandhi was quite enamored with people's races, castes, and nations that had the ability to inflict violence on others". Although Gandhi was a patron of *satyagraha* and political resistance, his philosophical work based on personal experiences and values are constitutive of racism and casteism. In South Africa, Gandhi depicted Africans as "uncivilized, dirty, troublesome, and living like animals" (Krishna 2014: 145). He referred to the lower castes and untouchables with the same yardstick and stressed on the importance of keeping races pure and untainted. He justified the caste system arguing that "a person born into a particular caste should follow the profession deemed appropriate" such that for any social change to take place within the caste system, it would have to involve the approval and generosity of upper caste members (Krishna 2014: 147). In similar vein, Gandhi held indentured laborers in South Africa responsible for their disadvantaged condition and the racial stereotypes towards them by the white population owing to their sins of the past life (Krishna 2019). Gandhi also advocated violence as a means to cleanse 'the self'. He confessed that *ahimsa* (nonviolence) could not be taught to a person that was incapable of inflicting violence such that for 'elusive nonviolence' to be attained a certain level of physical strength was ultimately required (Sharma 2021).

As such, Krishna (2014; 2019) highlights this dark side of Gandhi that held native Africans, lower caste *Dalits* (untouchables), and indentured laborers accountable for their sociopolitical backwardness and moral failures. Krishna (2019) states:

> "It is not the perfection of strategies of *satyagraha* or the ability to mobilize large numbers of people into disciplined acts of resistance that shines through his South African years but rather his troubling views about race and caste, his desire to ingratiate himself with those in power, his fear of militant labor, and the centrality of violence to his understanding of manhood and nationhood".

Thus, Gandhi's arguments denoting equality, liberation, peace, and nonviolence are deeply unsettling because they allude a stark departure from his conservative notions ascending racial and caste-based inferiority between socioeconomically advantaged groups and the vulnerably, marginalized sections of the subaltern population. It also creates ambiguity regarding his ideas on nonviolence and peaceful protests when his arguments regarding the use of violence are also quite glaring. In this light, it is difficult to fully read Gandhi as the philosopher, celebrated 'father' of an independent India, and eminent figure within the environmental justice movement space when Gandhi's worldviews are consistent with a perpetuated system of racial segregation, violence, caste-based oppression, and marginalization of indigenous actors that promotes the superiority of the upper castes. Scholars (Anievas et al 2014; Krishna 2014, 2019; and Roy 2017) contest these narratives that internalize sectarian division and conflict in the contemporary Indian state. They state that Gandhi's principles are a "postcolonial rendition of the racial and spatial order" (Krishna 2014).

More so, Gandhi's teachings on Hinduism (Gandhi 1994) closely align with the Hindu nationalist environmental narrative in India that suggests leveraging religion and culture within ecological protection and conservation narratives. Even though Gandhi did not directly preach the adoption of religious tenets, his admiration for Hinduism through his writings and certain religious practices can be considered as an inspiration for eco-traditionalism. This is problematic because it insinuates communalism and sectarian divisions within the environmental advocacy space laying greater eminence on the religious ethos of the state rather than promoting environmentalism. Gandhi's failure to isolate religion from environmental politics have thus deepened concerns surrounding the surge of eco-fascism and Hindu nationalism in the state. Gandhi (1994: 24) describes Hinduism in ecological terms:

> "Hinduism is like the *Ganga* (river) pure and unsullied at its source but taking in its course the impurities in the way. Even like the *Ganga* it is beneficent in its total effect. It takes a provincial form in every province, but the inner substance is retained everywhere. Custom is not religion. Custom may change, but religion will remain unaltered".

Sharma (2012) analyzes how this "saffronization of green movements" has led to issues of communalism and authoritarianism accentuating sociopolitical problems in the state. Movements inspired by Gandhi's teachings such as the anti-*Tehri* dam led by Sunderlal Bahuguna (Mawdsley 2005) utilized Hindu religious beliefs and cultural traditions to offer new pragmatic solutions for ecological problems surrounding the dam issue. This justified asceticism and secular intolerance in the state. Sharma (2002) argues:

> "…in the later part of the movement especially, anti-Tehri dam politics has persistently and centrally been constructed through a conservative Hindu imagery, often in partnership

> with Hindutva politics…The ecological reasoning is blurred and goes beyond logic, eliciting Hindu support, patriotism, and xenophobia".

Finally, there is also a moral value attributed to Gandhi's philosophical ideas that form a moral compass not just for the global South but for the North as well. Raghuramaraju (2012) argues, "if someone in particular holds a moral value then he must think it applies to all others". However, Bilgrami (2002) states that "one should be able to hold something to be of universal moral value but yet not demand universability". In this sense, assuming a Gandhi-based approach can be applied to other aspects of life is challenging because of its underlying failure to resonate with other actors, cultures, and geographical contexts. It pervades the moral process as Gandhi's arguments purport violence, racism, and casteism while claiming for 'simplicity', 'nonviolence', and 'peace'. Desai notes:

> "But if Gandhi was part of the racist common sense of the time, then how does this qualify him to be a person that is seen as part of the pantheon of South African liberation heroes? You cannot have Gandhi as an accomplice of colonial subjugation in South Africa and then also defend his liberation credentials in South Africa" (Biswas 2015).

In effect, comprehensively situating Gandhi's life and ideas based on his personality and actions is quite complex. This dissertation offers a ray of hope in this dismal picture. It recognizes the extent of challenges domestic activists have to face whilst dealing with state and non-state actors in transnational setups. It suggests that even with limited material and financial resources pursuing a *Gandhian* path while conducting environmental activism in the state will be more beneficial for domestic activists to empower themselves. This is because despite Gandhi's highly problematic ideals, his willingness to lay down his life for the freedom struggle, continually be 'self-reflective', admit personal mistakes, and encourage a sense of debate and dialogue with others qualifies respect. Gandhi's ideas particularly for domestic environmental activists have also been deemed successful for movements such as the *NBA*, *Chipko*, and *Appiko*. Thus, while most studies posit the importance of TANs for the success of southern advocacies (Keck et al 1998) and/or discount the efforts of domestic advocacies, postulating that they are incapable to sustain themselves without transnational support, this study, in contrast, highlights the creative potential for domestic environmental advocacies to self-govern themselves and resist the neocolonial and Eurocentric temptations of the global North in southern quarters using *Gandhian* principles. The promotion of global solidarity, building intersectionality, alongside a self-reliant approach as advocated by Gandhi will not only help achieve desirable outcomes in activists' discourses but also enhance the overall sociopolitical well-being of activists in civil society.

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