

## EXAMINING THE RELEVANCE OF “NARRATIVES” IN CLIMATE REFUGEE RESEARCH IN SOUTH ASIA: CASE STUDIES, DEBATES AND DISCUSSIONS.

### **Abstract:**

"Climate change" is a global environmental problem that continues to impact the lives and livelihoods of coastal communities at an unprecedented rate, all across the world. In India, coastal communities experience the wrath of climate-induced displacement, which impacts their settlement and rehabilitation. The present article attempts to explore intersecting horizons of climate refugee laws, global and local discourses of climate crisis/climate-induced displacement, and existing policy frameworks that work in an intertwined manner to impact the mitigation strategies for a vulnerable set of climate refugees in a small coastal village of West Bengal. The article takes on to account case studies, narratives, and participatory methods to reflect upon three significant questions: Who are 'Climate refugees'? What is the scope of "climate refugee" laws in India? How do local climate refugees negotiate the politics of 'displacement' in their everyday lives? Why is it necessary for policy-making bodies to upgrade their humanistic stance while framing policies for climate refugees?

Findings reveal Firstly, the term "Climate refugees" is a controversial term. Secondly, 'climate refugee' laws are a dire necessity to give a safer and more secure place to millions of migrating people who seek shelter and support during times of environmental crisis and want their local rights to be protected. Thirdly, climate refugees, as social actors, somewhere fail to exercise their agency in the politics of displacement in their everyday lives, and lastly, policy-making bodies somewhere need to gear up their humanistic stance to offer sustainable solutions to the climate crisis.

**Keywords:**

Climate change, Climate refugees, Refuge law, Human rights, Protection and Security, Sovereignty and justice.

**Introduction:**

‘Displacement’ as a social phenomenon has been studied by different scholars from different perspectives, ranging from historical, economic, political, religious, and ecological disasters (Hortsmann, 2015; Bandetti, 2017). The debate of climate induced displacement started when it was noticed by some scholars that there are varying types of climate migrations; such as inter country migration or transborder migration due to temporary and permanent effects of changing climatic conditions. Climate migration can be divided into two types; the temporary climate migration and another one is permanent climate migration. As per IPCC, there are millions of people displaced by shoreline erosion, coastal flooding and agricultural disruption due to climate change. In due course, many scholars conducted relevant surveys to determine numerical counts in order to understand the consequences of climate crisis (IPCC, 1990). People tend to move from one place to other when they encounter some emerging crisis in their surroundings in search for safe and secure place for their livelihood. As per UNFCCC, the rapidly and randomly changing weather conditions are a major cause of climate induced displacement everywhere in the world. People are losing their habitat, facing resource scarcity, and livelihood problems. It is evident that people are forced to move from their natural habitats or take stronger mitigation efforts to deal with that. (UNFCCC, 2015).

It was recognized by European parliamentary research services that large number of people

are migrating from one place to another due to climatic conditions, they also have a numerical value to count this set of people, which was 173 million in 2000 to 258 million in 2017(EPRS,2018). Recent data of inter- governmental panel for climate change suggests, one billion people could be displaced due to climatic conditions, mostly due to shoreline erosion, coastal flooding, agricultural disruption. It was stated in the report of the UN refugee agency, that covid-19 created a threefold impact to the people living in effected countries, they are on the verge of crisis, from economic crisis, social protection, poverty, conflict, weak health systems to distorted livelihoods, and climate change impac

Climate refugees are already living in undefined status, they are not recognized as 'Refugee' in 1951 convention, and so, they are not protected under any national or international laws. It was Antonio Gueteres who emphasized the importance of rising 1.5 degree temperature and the risk of people living in islands and coasts across the globe, these people were to face the worst consequences of climate change. (Gurdian, 2018). It was never clearly determined the intertwined factors leading to this crisis though, the detail macro and micro level analysis of climate migrants was given by Waldinger, 'climate change increases the intensities of migration by emerging income disparities'(Waldinger,2015).

Many scholars were interested in looking over minute details about this events, and made reports, such reports are used as valid guide to understand the phenomenon of climate change and associated events, According to International organization Of Migration, the meteorological impacts of climate change are of two types, one is climate drivers, which can be divided into two types, climate processes, such as sea level rise, salinization of agricultural lands, desertification and growing water scarcity, and climate events such as floods, storms, glacial lake outbursts, cloudbursts. and the other type is NON-climate drivers, such as government policy, population growth, community mitigation efforts, all of these decide the frequency of vulnerability people experience due to climate change.(IMO,2008).

People from various disciplines have been looking over the problems and solutions associated to climate change. There are two types of available literature of climate change; one is wholly based on science-technology, most of them focused upon evaluating Carbon footprints, Use of Renewable technology, reducing Plastic pollution, tracing quantities of greenhouse gases etc. All such measures were directed toward understanding human impacts on earth, but putting

numbers on displaced people directly related to temporary or permanent climate change events were done by Norman Myers of the university of Oxford, as, “There could be as many as 200 million people overtaken by disruptions of monsoon systems and other rainfall regimes, by droughts of unprecedented severity and duration, and by sea-level rise and coastal flooding”(Brown,2008).A report prepared by international organization of migration claimed that due to climate change the “carrying capacity” of some parts of the world will vanish forever and millions of coastal or island people will be homeless due to permanent adaptation failure in those places, they may have to moved forcefully for survival, but still now these people can’t be included in national or international refugee recognition laws for taking benefits directly.

The first task was to gather and analyze secondary data from existing scientific reports and news articles regarding the issue, using main and sub themes like Holocene, The Silent Spring, Deep Ecology, Green Capitalism, Climate Change, Climate Refugees in India, the Globe, Displacement and Sustainability, Migration and Climate Change, Refugee Laws, etc. The study's universe is 24 Paragansa, South in the Sagar island of coastal Bengal, which is situated at the extreme end of the Sundarban archipelago. The next phase was going into the field to experience the problem once the content analysis was completed and a scientific literature study was created based on the sorted themes and newly developing themes.

**Theoretical underpinnings and formation of Climate knowledge: -**

Theories are the backbone of any research problem and give the structure for any further inquiry and also helps us to get one conclusive standpoint about an issue, it is important to understand theories as they help us to connect the dots and builds systematically –inclusive methodology for research, helping us connect with realities exclusively. In the domain of Environmental

anthropology, there are two processes of knowledge production about climate, one is only theoretical and the other one is praxis based. During the earlier times, the theoretical knowledge production houses were working as colonial armchair anthropologists who attempted to figure out social problems of their surroundings, and developed important theories without cross-verifying them in other contexts, ignoring the praxis component of it. Environment was seen as one criterion to justify human differences or weaknesses, such as, white over black, or to describe good vs. bad characters/personalities such as rich, sober vs. poor, barbarians by Montesquieu. (Montesquieu,1748). They always used their perception of “other” people as one conceptual tool to describe about Environment. Although, without reviewing big conjectures, it was impossible to get clarity over certain social facts. So, anthropologists took a lead with concrete steps. The “Climate” knowledge formation in Anthropology was initiated by Margret Mead in 1974 “Climate conference” in which she insisted to contribute on health and Environment, though the book, “the Atmosphere: Endangered and Endangering”.(Baer,2009).Human environment relationship was narrowed down to Ethnography by social-cultural anthropologists, before that it was only based on conjectures without evidences and validation. Environment was always analyzed as one value indicator in various research, but not taken as functional variable which would create complex and analytical qualitative response feedback structure. Most of the later conjectures of environmental research were situated around the debate of structural-functional domains of society. It was evident that after the emergence of “Cultural Materialism” and “Cultural Ecology” theories, there was a trend in looking at complex variables of environment through the lenses of “Deep Ecology”, where environment was not avoided as external force but understood as a whole, where different actors perform their roles.(Earne Naess,1970)

The school of thought of “Political ecology”, emerged through a radical movement all over the world, where scholars tried to clear out the misconceptions in understanding any environmental problems. (Watts, 2001; Perreault, 2015). It pointed towards shadowed capitalist realities of that time where the questions emerged as who is responsible for the doubling effects of changing environmental phenomenon on the developing countries. (Perreault, 2015). The term political ecology was coined by Frank Thone in his article “Nature Rambling: we fight for Grass”, he used the term to portray a political situation between Japan and Russia, through Mongolia. (Thone,1935). So, to understand the unequal power dynamics across the field setting, the epistemological projection of political ecology creates extended opportunity to look over unequal division of labour, formation of new identities, restructuring of societies due to any conflict arising from environmental, economical, sociological issues. So, in the case of concern for Climate refugees, it helped to formulate one holistic understanding of the phenomenon with incorporating emerging variables from the field, In the context of climate migrants of Sunderbans. It is important to understand and unfold the complexities of climate crisis, to help it build its own path of resilience and protection frameworks, according to Kristensen, “life in its totality has entered the reflexive prism constituted by the power-knowledge nexus”(Kristensen,2013).so, climate crisis couldn't be understood without the power and knowledge formation on subjectivities.

As it is not important to encompass all theories in one research, it depends on the available social situation in field setting, and however it's up to the researchers to choose the valid paradigm that can guide investigations. A lack of anthropological study about Climate change and its consequences in India may be because of heavy influence of western paradigms on constructing environmental knowledge. Specifically, the displacement of people due to direct consequences of

climate change, all the anthropological institutions have focused upon tribes, institutions or society with a colonial bias but there are hardly any example of climate induced displacement debates based on local epistemologies . Likely, the newness of the discipline within Environment anthropology and unclear concept of how to conduct fieldwork when studying climate change, and where to find the connections and where to find the variables kept scholars away from the event for so long. Some studies are there by anthropologists as meaning of climate change to indigenous/local people but the lack of detailed study on clarity of direct effects of climate change on the life of people.(Mehtaetal,2019;Vedwan,2006).The forest degradation, indigenous knowledge, eco-medicine, seed conservation found its place in the arena of Environmental anthropological literature but not climate induced displacement and its importance.

### **Methodology:**

The methodology of the present study focuses up on collection of relevant case studies and use of first hand data from interview, observation and participatory rural appraisal methods in order to gather evidence of the scope of refugee laws in the context of Climate Refugees in India. It is also observed that creating a specific criterion to determine climate refugees is very complex and difficult as some of the communities did not qualify the criterion of migration directly related to climate change, as it is evident from their studies that only linking migration due to climate change data was not sufficient, it was mainly due to human choice of space which depends on luxury, income source, religious interest, popularity of the place, and resources. The paper will discuss three important case regarding the precarities of displacement due to climate change.

### **Findings and analysis:**



***Studies on Climate Induced Displacement:***

*The case of Shishmaref at Alaska:*

This report was published as a draft in a workshop in Indiana University. It is about 600 inhabitants of Shishmaref and their voted displacement due to climate change on 2002. The author linked the subsistence pattern to everyday social activities and termed the people as social actors. The people had to choose to move from their native place due to the sea level rise and many associated factors like erosion were making their life vulnerable. The decision was taken by the people after two storms and loss of houses and, resources. It was 2009 when Government Accountability Office(GAO) noticed the unusual pattern of erosion and storm on the small island and on its inhabitants. It took them 179 million dollars for this displacement. (Kolbert, 2015; Benedetti,2017). The author clearly described the different world views of displaced people to understand the Global climate change knowledge production and decision-making processes of social actors facing the change. The role of actors in determining their fate would lead to the formulation of an inclusive policy for their secure and easy mobilization according to the situation. The displacement disrupts their social cohesion and brings uncertainty to their life. According to the author,

*“Being apart from the community, the sea ice and their land would be like losing the strong human-ecological relationship..... The consequences of climate change are not only material, but they are also psychological, cultural and impact identity.”*(Marino, 2015; Benedetti, 2017).

According to Bendetti, it was like “Cultural Genocide”, everything was taken away from them, their land, subsistence means, and resources. It was like the people are screaming their fate and yearning basic minimum rights of life. The author placed social actors on -arenas which are the social spaces human use as agency to give choices for decision making processes regarding resource mobility, political relationships and interpersonal communications. All of these factors contribute to the local environmental governance and decision-making processes. The study on Sishmaref suggest that there is one ample opportunity for anthropologists to do in depth fieldwork among the climate induced people to understand the different levels of decision-making processes from the locals and convey that to the state and national level for better policy implementation approaches.

***The case study: “The Climate Refugees” of West Bengal, India” (from the field)***

This case study was done by me under the purview of climate change research situating ethnographic universe at coastal Bengal. Global environmental knowledge production for the policy making purpose. Is important and we hope a study on climate migration bridges the gap in the existing knowledge domains of climate refugees/ migrants. Climate change being the most discursive issue of present time, every country is dealing with it and local actors are generating new meaning of climate change through adaptation. So, this case study is based on about 14 houses of displaced people from one island to the other, who have lost the portion of their islands into the sea due to abrupt sea level rise and erosion. The work focused upon exploring climate change and perspectives of people about it which ended on the adaptation and vulnerabilities of

the displaced people, understood as “Permanent Climate induced refugees”. The process of erosion is continuing and the people constant move from their island to other island for survival, unfortunately, the island in which they are now seeking “refugee” is also sinking very fast from its sides according to the people and media articles and the fate of these people are becoming more vulnerable.

The permanent word is so significant to address the crisis of these people as climate events are of two types, one is temporary such as cyclones, typhoons which have small episodes of disastrous impacts on the life of human and other animals and other is permanent and have prolong impacts on the lives of human and other animals such as prolong effects of sea level rise and coastal erosion, changing environment, abnormal patterns of animal movement, scarcity of resources, fresh water crisis as per locals. These narratives are all about a group of people who was rehabilitated in another island due to sudden erosion of large portion of area of their island which was situated at the coast of Bay of Bengal. It’s also evident that, many coastal cities, towns and islands are facing the hardest crisis of this time due to sea level rise and erosion.(Thomas,2018).According to some available reports, many low lying areas and islands would be inhabitable by 5 meter sea level rise across the globe.(kelman,2009).

*The experiences of the locals: Identity Fallacies, And Narratives of Adaptation Mitigation and vulnerability*

This case study was to bridge the gap between denials of climate change and the perspective of people who are the victims of climate crisis, and had the wrath impacts of climate change in their life. yearlong erosion events are taking place in and around Bay of Bengal, there was no as such formal records of their population after displacement exists. In-depth and open ended interviews were taken as main research technique to take case of climate induced forced displacement. Semi structure schedule guide was used to bring out the different level of narratives the people of the island share to convey their experiences of climate change. This includes their views about themselves the perspective of the old and new government authorities who are helping them continuously still to adapt within the new environment conditions, the perspective of their neighbors as they are seeking “refugee” in neighboring islands. Working on the life of “climate refugee” and to understand their issue is quite difficult, as the issue itself is so complex to connect directly with other aspects of life and without understanding connection of issues of their life it’s impossible to voice for their rights, conservation and protection. So, the impacts on the life of those people who have suffered climate induced displacement needs proper attention of the policy makers, advisors, researchers, media persons as near advocates would contribute back to the life of those people and to voice their rights to global level for better preparation, participation of the locals in forming disaster management action plans which will be area specific. There are similarities between other criterion of migration such as territory, religion, but here the article will only focus on the impacts of climate induced displacement, which will be discussed below,

- Interview of one climate “refugee” about their identity:

“I would like you to please refrain from calling me a "Refugee." From what I understand, that

term implies that we are homeless and lack anything of our own. Before being rehabilitated to this island, I was a member of a well-respected, wealthy family, and I owned one Bigha piece of property and one well-kept house. Their statements made clear the mental agony that the climate catastrophe creates, recognizing that these people are grappling with identity issues. Since there was no organized campaign on the concept of "Refugees" and their rights, the residents were ignorant of it. These dispel the myth that refugees are misinterpreted as charity-dependent beggars while, in reality, they are in need of government assistance. Curating an anthropological study that involved identifying, surveying, and exploring the ethnographic field of "Climate Refugee" was challenging because the "victims of Climate Change" did not receive any recognition on a global or local level due to a critical viewpoint between various disciplines, such as economics, public health, or studies on climate change. Each discipline has its own unique operationalization, theoretical bias, and methodological foundations, and inter-disciplinary fencing. When I left for field to study "Impacts of climate change" over Bay of Bengal after following media reports of many countries, I was told by many respected individuals that, "Climate change is just one myth, just recheck your concepts and don't believe in what everyone says", but it was so robustly expressed itself on the life of these islanders, which we could ever imagine from the protected and secured places.

- interview conversation with the son of ex-chief,

*"We have never ever imagined that small erosion events of the coastal areas would lead us to become "Homeless" forever, we have not only lost our houses, but we have lost our*

*livelihood together. Few of us also couldn't afford the mental abrupt stress so, a few committed suicide, one day when there was a heavy storm landfall nearby our island, all of the corners of our island got drowned, even no higher space was there for us to survive, till the officials came and rescued us, we were all in shock and trauma, the officials gave us temporary places to sustain till they sanctioned two acres of land to each family and one livelihood options for us, climate change was very real for all of us, we did not know any terms like these before, but we faced it as "change" In weather pattern, we also wants to know more about these issues in future for safe escape, the increased severity will disappear the remaining island within habitants as it seems, but you know, till, our island sinks these island will be also drowned together".*

So, this man has very vivid experience of climate change as he is the victim of it, he was rehabilitated here 20 years ago during a very robust erosion events and submergence of five village into the river. It was the first time they have heard of any word like "climate change" but it was in their perception as one "abrupt change" may be due to some "sins" performed by them communally. Their main concern is the decaying quality of their life, insecurity of resources and habitats, as they are experiencing extreme levels of erosion and increased frequency of flooding which are mainly caused by sea level rise and abrupt change in water currents. (Hazra et al, 2002)

Indian government has been taking initiative for environmental management plans, such as, mapping of coastal areas needs special consideration in its annual Environment report, which was evaluated under Shailendra nayak committee and amended many times from 2011 to 2019, where they have recommended many regulations about coastal and island population who are poor and

vulnerable, this was published under coastal zone regulation(CRZ).The society for integrated coastal management(SICOM) was formed to maintain a balanced, protected coastal resource mobilization and conservation, healthy and aesthete beach making, as, coast/island population dependent on these resources, although, the harsh impacts of extreme and continuous erosion events and sea level rise on the life of people was not recognized in proper ways. There are some official ,Educational and Non- governmental awareness programs for spreading awareness on increased frequency of disaster and the measures for the people in Sagar Island, West Bengal, but according to the islanders it needs to be increased more within community as they need to learn about the prevailing condition over the island for protection of their resources for future generations and to maintain communal harmony. The state Government of west Bengal also took measures to deal climate change as state action plan on climate change.it was evident that government is progressing toward an integrated plan to deal climate change as an independent issue rather than compiling climate change with disaster Management or action plan on Environment.

Because climate crisis is the most focused issue of this time, it deals with the devastating change over a longer time period continuously, although it belongs to the arena of Environment, it needs to be dealt independently for action and understanding purpose. This action plan on climate change has analyzed 116 years data of diurnal temperature change, precipitation pattern, monsoon pattern over West Bengal and according to them it was abruptly increasing in the costal Bengal which are the main reason for excessive flood events, and also these events needs real time monitoring. It holds many predictions and recommendations for future events and analyzed efficiently the causes behind limited available data. They have taken into account many variables which have emerged due to climate change like displacement from extreme events, health crisis,

water scarcity etc, it seems a pioneer work of this time which includes detailed analysis of climate change and its consequences, but still there has been lack of awareness in local people about climate change in an overall capacity, people also failed to figure out causes of abrupt erosion and their lost houses, the confusion and chaos around “the myth vs. of climate change “would increase if not conveyed to the people in convenient ways right now, as climate change is predestined, it needs to be tackled sensitively rather immediate help when there is something bad accrued. So, identity fallacies are not common after any kind of rehabilitation events, as after rehabilitation also many people are deprived of getting their lands back as promised earlier due to identity confirmation, as “climate change” was not so common in past. When the first displacement took place, authorities had promised to give back their lost lands to them in the new place with proper documentation, the documentation process was so clumsy that it took years to get signature from all the authorities of old and new places to get the document passed for scrutiny. Many people have left all hopes of getting their land back due to this time-consuming process.

It was a leisure day for some women as their husbands left for deep sea fishing at mid night, So, after a week I got my time to interact with the women of this colony, the first question was significant as it was on when did they understand that their villages would be drowned into the river, everyone was emotional and

- Interview with one woman of the climate refugee community, she pointed out that,

*“The change would only be understood if you were there with us, it was mid-morning, and few of us were awake as we were doing duty at the river bank to securing our houses from high tides*



*by cutting grids and repairing mud embankments as, it was our last resort. Suddenly, one of us heard a sound of breaking a portion of the wall, one portion of the embankment broke just in a fraction of second, we could not make it with our body pressure, water began intruding and we started floating toward our villages with the flow of water. The devastation was scarier, when we couldn't find out higher positions to save our life, while, we were protecting over the embankment, some of us were trying to secure their domestic animals at nearby flood centers .It became a weekly activity for us within a year as it seems, as we were able to understand that, our island is sinking slowly, there is no way left for us without rehabilitation.....,do you have any idea about Lohachara island.....? It was slinked just in front of us, not all of a sudden, but day by day it got drowned in the water, all of its inhabitants like us were displaced by government to another island, and affluent ones moved to main cities by buying land and made houses. There was also one big accident, as one child was playing at the river bank that day, he slipped into the water with a big tree when the erosion events accrued, we lost the child, and we were also continuing with losing our animals, land, houses, identity, cosmos, communal religious feasts everything we had earlier as inhabitants of that island, on the fateful day what happened suddenly water intrudes our island and our authority took us to the flood center and after that we got to know all of our land got drowned and we need to shift without important documents to another island, we cried a lot together, and made our mind to take the big shift for survival .....*”

There were many young women who were listening to the conversations; one woman also claimed that the government is well aware about their condition, and helping them locally to build resilience by giving them livelihood options, teaching them about new technologies for sustainable farming,

And fishing around their houses/localities. Displacement brings identity crisis to the people as according to them,

*“The government at that time gave us two Bighas of land in the new island, for sustainable farming and resettlement, it was then a barren land at the river bank, where we made our houses and farm lands by our communal effort, Government only provided us resources, which we used as per our knowledge and efforts. There were some people who lost the control of mind, and ended their own lives due to this rehabilitation process from our mother lands; it was traumatic and unbearable for every one of us but those people couldn’t digest the fact .” .....one woman also added that..... “there is breach of security for the women of our communities, there was a middle aged girl who was molested at the river bank while she was playing with other girls, these things were not common in our island, while we shared a respectable and supportive communication systems between us, it feels like we are outsiders here, so, our own people started to break the social ties we shared before, the increasing rates of crime is the evidence that our society is losing its internal ties and structure, if we were being told that it is going to be our fate, we would get prepared slowly, the sudden displacement emerged new issues in our community operations from health, education to religion everything got changed, it seems we have lost our communal integrity, do you know our children’s left schools because teachers denied to come on duty due to harsh weather and abrupt wave current on the way to our island, few teacher managed to continue and some classes are going on, what was told by our relatives who all are living on that island. Same situation for the doctors and health centers there.....”*

It’s difficult to limit the narratives which people expressed during interviews due to their awareness to the debate on climate change and displacement, so, climate change and

displacement opened doors of various factors from health to religion, which shaped their new way of living after displacement. The only positive change happening with them was the teaching of sustainable farming techniques, which made them self-sustained or prepared for every mis- happening that would come into their life in future also. Climate change debates are emerging very strongly with emerging voices of the locals of vulnerable zones across the world. There was a shift in their economic pattern, as most of the woman were practicing prawn seedling cultivation and farming, and their system of exchange were based on barter system, they exchanged goods most of the time in their past island, rather than money, money is useful in the new island as per them, one woman pointed out that, *“There was an emergence of small scale loan industries to help them in marrying their daughters or agricultural activities.....but simultaneously, it has raised internal community conflict issue.....,many of us, have relatives and husbands who have migrated to Dubai, Kerala for daily wage labourer work .do you know? It is very risky, sometimes, they never return as there is no special protection for them, it’s on fate.....so, climate change is not only real to the lives of millions of people living in vulnerable zones, its changing their whole way of life, from economic exchanges to social cohesion.*

Unfortunately, the events of climate change effects those people who are already poverty ridden, while I was asking about embankment making and failure, many woman objected, as according to them it is not one natural failure, it can be human induced also, where unequal wealth distribution take place at local level which pushed those projects in vein and made the life of those people vulnerable....., *“Do you know about embankment making.....? It is very risky and burdensome work; local authorities recruit us to work for 100 days under a scheme, to save our island and to keep it clean, that’s not the issue.....but the issue is where some local chiefs*

*intervene in the resource distribution process sanctioned for embankment making.....and also the sea is not cooperating with our fate, as just few weeks back when it was full moon, the sea became dangerous for us, and took away a big JCB machine underwater with all the material kept at the bank for embankment making, there are cases of multiple unregistered thefts of the materials given by the authorities as some houses are struggling at the river bank struggling hard and protecting their houses by using it at the base of their house, so that the rising sea waves couldn't destroy their houses...what to do; ”.*

### **Climate induced displacement and Protection of Climate refugees: worldviews and actions**

Basically, there is currently no legal provision for climate refugees across the globe because of continuous debate and discrepancies over the interpretation of the term. In present scenario, climate refugees are those people/migrant who opt for internal or external migration only due to permanent loss of habitat and resources

According to emerging researches on their lives, these people are having the worst burn of global warming as because climate change impacts are altering their economic-social-political life altogether and also creating community conflicts, identity crisis issues, and citizenship crisis. There is one family, who did claim for protection as “Climate refugees” in lower court of New Zealand, but they failed to prove it and their case got rejected in both courts. The verdict given by court was

*“The 1951 Refugee Convention requires an identifiable threat such as human factor. However, in Teitiota’s request, the court rejected the request because the threat referred to the impact of*

*climate change. According to the court, such threat could not be detected and identified. The next legal consideration is the absence of well-founded fear in this case. The court states that there was no evidence of any future fear that if Teitiota and family returned to their home state, their lives would be at risk. This fear cannot be proven because of the absence of physical threats in this regard”.*(Handyani, 2016)

So, the rejection was only based on the criterion fixed by 1951 convention wherein to identify an individual as a Refugee and giving them protection from any threat, it did not consider climate change sufficient enough as a permanent threat to identify and acknowledge climate migration as climate refugees’. The refugee convention to discuss about climate change began only from 2011, before that, it was political and geographically rooting of refugees which were mostly acknowledged as community level crisis or national crisis.

Historically, this convention was adopted from a 1951 conference in Geneva, to recognize the rights of refugees after World War II to identify war criminals and “refugees”, it was to give protection from the persecution of other countries. The refugee convention built an international document on Universal Documents Of Human Rights (UDHR),it had 30articles on freedom of rights of human beings, and mainly focused on status of refugees by article 14.It was decided what will be the responsibilities of parties in treating refugees. But it is still not decided how to recognize people under “Refugee Law” who are “Climate Refugees”. Very recently in 2018, The Global Compact, on refugees recognized Climate-induced displacement, as “Climate, environmental degradation and disasters increasingly interact with the drivers of refugee

movements”. So, the lack of clarity of the concept was creating a large barrier to categorize and understand about the events. But still now it’s under discussion to ensure the rights of these people. This concept has a number of definitions, some of which will be used below to comprehend the line of discourses. According to a UN report, a "person eligible for subsidiary protection" is defined as a third country national or a stateless person who does not meet the criteria for refugee status but for whom there are convincing reasons to believe that, if they were to return to their country of origin or, in the case of a stateless person, their country of former habitual residence, they would face a real risk of suffering serious harm as defined in Article 15—to which Article 17(1) and (2) do not apply—and that they would not be able to, or because of such risk. El-hinnawi also traced upon the concept and defined it as below,

*“Those people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of marked environmental disruption (natural and/or triggered by people that jeopardized their existence and/or seriously affected the quality of their life”.*(El-hinnawi,1981)

The concept is not under the subject of law, so it is difficult to bring people under the protection of law also. So, basically, it needs to be defined first to create a legal framework for everyone across the globe.

### **Policy evalutaions: Rights vs. Sovereignty**

Even though India is the only nation providing safe havens for asylum seekers, it is not a

signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol. They have their own criteria that they use to determine which refugees are eligible for resources, so they do not approve safe housing or resources for all refugees. India bases its decision to grant rights to refugees on a number of factors, including social stratification, gender stigmas, religious beliefs that uphold the nation's sovereignty and peace, and religious affiliations. Even though each of the actors in the asylum-seeking process has their own needs, preferences, and social contexts that influence where they choose to live, how they position themselves, and how they develop, they are still on the receiving end of people seeking their own basic rights.

India lacks a policy framework for climate refugees because, in order to reach a consensus, a concept must be framed. Sadly, the term "climate refugee" has not gained traction because there is a dearth of concrete evidence and discussion. Climate change is a global issue, but it must be addressed locally, and policymakers must create regional plans to address it. This is because the effects of the climate crisis are not the same everywhere; for example, sea level rise in the Bay of Bengal has a greater impact than it does on any other Indian coast. Thus, policy appraisal is required before adopting a national framework to safeguard the security, resources, and rights of India's climate refugees. as policy discussions lack theoretical-empirical understanding and evaluation together, that's why appraisals are important.

According to OECD,

*'Policy appraisal is a systematic way of bringing evidence to bear on alternative policy options, weighing up costs, benefits, their distribution between different parties and over time, uncertainties and risks, as a way of assisting the development of policy'.(OECD,2008).*

Numerous aspects of the "Refugee Crisis" have emerged from these discussions and empirical evidence, indicating that it is a highly complex and significant global political issue that requires consideration of the various socioeconomic, political, social, and environmental factors at play. The few policy recommendations listed below should aid in educating decision-makers and other interested parties about the significance of establishing a strong, uniform framework for climate refugees in India, which could potentially aid in resolving the global climate crisis.

### **Conclusion:**

Given that climate change is currently wreaking havoc on the earth's low-lying regions, it is becoming a global issue, and Indian coasts need to be ready to respond to it, there should be loss and damage funds for property reconstruction and adaptation after every coastal erosion events, as well as raising local awareness and launching action initiatives, is necessary to better address climate change effectively now. The effects of climate change vary depending on the environmental zones, such as hills or coasts. It is crucial to realize that case studies, narratives and genealogical histories have a significant influence on how people behave and assume roles because Power creates unequal relationships across spaces that determine the fate of those affected by climate change. so, Some people are facing worst impact of climate crisis than others; this article is an attempt to bridge the gap between climate knowledge and empirical evidences, Anthropology has the potential to assist stakeholders, scholars, and policymakers in comprehending the bottom-up approach utilized in developing policy frameworks regarding climate refugees within the Indian context. A greater level of readiness may provide climate refugees access to a variety of workable



laws and appropriate action plans at the local, regional, and federal levels, given that the climate crisis is expected to worsen in the coming years. India ought to set an example for other nations by creating a temporary climate refugee law that would acknowledge, defend, uphold, and accommodate the rights of climate refugees. This would enable them to secure their land rights for resettlement and provide them with protection for their means of subsistence and social security, thereby elevating their living status in society.

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The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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