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ECO-THEOLOGY MOVEMENTS FROM INDIA
Trajectories, Challenges, and Promises

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Abstract

India has a long and diverse history of eco-theological thinking and praxis, and this essay attempts to identify and study those diverse trajectories of Indian eco-theologies. The essay further engages with different ecological philosophies and eco-justice movements from India and examines their impact on the politics of the Indian eco-theology movements. The essay concludes with a critical interrogation of the mainstream eco-theology movement in India and a re-vision of eco-theological imaginations and praxis, informed by subaltern and Indigenous perspectives.

Keywords: environmentalism, ecotheology, India, Indigenous, movements

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GERAKAN-GERAKAN EKOTEOLOGI DARI INDIA
Trajektori, Tantangan, dan Kemungkinan

Abstrak

India memiliki sejarah yang panjang dan beragam terkait pemikiran dan praksis ekoteologis, dan tulisan ini berupaya untuk mengidentifikasi dan membahas keragaman trajektori ekoteologi-ekoteologi dari India tersebut. Lebih jauh lagi, tulisan ini juga memperlihatkan berbagai filosofi ekologis dan gerakan-gerakan keadilan lingkungan dari India serta memeriksa dampak mereka terhadap politik gerakan-gerakan ekoteologi India. Tulisan akan ditutup dengan sebuah pertanyaan kritis atas gerakan ekoteologi arus utama di India dan sebuah tawaran re-visi akan imaginasi dan praksis ekoteologi yang dibentuk oleh perspektif-perspektif subaltern dan *Indigenous*.

Kata-kata Kunci: lingkungan hidup, ekoteologi, India, *Indigenous*, gerakan-gerakan

Introduction

Theological reflections are context-specific expressions of faith, emerging from our ongoing search to re-imagine faith in light of the challenges and realities we encounter in everyday life. The politics of our theological imaginations and praxis are shaped by the epistemological sources and standpoints that guide us in this process. In recent decades, the ecological crises confronting the Earth have compelled religious communities across traditions to return to their scriptures, doctrines, liturgies, and practices for wisdom and guidance. Out of this engagement has emerged a growing field of religious environmentalism, with eco-theology becoming a mature and influential strand within Christian thought. Drawing on diverse theological, biblical, and pastoral resources, eco-theology has inspired faith communities to reorient their ministries toward the healing of both the planet and the people.

This essay situates Indian Christian eco-theologies within this wider global movement. It is organized into three sections. The first section offers a brief survey of global eco-theology, highlighting its diverse approaches and trajectories. The second turns to the environmental histories of India, engaging Indigenous, subaltern, anti-colonial, and social movements, and their struggles to decolonize *jal* (water), *jungle* (forest), and *jameen* (land), while also introducing key strands of Indian environmental philosophy. Lastly, I examine eco-theological movements within India, with particular attention to their influence on theological education, the

public witness of the church, and the work of ecumenical movements. The essay concludes with tentative proposals for the future of eco-justice theologies in India, informed by decolonial and intersectional perspectives.

In sum, this study seeks to introduce and critically assess the trajectories, challenges, and possibilities of Indian Christian eco-theologies, with the hope of inspiring faith communities to participate in decolonial, intersectional, and planetary politics of healing and justice.

Ecotheology: Approaches and Trajectories

Before delving into the eco-theology movements in India, it is essential first to understand the broader landscape of global eco-theologies. Contextual theologies are reflections from specific communities, shaped by their experiences of death and destruction, and their efforts to foster life despite these challenges. Eco-theology, in this sense, can be defined as a contextual theology that responds to ecological crises through both theological reflection and praxis. One can identify at least two main approaches within mainstream eco-theologies: Ecotheologies of Denial and Rejection, and the Feel-good Ecotheologies.

Despite the ecological richness of Christian faith and Scripture, mainstream Christian theologies and biblical interpretations have often promoted an earth-denying spirituality. This has inadvertently provided theological justification for the exploitation and destruction of the Earth, which God created and deemed good. The first creation story has been used to assert human superiority over nature, viewing the natural world as devoid of intrinsic value or moral significance. As a result, nature is considered excluded from God's salvific plan and seen merely as a resource for human use and enjoyment. This view supports the commodification of creation, offering theological legitimization for the colonization of the Earth.

Theological justifications for the exploitation and colonization of God's creation not only ignore the ecological crises but also undermine the importance of ecological ministries and activism. The eco-theology of denial and rejection promotes the idea of an omnipotent God who is in control, interpreting the climate crises as part of God's plan or wrath. In this view, since God will address the crisis in His time, humans are called to wait patiently. This eschatological perspective sees humans as mere "sojourners" and "pilgrims" on Earth, suggesting that the restoration of the Earth is not a Christian responsibility.

A critical examination of mainstream creation theology is essential here. The doctrine of creation out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*), which asserts that God created the universe "out of nothing," underpins the European colonial theology of conquest.

The colonial doctrine of *terra nullius*, which treats land as "empty" and available for claim, stems from this belief. According to this view, the land God gave to humans was initially unoccupied, making it open to conquest, cultivation, and commodification for Europe's civilizing mission. Thus, the concept of *ex nihilo* became a justification for the missionization and colonization of Indigenous communities and the exploitation of their lands for the benefit of the Christian Empire. The Papal Bull of Pope Nicholas V (1452) demonstrates how creation theology was used to legitimize the colonial plunder of land and people:

> to invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit.[1]

Mainstream creation theology's suspicion and rejection of the earth-honoring worldviews and creation-care practices of Indigenous and subaltern communities have contributed significantly to the destruction of the human-nature-divine rhizomatic relationship of mutual flourishing.

The second half of the 20th century saw the rise of feel-good environmentalism, driven by the growing awareness of the unprecedented destruction of the Earth. This approach reduces the ecological crises to personal choices, promoting campaigns like

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[1] See "Dum Diversas," Doctrine of Discovery Project, https://doctrineofdiscovery.org/dum-diversas. For more discussions on the colonial effects of the doctrine of creation out of nothing, see Whitney A. Bauman, "Creatio ex Nihilo, Terra Nullius, and the Erasure of Presence," in *Ecospirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth*, ed. Laurel Kearns and Catherine Keller (Fordham University Press, 2007), 329–40; Whitney A. Bauman, *Theology, Creation, and Environmental Ethics: From Creatio ex Nihilo to Terra Nullius* (Routledge, 2009); Peter Lewis, "'Terra Nullius Amnesiacs': A Theological Analysis of the Persistence of Colonization in the Australian Context," in *Colonial Contexts and Postcolonial Theologies: Storyweaving in the Asia-Pacific*, ed. Mark Brett and Jione Havea (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 149–62; Kriti Kapila, *Nullius: The Anthropology of Ownership, Sovereignty, and the Law in India* (HAU Books, 2022); Nasili Vak'auta, "Delusions of Empire: On People and Land in Oceania," in *People and Land: Decolonizing Theologies*, ed. Jione Havea (Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2019), 47–62.

conservationism, wilderness protection, and lifestyle changes. During this time, Lynn White Jr. highlighted how the Judeo-Christian tradition and its scriptures have legitimized the abuse of the Earth.[2] In response, eco-theological movements, influenced by feel-good environmentalism, attempt to counter these criticisms by "greenwashing" problematic scriptural teachings and doctrines.

Feel-good ecotheologies often use universal categories to explain the ecological crises, identifying anthropocentrism and human-induced emissions as the root causes. They commonly portray the issue as one where "we are all to blame" for our sinfulness. However, this narrative legitimizes misanthropy and absolves corporations—the true culprits—of responsibility. These theologies obscure the systemic nature of the crises by deliberately avoiding the use of the term "climate injustice" in their diagnosis of the problem. Their failure to apply intersectional approaches prevents them from recognizing how vulnerable communities are disproportionately affected by ecological crises and how these disasters worsen their marginalization. In essence, feel-good ecotheologies downplay the links between climate injustice and broader social, gender, and economic inequalities, while reinforcing the prevailing toxic environmental and social order.

Mainstream eco-theology often overlooks the critiques noted earlier, especially in regard to the tendency of "feel-good" environmentalism and ecotheologies to deliberately sidestep intersectional and justice-oriented concerns. By emphasizing "diversity" and "inclusion," these approaches reproduce colonial logic, incorporating differences into dominant narratives rather than challenging underlying power structures. They risk romanticizing nature and framing environmental concern in spiritual or aesthetic terms, while neglecting the systemic and socio-political causes of ecological crises. This situation calls for moving toward a decolonial approach that centers the voices, knowledge, and grassroots movements of communities most affected by ecological injustice. In this way, eco-theology can be reimagined as a justice-focused praxis, critically engaging with the intersections of ecology, coloniality, and social inequality.

The ecological ministries of feel-good ecotheologies, arising from positions of power and privilege, are limited to promoting lifestyle changes like "reduce, reuse, recycle," focusing on ethical consumption practices. They encourage ethical consumerism without challenging the dominant neoliberal capitalist system. This notion of voluntary simplicity reduces a systemic issue to individual choices, neglecting the privilege and

[2] Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1203–07.

power that enable one to make such choices. These theologies do not advocate for a redistributive downscaling of production and consumption. In essence, for feel-good ecotheologies, "saving the planet" becomes an apolitical campaign that seeks lifestyle changes without disrupting the underlying unjust social and economic order.

The last three decades witnessed the emergence of ecojustice theological movements that recognize the ecological crises as a justice issue. These theologies challenge mainstream eco-theology and provide alternative perspectives and actions to achieve ecological justice. Inspired by the Environmental Justice Movement, Indigenous and subaltern social movements in the Global South, and liberation, postcolonial, and decolonial theories, they recognize the link between the cries of the poor and the Earth.[3] They examine the connections between women and nature both as sources of life and as exploited by patriarchy, racism, and capitalism.[4] They contest the claims of neo-liberal capitalism and offer alternative ecological and economic visions for healing the Earth. They recognize the epistemological agency of subaltern social movements and non-violent activism in developing alternative eco-theologies and earth ethics.[5] Adopting political theology, they critique modernity and Empire while advocating for a planetary movement for social and ecological justice.[6] Using prophetic pragmatism and intersectional, interdisciplinary approaches, they address concrete problems and propose ethical responses for a just and sustainable future.[7]

Environmental Histories of India

Scholars have identified multiple waves of approaches in the study of India's environmental history. Michael Fisher's heuristic model of "three waves" provides a useful framework for

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[3] See Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (Orbis Books, 1997).

[4] See Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1992); Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation* (Fortress Press, 1999); Melanie L. Harris, *Ecowomanism: African American Women and Earth-Honoring Faiths* (Orbis Books, 2017).

[5] See George Zachariah, *Alternatives Unincorporated: Earth Ethics from the Grassroots* (Routledge, 2011); Karen O'Brien, *The Violence of Climate Change: Lessons of Resistance from Non-Violent Activists* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[6] See Michael S. Northcott, *A Political Theology of Climate Change* (Eerdmans, 2013); Catherine Keller, *Political Theology of the Earth: Our Planetary Emergency and the Struggle for a New Public* (Columbia University Press, 2018).

[7] See Willis Jenkins, *The Future of Ethics: Sustainability, Social Justice, and Religious Creativity* (Georgetown University Press, 2013); Whitney Bauman, *Religion and Ecology: Developing a Planetary Ethic* (Columbia University Press, 2014).

understanding these developments.[8] The first wave, represented by historians such as Ramachandra Guha, Vandana Shiva, and Arun Bandyopadhyay, emphasized popular environmental movements that resisted the extraction and exploitation of natural resources across India. The second wave expanded the scope of inquiry to include the diversity of local knowledge systems, human-environment interactions, and both pre-colonial and colonial approaches to environmental management. The third wave examines Indian environmentalism through the lenses of caste, class, and ethnicity, highlighting how social hierarchies shape ecological experiences and struggles. Together, these three waves situate India's environmental history within the broader contexts of colonialism, neoliberal capitalism, and caste-based inequalities, while underscoring the resilience of communities whose efforts to protect the environment are deeply intertwined with their struggles for social and economic justice.

The environmental histories of India begin with Indigenous communities and their cosmogonies, theologies, and community practices of creation care. They uphold the sacredness of the land, water bodies, and forests. They understood flourishing as relational and mutual. However, colonialism and missionary theology, which imposed an anthropocentric worldview and an other-worldly salvation project, condemned these Indigenous practices as animistic, paganistic, and pantheistic, thus erasing the eco-theological visions and practices of Indigenous and subsistence communities.

Colonial extractivism led to the widespread destruction of the commons across the subcontinent. Neoliberal capitalism perpetuated the colonial spirit of conquest, further colonizing the *Jal, Jungle*, and *Jameen* (water, forest, and land). Life-sustaining commons were transformed into commodities, priced for corporations to exploit. Accumulation through dispossession and displacement became the driving force behind this trajectory of development and progress, uprooting subsistence communities that had lived in communion with the commons for generations.

Amitav Ghosh articulates succinctly the legacies of colonialism in India, which disproportionately affect the survival and flourishing of Indigenous and subaltern communities and their sacred land, forests, and waterbodies.[9] Elsewhere, he writes, "An exploitative economy in all its ruthless facets was the hallmark of colonialism across the globe in the earlier centuries, and the same economics continues to rule in the mineral-rich mines of Jharkhand

[8] Michael H. Fisher. *An Environmental History of India: From Earliest Times to the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[9] See Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (University of Chicago Press, 2016).

and Odisha."[10] His critique further exposes how extractive capitalism is intermingled with ideologies and practices of exclusion like casteism.

Grassroots Environmental/Social Justice Movements

The environmental histories of India trace the struggles of diverse communities resisting the colonization of the commons throughout history. These movements challenged the colonial, capitalist, and caste-based conquest of common resources, as well as the dispossession and impoverishment of the commoners. In pre-colonial India, access to the commons was determined by one's caste identity. The commons, or common resources, were not accessible to all; only members of the dominant castes were entitled to benefit from them. Colonialism further alienated the commons from the common people. For example, the Indian Forest Act of 1865 revoked the customary rights of millions of forest dwellers who had protected the forests for generations. The Act "empowered the colonial government to declare any land covered with trees as government forests and to issue rules for conserving them."[11]

A brief discussion of select environmental justice movements in India highlights how grassroots communities have framed the environmental crisis as a justice issue, identifying its connection with broader economic, social, and gender inequalities. The Bishnoi Movement (1700s) in Rajasthan was led by the Bishnoi community, particularly women like Amrita Devi Bishnoi, who fought to protect their trees. Hundreds sacrificed their lives to save the trees, and eventually, the king issued a proclamation forbidding the felling of trees in any Bishnoi community. The Mahar Satyagraha (1927) was a protest by the Dalit community to reclaim their right to access water from the Chavdar tank in Mahad, Maharashtra. The Chipko Andolan (1973) was a historic protest movement in the Himalayas aimed at protecting the trees from government-sponsored logging. The Silent Valley Movement (1970s), initiated by the Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad, sought to protect Silent Valley, an evergreen tropical forest in Kerala, from a proposed hydroelectric project of the government. The Plachimada Movement (2002) in Kerala is another significant grassroots initiative in India's environmental history. Adivasis and other subaltern communities succeeded in closing down a Coca-

[10] Amitav Ghosh, "Colonial Sentiments Rule in Indian Mines," The Telegraph India, February 2, 2023, https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/colonial-sentiments-rule-in-indian-mines-amitav-ghosh/cid/1913870.

[11] Ashley Dawson, *Environmentalism from Below: How Global People's Movements Are Leading the Fight for Our Planet* (Haymarket Books, 2022), 166.

Cola plant that threatened their water sovereignty and jeopardized their livelihoods.

The Narmada Bachao Andolan (1980s-) is a grassroots social movement representing people from diverse communities in the Narmada Valley. They contested a World Bank-funded government project to build several large dams across the Narmada River, which flows through the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. The National Fishworkers' Forum (1980s-) is a confederation of traditional and artisanal fish workers, advocating to protect their waters and livelihoods.

India also has a long history of struggles by Indigenous peoples for self-determination over their forests. Various colonial forest acts uprooted traditional forest dwellers from their homes and livelihoods. However, due to their relentless struggles, the Forest Rights Act (FRA), or the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, was passed, granting them traditional rights over forest land and community forest resources. This Act also envisions the establishment of democratic, community-based forest governance. However, forest dwellers continue to struggle, as the government has been reluctant to implement this Act fully.

These movements, among many others, inspire communities to resist the colonization and commodification of the commons and the displacement of marginalized peoples. They also expose the dangers of right-wing environmentalism, in which the current political dispensation appropriates ecological rhetoric and symbols to "saffronize the green," while demonizing Dalits, Adivasis, tribals, and religious minorities. In other words, subaltern grassroots struggles in India are unmasking the eco-fascism of Hindutva environmentalism, which seeks to co-opt ecological concerns in the service of neoliberal capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and cultural nationalism.[12] Crucially, these movements are not only sites of resistance; they also embody practices of "commoning," envisioning and enacting alternative socio-economic and ecological relationships.

Environmental Philosophies

Environmental philosophies and standpoints play a significant role in constructing ecological consciousness. These lenses determine our perception, diagnosis, and solution of crises. Stated differently, our eco-politics is informed and shaped by the environmental philosophies and perspectives that we use. This

[12] See Mukul Sharma, *Green and Saffron: Hindu Nationalism and Indian Environmental Politics* (Permanent Black, 2012).

applies to the ecological interventions of governments, NGOs, churches, academics, and grassroots movements.

The tension between the perspectives and politics of deep ecology and social ecology—two prominent environmental philosophies—is evident in the history of Indian environmentalism, even though it is not always acknowledged. Proponents of the logic of deep ecology argue that anthropocentrism and human intervention are the root causes of the current environmental crises. In contrast, those influenced by social ecology view these crises as the inevitable consequence of prevailing unjust social and economic systems. The deep ecology perspective focuses primarily on species extinction, animal cruelty, and biodiversity loss, advocating for solutions like population control, national parks, and enclosures. The logic of deep ecology influences contemporary environmental approaches such as eco-capitalism, eco-casteism, and eco-fascism. On the other hand, social ecology frames environmental crises as interconnected with systemic issues like capitalism, casteism, and patriarchy.

Academics, activists, and social movements inspired by social ecology have developed contextually relevant ecological visions and politics, drawing on Indigenous, subaltern, and socialist epistemologies. "No Humanity without Nature," the epitaph of mainstream environmentalism has been challenged by the equally compelling slogan "No Nature without Social Justice."[13] One viewpoint asserts that the system is broken and needs to be fixed, while the other argues that the system is functioning exactly as intended and must be dismantled. The future of the planet and humanity hinges on which of these perspectives we choose to follow in our ecological witness. Let us briefly explore three distinctive environmental philosophies from the Indian subcontinent.

Gandhian Ecology

Gandhi's ecological philosophy was grounded in the concept of the "economy of permanence," as reflected in his oft-quoted statement: "The earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed."[14] Here, Gandhi identifies human greed for accumulation as the root cause of imperialism and conquest. In this framework, conservationism and wilderness preservation do not feature prominently, nor is there a shift from anthropocentrism to biocentrism. Instead, Gandhi's ecological

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[13] Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martínez-Alier, *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South* (Earthscan, 1997), 96.

[14] Quoted in Mark Shepard, *Gandhi Today: A Report on Mahatma Gandhi's Successors* (Simple Productions, 1987), 63.

philosophy is centered on consistent resistance to the capitalist mode of production and a genuine commitment to revitalizing village-centered economies, all rooted in his vision of *Swaraj* (self-rule).[15] This approach represents the essence of Gandhi's ecological thinking.

The Gandhian vision of Swaraj holds the potential to inspire postcolonial communities in their struggles against neoliberal imperialism, which exploits their livelihoods and landscapes. For Gandhi, self-rule, self-sufficiency, and self-determination are fundamental to his village-centered economics. The colonization of the commons can only be resisted when communities possess self-rule, economic independence, and the freedom to make decisions about their own lives. The spinning wheel and khadi cloth symbolize a community's determination to be the architects of their destiny. As Gandhi stated, "Real Swaraj will come not by acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused."[16]

Drawing inspiration from Gandhian ecology, contemporary Indian environmentalist Ashish Kothari developed the concept of Eco-Swaraj, or Radical Ecological Democracy (RED), as an alternative vision of well-being for the planet and its people. As Kothari explains, "Eco-swaraj or RED refers to socio-cultural, political, and economic arrangements in which all people and communities have the right and opportunity to fully participate in decision-making, based on the twin principles of ecological sustainability and human equity. Rights extend to all forms of life, beyond the human, and we recognize and act upon our role as stewards or custodians of the Earth, not its owners."[17] Dalit ecologies contest Gandhian environmentalism because of its reluctance to address the relationship between casteism and the environmental crises.

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[15] Gandhi's concept of *Swaraj* (self-rule) is one of the most foundational ideas in his political and ethical thought. While the term originally referred to political independence from British colonial rule, Gandhi expanded its meaning into a far deeper moral, social, and spiritual vision. Swaraj stands for enabling the moral agency of individuals and communities to govern themselves ethically, living in harmony with others.

[16] Quoted in Aditya Mukherjee, *Gandhian Thought and Environment* (Publishing House, 2001), 33.

[17] Ashish Kothari, "Eco-Swaraj: The Flower of Transformation: Lessons from Radical Alternatives for Local to Global Cooperation," in *Beyond Growth? Alternative Models for Economic Development*, ed. Corinna Braun-Munzinger and Patrick Zuell (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, 2023), 59.

Adivasi and Tribal Ecologies

In India, the primary victims of environmental distress are Indigenous and subaltern communities. Industrialization, large-scale projects like dams and expressways, mining, agribusiness, the green revolution, and biological parks exacerbate the marginalization and oppression faced by these communities. Survival with dignity and self-determination has been the greatest ecological crisis they have faced for centuries. The colonization of the commons in the name of development has been displacing them from their land, forest, and water, transforming them into environmental refugees. These communities raise critical questions that challenge mainstream environmentalism: Who controls the commons? Who defines national interest when Indigenous livelihoods are displaced in the name of progress? And who decides what constitutes progress and development?

In this context, the concept of "ecological ethnicity," developed by Pramod Parajuli, becomes significant. It refers to communities like Adivasis and tribals who "maintain the rhythm of circularity and regenerative cycles of nature's economy by cultivating appropriate cosmovisions, observing related rituals, and practicing prudence in the ways they care about nature, harvest from nature, nurture nature, and in turn are nurtured."[18] For ecological ethnicities, nature is essential to their livelihoods and survival. Their engagement with nature is shaped by their struggle for survival, offering a radically different perspective on the environment.

The dominant discourse of our times oscillates between viewing nature as a resource to be exploited and engineered, and as wilderness to be separated from human use, particularly by ecological ethnicities. The land is often viewed as a mere repository of lifeless resources, given to the rich and the powerful by divine providence or conquest, to be occupied, consumed, and exploited. The state is committed to transforming the land, water, soil, minerals, wildlife, and people into corporate wealth. From the colonial era onwards, various forest acts were enacted in India in the name of conservation, social forestry, biological reserves, and national parks. Extractivism and enclosures led to the exclusion of ecological ethnicities from their traditional habitats. The postcolonial state, driven by its commitment to "progress" and "development," imposed a regime of ethnocide, displacing millions from their ancestral lands.

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[18] Pramod Parajuli, "Learning from Ecological Ethnicities: Toward a Plural Political Ecology of Knowledge," in *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development, Social Movements*, 2nd ed., ed. Richard Peet and Michael Watts (Routledge, 2004), 560.

The Adivasi and tribal perspectives are rooted in a rhizomatic relationship with their homelands, shaped by their struggle for survival. The land is a life-sustaining gift for all living beings. The fertile soil, freshwater, clear air, and diverse creatures deserve our gratitude and respect. We cannot commoditize these gifts. They are sacred living and breathing entities. For these communities, land is not *terra nullius*—wilderness or resource without meaning and ownership—but, a cultural landscape, formed and shaped through their deep connection with nature. This landscape also represents their identity and historical resistance to colonial invasions. In contrast to the concept of *terra nullius*, their land is sacred, imbued with the spirits of ancestors, gods, goddesses, and demons. The meanings derived from this symbiosis with nature make self-rule or autonomy central to their political vision. As Smitu Kothari notes, for ecological ethnicities, environmentalism is a critical practice "of asserting the importance of place, of seeking greater control over one's life and life sphere, of redefining what independence and freedom mean, of strengthening self-governance, of reclaiming the sovereignty that has been systematically taken away, …[and] of seeking to democratize the state and other economic and cultural processes."[19]

Dalit Ecologies

Environmental philosophies and activisms in India have historically been caste-blind, and this remains true in contemporary discussions surrounding Indian environmental justice movements. While these movements challenge mainstream environmentalism and its politics, the caste privilege of many academicians and activists often prevents them from acknowledging the connection between caste and the environment in the Indian context. Perhaps this is the reason why Dalit movements, in general, have been hesitant to engage with both mainstream environmentalism and the broader environmental justice discourses in India.

In his analysis of "eco-casteism," Mukul Sharma argues that the history of caste has significantly influenced the environmental history of India.[20] He identifies two key traits of eco-casteism. First, by idealizing and glorifying ancient Indian caste-based culture, eco-casteism seeks to legitimize casteist traditions, portraying them as natural and organic. Second, the casteist logic of eco-casteism frames impurity and pollution as the primary

[19] Ashish Kothari, "Sovereignty and Swaraj," *Economic and Political Weekly* 50, no. 30 (2015): 423.

[20] Mukul Sharma, *Caste and Nature: Dalits and Indian Environmental Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

ecological issues in India. Consequently, many mainstream environmental movements focus on addressing impurity and pollution, aiming to restore the country to a state of perceived ancient purity. In this framework, eco-casteism pathologizes marginalized groups—Dalits, indigenous communities, immigrants, and minorities—branding them as impure and blaming them for the ecological degradation of the nation.

Furthermore, eco-casteism reinforces caste discrimination by attributing ecological principles and justifications to the ideology and structures of the caste system. As O.P. Dwivedi suggests, "the Hindu caste system can be seen as the progenitor of the concept of sustainable development."[21] In this context, Brahmanical environmentalism not only justifies the caste system but also perpetuates it as an ecological model. Babasaheb Ambedkar's environmental vision offers a critical counterpoint: he argued that "environment could not be disentangled from the ugliness of caste injustice, the development of the rural landscape could not be disconnected from the social relations and structures of power in which it was embedded, and ecology had to confront the transitions to democracy."[22] Ambedkar's perspective highlights the inseparability of environmental issues from the struggles for the annihilation of caste.

Dalit struggles for dignity and equality have always been intertwined with issues of nature, but they have rarely been recognized as struggles for environmental justice. In India, the identity of a place is shaped by caste. Dalits are systematically excluded from the public commons based on the purity-based maps of caste identity. The boundaries of villages are delineated by caste, and even water bodies are marked by caste distinctions. Dalit transgressions of these casteist spatial arrangements often result in violence and even massacres. As Ravikumar aptly observes: "A 'common well' means one from which an untouchable cannot draw water; a 'common funeral ground' means a place where the body of an untouchable cannot be cremated; a 'common market' is a place where an untouchable cannot even sit."[23] Given this, it is crucial to revisit the Dalit struggles for rights over the commons to understand Dalit ecological visions and politics, which challenge both caste oppression and environmental degradation.

The Chavdar Tale (lake) Satyagraha, also known as the Mahad Satyagraha, is a notable example of Dalit struggles that

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[21] O. P. Dwivedi, "Satyagraha for Conservation: Awakening the Spirit of Hinduism," in *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (Routledge, 1996), 159.

[22] Quoted in Mukul Sharma, *Caste and Nature*, 130–31.

[23] Ravikumar, *Venomous Touch: Notes on Caste, Culture and Politics* (Navayana, 2017).

combine ecological and social justice. Dalits were historically barred from drinking water from the common water tank at the Mahad temple in Maharashtra due to their supposed "impurity." On 20 March 1927, under the leadership of Babasaheb Ambedkar, Dalits marched to the tank and drank water from it, challenging the caste-based exclusion. This act enraged the dominant caste Hindus, who responded by "purifying" the tank with cow urine, cow dung, and ghee. Ambedkar returned to Mahad on 25 December 1927, where he proclaimed, "Let's destroy the authority of ancient Hindu scriptures that are born in inequality. Religion and slavery are not compatible."[24] In a powerful act of defiance, the Dalit community burned the Manusmriti, the scripture that justifies and perpetuates untouchability, caste privilege, caste violence, patriarchy, and eco-casteism.

This excerpt from Ambedkar's speech powerfully encapsulates the politics of Dalit environmentalism. "We are not going to the Chavadar tank to merely drink its water. We are going to the tank to assert that we too are human beings like others. It must be clear that this meeting has been called to set up the norm of equality."[25] Even after nearly a century since this speech, the struggle continues. In 2022, a nine-year-old Dalit boy in Rajasthan was beaten to death by his teacher for touching a water pitcher, illustrating that the water crisis in India goes beyond issues of scarcity and accessibility. Dalit ecologies, therefore, affirm that the fight for environmental justice in India must be intertwined with the struggle for the annihilation of casteism.

Indian Eco-theology Movements and the Role of Theological Education in India

The history of the Christian eco-theology movements in India can be traced back to the ecological visions and practices of the Indigenous and subaltern communities who embraced Christianity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They resisted the Western missionary theologies that desacralized nature and privatized salvation to a single species that claimed to be created in the image of God. One can identify the determination and creativity of these communities to practice creation care inspired and informed by their multiple belongings. The Christian Ashram movement in the 20th century also practiced ecological living and creation care, inspired by the monastic movements of yesteryears. Gandhian environmentalism inspired many Indian

[24] Quoted in Reginald Daniel, "Ambedkar's Vision of Democracy," *Journal of South Asian Studies* 34, no. 2 (2011): 219.

[25] Quoted in Arundhati Roy, "The Lake of Liberation," *Outlook India*, December 25, 1999.

Christians to embrace the virtue of ecological living. J. C. Kumarappa, an Indian Christian economist and close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, has done substantial work in articulating Gandhian environmentalism as an economy of permanence.[26]

One of the distinctive characteristics of the Indian eco-theological movements is their consistent attempts to approach the ecological crisis as a justice issue. Addressing the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, the first major UN conference on international environmental issues, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi said, "We have to prove to the disinherited majority of the world that ecology and conservation will not work against their interest but will bring an improvement in their lives… Are not poverty and need the greatest polluters?"[27] In the wake of the Stockholm Conference, M.M. Thomas observed that, "the churches have also the concern to see that the debate on environment does not become a provincial concern of the affluent rich societies…. It is certainly irresponsible to talk about environment in isolation from the massive world problem of poverty, war, and oppression…. We need to affirm the centrality of man (sic) with his (sic) sufferings and hope in the environment debate."[28] This intentional commitment to combine ecological justice and economic and social justice continues to be the distinctive characteristic of the Indian eco-theology movements.

Unlike the mainstream global eco-theology movement, the eco-theology movements in India, in general, have always engaged theologically with the many manifestations of environmental injustice in India. A pristine nature devoid of subsistence communities has never been the subject matter of the Indian eco-theology movements. They carry the legacy of the ecological visions, practices, and struggles of the Indigenous and subaltern communities who resisted the Western missionary theologies that desacralized nature and the neo-liberal capitalist development paradigm that plundered the *Jal, Jungle*, and *Jameen,* and destroyed their abode and livelihood.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the emergence of a constructive eco-theology movement in India. Drawing from the

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[26] J. C. Kumarappa, *Economy of Permanence* (Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1951); Solomon Victus, *Religion and Eco-economics of Dr. J. C. Kumarappa* (ISPCK, 2010).

[27] "Indira Gandhi's Speech at Stockholm, 1972," *Law School Environmental Review*, July 2012, http://lasulawsenvironmental.blogspot.com/2012/07/indira-gandhis-speech-at-stockholm.html.

[28] Thomas, M.M. "The Concern for Cleaner Environment." *The Guardian* 4, no. 24 (June 15, 1972): 1–2.

wells of Orthodox theology, Paulose Mar Gregorios offered a robust criticism of the Western models of environmentalism, offering new perspectives to engage with the ecological crises theologically.[29] Sebastian Kappen has challenged the Indian eco-theology movement to experience the Divine in the terrestrial and search for eco-Sophia in the scriptures and oral traditions of our neighbors of other faiths.[30] K. C. Abraham is one of the pioneering theologians who intentionally incorporated the concept of "eco-justice" into the global eco-theology movement. He proposed an eco-theology of "conservation, not consumerism, need, not greed, enabling power, not dominating power, and integrity of creation, not exploitation of creation."[31]

Bastiaan Wielenga has articulated succinctly this alternative earth politics. "It is not either anthropocentric or bio-centric or eco-centric, but the challenge we are facing is to learn to be deeply concerned about human life—both individually and collectively—and about all other forms of life and about the planet earth, about society and nature, about human history and the cosmos, about the struggle for justice and water harvesting, about red and green."[32] Drawing from her close association with grassroots social movements, Gabriele Dietrich has consistently challenged and inspired Indian Christians to engage in eco-theological reflections at the interface of class, gender, and caste, informed by the social movements. Affirming the inseparability of the struggles for redistribution and recognition and the struggles to save the Earth, she observes that "without the interaction of progressive social movements, the lifeworld will either easily disintegrate. . . or it will fossilize into rigid patriarchal and chauvinistic forms which project religious, ethnic or caste-based community identity at the cost of women, children, and all democratically minded sections."[33]

Wati Longchar broadened the scope of the Indian eco-theology movements through his theological and ethical reflections on land from a tribal perspective.[34] Drawing from liberation theology's methodological standpoints of confronting injustice and establishing transformation, Geevarghese Mar Coorilos developed a robust green theology of liberation that challenges other social

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[29] Paulos Mar Gregorios, *The Human Presence: An Orthodox View of Nature* (WCC Publications, 1978).

[30] Sebastian Kappen, *Paristhithi, Samskrithi* (Ascend Publications, 1988).

[31] K. C. Abraham, *Liberative Solidarity: Contemporary Perspectives on Mission* (ISPCK, 1996).

[32] Bastiaan Wielenga, *Towards an Eco-Just Society* (Centre for Social Action, 1999), 137.

[33] Gabriele Dietrich, *A New Thing on Earth: Hopes and Fears Facing Feminist Theology* (ISPCK, 2001), 138.

[34] Wati Longchar, *Returning to Mother Earth: Theology, Christian Witness and Theological Education: An Indigenous Perspective* (PTCA/SCEPTRE, 2012).

evils such as casteism.[35] Engaging with contemporary theological reflections on new materialism, Y.T. Vinayaraj offers alternative eco-theological perspectives affirming the social agency of the Earth and the subsistence communities. "The perspectival shift from 'care for the earth' to 'the agency of the earth,' in fact, unsettles the settled notions of ecology, economy, anthropology, and politics and calls us to look into the environmental praxis of Indigenous people and how they envisage a materialist philosophy of everyday life in common."[36]

The contributions of Indian women theologians to the Indian eco-theology movements deserve special attention.[37] Unlike the dominant strands in eco-feminism based on "biological" and "essential" connections between women and nature, Indian eco-feminist theologians approach the issue from the vantage point of women's right to have control over resources and their struggle against patriarchal, caste, and economic violence. They begin with a plea to reject the dominant feminist attempt to present women as a unitary category and to recognize the reality of multiple forms of domination such as caste, class, and race. They advocate the need to go beyond totalizing eco-feminist theories and to learn how women integrate their particular experiences of domination with the distress of the Earth and participate actively in the struggles for survival and mutual flourishing.

This perspectival shift in Indian eco-feminist theology is evident in the writings of Indian women theologians. For Aruna Gnanadason, eco-feminism calls for "an overcoming of dualistic and hierarchical ways of knowing and bringing to the center stage the wisdom and knowledge of subaltern communities. This is based on an understanding that in such knowledge we will find resources to reverse the ecological destruction that has been caused by dominant ways of knowing and so-called scientific forms of inquiry."[38] Drawing inspiration from the eco-womanist movement, there are attempts to construct eco-womanist reflections at the interface of patriarchy, gender, and casteism.[39]

The Christian eco-theology movement in India continues to build on this legacy, developing eco-theological reflections that engage with various unique Indian realities. Christ Sumit Kerketta

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[35] George Mathew Nalunnakal, *Green Liberation: Towards an Integral Ecotheology* (ISPCK, 1999).

[36]. Y.T. Vinayaraj. "Religion, Ecology, and Politics: Movements Matter," in *Becoming Earthlings: Religion, Ecology, and Politics*, ed. Y.T. Vinayaraj (ISPCK, 2024), 235.

[37] Dietrich*, A New Thing on Earth*; Aruna Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women, Listen to the Earth* (WCC Publications, 2005); Ivy Singh, *Voices from Narmada: Doing Ecofeminist Theology* (ISPCK, 2009).

[38] Aruna Gnanadason, *Church and Gender Justice* (ISPCK, 1999), 79.

[39] Vinod Wesley, *Church and Climate Justice* (ISPCK, 2021).

works on Adivasi eco-theology, focusing on the relationship between neo-liberal development and ecological crises in Jharkhand. Baiju Markose continues his research in postcolonial studies, exploring subaltern religiosity and ecological practices.[40] Zubenthung Humtsoe's work attempts to construct a Naga Christian earth ethics, shaped by Indigenous struggles against extractive capitalism.[41] Aravind Jeyakumar is making significant contributions through an eco-justice reading of the Hebrew Bible.[42] Vinod Wesley's research aims to develop a Dalit Christian climate ethics, with a primary focus on the Tamil Nadu Women's Collective, a movement of Dalit women in Tamil Nadu.[43] This list is not exhaustive, but it demonstrates the flourishing of the Indian eco-theology movement.

The role of theological education cannot be overlooked in the development of Indian eco-theology movement. The Earth's crisis and the rise of environmental justice movements across the country prompted theological educators within the Senate of Serampore College (University) to integrate ecological concerns and eco-theological reflections into their academic and ministerial formation programs. By the 1990s, these issues began to appear in the syllabi, worship services, sermons, and field education programs of the University and its affiliated colleges. Christian Ethics courses began addressing the environmental crisis as an ethical issue. The course on Introduction to Christian Doctrines started to include ecological topics alongside the doctrine of creation. Hebrew Bible courses began to explore ecological themes and motifs in the Old Testament. The Social Analysis and Women's Studies departments also integrated ecological concerns into their curricula. In 2007, a comprehensive course on eco-theology was introduced within the Serampore family at the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute in Chennai.

When the Senate of Serampore initiated a curriculum review process for the BD program in 2009, the primary focus was to align theological education with a deeper engagement with the context. Several new courses were introduced to address contextual concerns. One of the key courses in the revised curriculum, "Discerning the Signs of the Times," aimed to help students understand their social context as the foundation for theological

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[40] Baiju Markose, *Rhizomatic Reflections: Discourses on Religion and Theology* (Wipf and Stock, 2018).

[41] Humtsoe, Zubenthung, *Colonization of the Commons: Re-Imagining Tribal Earth Ethics* (TDCC Publications, 2022).

[42] Aravind Jeyakumar Moniraj, *Yahweh at Work: The Significance and Function of the Theme "Creation" in Isaiah 40-48* (Missionshilfe Verlag, 2021).

[43] Wesley, *Church and Climate Justice*.

and ethical reflection and praxis. This course included several units addressing ecological crises and eco-theological reflections, such as *Development as Destruction: Stories from the Neighborhood, Terminator Seeds: Science and Technology as Agents of Death, Climate Change as Climate Injustice, and Destruction of Jal, Jungle, and Jamin: Ecological Crisis in Our Neighborhood*. For the first time in Serampore's history, Green Theology was introduced as a required course. Various clusters consciously worked to integrate ecological concerns, eco-theologies, earth ethics, and eco-diakonia into their courses.

The curriculum was revised once again, and during this process, the Green Theology course was also updated. The revised course, now titled Eco-Justice Theologies, reflects a shift in perspective. Additionally, new courses such as Science and Religion were introduced. The field education program underwent a significant overhaul, with affiliated colleges encouraged to organize exposure programs with environmental justice movements and environmental agencies.

The MTh curriculum was revised in 2015, incorporating new courses and sections addressing the distress of the Earth and eco-theological reflections across almost all departments. For instance, a new course titled *Ecological Crisis and Eco-justice Movements in India* was introduced in Christian Ethics. During this period, several DTh research scholars also focused their doctoral research on eco-theology, eco-justice hermeneutics, and earth ethics.

Several affiliated colleges of the Senate of Serampore have launched new programs focused on eco-theology and eco-diakonia. In 2015, the United Theological College, Bengaluru, in collaboration with the Council for World Mission, introduced a diploma program in Eco-justice Ministries, which includes three courses and a research project. This program has attracted participants from various parts of the world. The Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College (BTESSC) has also organized numerous programs on eco-theology and eco-diakonia for theological educators, students, and church leaders. Most of the significant publications on eco-theology in India have emerged from theologians associated with the Senate of Serampore College (University).[44]

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[44] For an overview of eco-theology works by Indian theologians associated with the Senate of Serampore College, see Paulos Mar Gregorios, *The Human Presence*; Kappen, *Paristhithi, Samskrithi*; K. C. Abraham, *Ecojustice—A New Agenda for the Church's Mission* (BUILD Publications, 1992); Wielenga, *Towards an Eco-just Society*; Nalunnakal, *Green Liberation*; Dietrich, *A New Thing on Earth*; V. J. John, *The Ecological Vision of Jesus: Nature in the Parables of Mark* (CSS, 2002); Rajula Annie Watson, *Development and Justice: A Christian Understanding of Land Ethics* (ISPCK, 2004); Gnanadason, *Listen to the Women, Listen to the Earth*; Chilkuri Vasantha Rao, *Ecological and Theological Aspects of Some Animal Laws in the Pentateuch* (ISPCK, 2005); Singh, *Voices from Narmada*; Zachariah, *Alternatives Unincorporated*;

Final Thoughts: Where do We Go from Here?

Despite the significant contributions of Indian eco-theology movements and their efforts to integrate eco-theological and eco-diaconal concerns into theological curricula and the ministries of the churches, eco-theological discourse and eco-justice advocacy in India continue to be shaped by the logic of mainstream environmentalism. Mainstream environmentalism is problematic for two key reasons: its neo-liberalization of alternatives and its monocultural, single-issue approach. The neo-liberalization of alternatives refers to the co-optation of radical ecological discourses and practices by neoliberal agendas. The single-issue approach, on the other hand, stems from a failure—or reluctance—to acknowledge the intersectionality of various forms of oppression, which disproportionately affect marginalized communities. A deeper engagement with grassroots social movements and subaltern environmental philosophies could enable Indian eco-theology movements to develop a more relevant and inclusive alternative eco-politics.

Decolonizing eco-theological reflections and praxis in India requires the engagement with two contemporary hermeneutical frameworks: Intersectional Environmentalism and the Capitalocene. Intersectional Environmentalism highlights the interconnectedness of injustices faced by marginalized communities and the Earth, shedding light on the issue of social inequality. Intersectionality, a concept introduced by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, refers to how various aspects of an individual's identity—such as gender, class, race, caste, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and ability—can subject them to overlapping forms of discrimination, marginalization, and privilege. It underscores how interlocking systems of power disproportionately affect the most marginalized people. As Crenshaw explains, intersectionality serves as "a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other…. It's simply about how certain aspects of who you are will increase your

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Longchar, *Returning to Mother Earth*; Solomon Victus, *Eco-Theology and the Scriptures* (Christian World Imprints, 2014); John V. Mathew, *Advaita Vedanta Re-Explored* (Christian World Imprints, 2014); Zulunungsang Lemtur, *Climate Refugees* (TDCC, 2015); T. Swami Raju, *Eco-Concerns in Indian Religious Traditions* (Christian World Imprints, 2018); Eric J. Lott, *Embodied God in Indian Eco-Vision* (Christian World Imprints, 2019); Wesley, *Church and Climate Justice*; Lalramchhana R.C., *Cosmic Christology in the Gospel of Matthew* (Christian World Imprints, 2021); T. Nzanthung Ngullie, *Eco-Homiletics and the Craft of Narrative Preaching* (Christian World Imprints, 2021).

access to the good things or your exposure to the bad things in life."[45]

Environmental activists, particularly those from Indigenous and subaltern communities, use intersectionality as a key framework in their environmental theories and politics. Leah Thomas defines intersectional environmentalism as "an inclusive approach to environmentalism that advocates for the protection of both people and the planet. It argues that social and environmental justice are intertwined, and that environmental advocacy that disregards this connection is harmful and incomplete. It focuses on achieving climate justice, amplifying historically excluded voices, and approaching environmental education, policy, and activism with equity, inclusion, and restorative justice in mind."[46] In the Indian context, an intersectional eco-theology should be informed by Dalit ecologies to understand the impact of casteism on prevailing social and ecological relations, as well as how casteism shapes and controls mainstream ecological consciousness and activism. This critical approach is essential for decolonizing eco-theology movements in India.

Secondly, Indian eco-theology movements should engage with the perspective of the Capitalocene. While mainstream environmentalism classifies our geological age as the Anthropocene, highlighting the impact of human activity and human-induced greenhouse gases on the health and integrity of the planet, this view fails to account for the social, political, and economic contexts that shape environmental crises. In 2017, *The Guardian* reported that "just 100 companies have been the source of more than 70% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions since 1988."[47] This revelation exposes the politics of the Anthropocene. By obscuring the vast carbon debt of industrialized nations and corporations, proponents of the Anthropocene continue to shift the blame onto the victims of the climate crisis. This realization has given rise to the term "Capitalocene" to more accurately represent our current geological age, emphasizing the role of capitalism in driving environmental degradation.[48]

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[45] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Intersectionality Matters," Time Magazine, February 20, 2020, https://time.com/5786710/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality/.

[46] Leah Thomas, *The Intersectional Environmentalist* (Voracious, 2022).

[47] Tess Riley, "Just 100 Companies Responsible for 71% of Global Emissions, Study Says," *The Guardian*, July 10, 2017.

[48] There are several insightful works that critically engage with the concept of Anthropocene by exposing the role of capitalism, colonialism, and systemic inequality. In that way, they attempt to respond to the suspicion raised by the scholars of Capitalocence, offering alternative frameworks for problematizing and addressing the climate catastrophe. See Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2016);

According to Jason Moore, the Capitalocene "is an invitation to a conversation around how we might dismantle, analytically and practically," the prevailing system that prioritizes profit over people and the planet. The Capitalocene frames the ecological crisis as "a geohistorical moment that systemically combines greenhouse gas pollution with the climate class divide, class patriarchy, and climate apartheid."[49] The Capitalocene is not merely a diagnosis; it also offers an alternative political vision. As Moore asserts, "The history of justice in the twenty-first century will turn on how well we can identify these antagonisms and mutual interdependencies, and how adeptly we can build political coalitions that transcend these planetary contradictions."[50]

This problematization of the climate crisis and the alternative political vision is endorsed by many theologians. For Joerg Rieger, "Theology in the Capitalocene starts with an account of the dominant powers in order to identify alternatives. It needs to be both local and global, and always international, incorporating the intersections of human and nonhuman developments."[51] Cynthia Moe-Lobeda reminds us that "climate change may be the most far-reaching manifestation of white privilege and class privilege yet to face humankind."[52] Thus, the Capitalocene invites us to recognize the climate privilege of dominant classes and castes, while encouraging a broader eco-politics centered on the slogan, "System Change, Not Climate Change." This movement calls for solidarity with labor movements, trade unions, cooperative movements, and Indigenous and subaltern communities. These movements, along with the alternative discourses and politics that arise from their resilience, hold the potential to challenge the dominance of mainstream eco-theologies that continue to exploit both people and the planet for profit.

About the Author

George Zachariah is from India and teaches at the Trinity Methodist Theological College in Auckland, Aotearoa, New Zealand. Starting his ministry with the Student Christian

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Julia Adeney Thomas, Mark Williams, and Jan Zalasiewicz, *The Anthropocene: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (Polity Press, 2020); Wendy Arons, "Tragedies of the Capitalocene." *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English* 8, no. 1 (2020): 35–50.

[49] Jason W. Moore, "The Capitalocene and Planetary Justice," *Journal of World-Systems Research* 22, no. 2 (2016).

[50] Moore, "The Capitalocene and Planetary Justice."

[51] Joerg Rieger, *Theology in the Capitalocene* (Fortress Academic, 2022), 2.

[52] Moe-Lobeda, "Climate Change as Race Debt, Class Debt, and Climate Colonialism: Moral Conundrums, Vision, and Agency," in *Ecological Solidarities: Mobilizing Faith and Justice for an Entangled World*, ed. Krista E. Hughes et al. (The Pennsylvania University Press, 2019), 61.

Movement and different grassroots social movements in India, Zachariah then graduated from the United Theological College, Bangalore, India (BD), the Union Theological Seminary, New York (STM), and the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (PhD). After completing doctoral research, he served at the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, Chennai, India, and the United Theological College, Bangalore, India. His research interests include earth ethics, eco-theology, human sexuality, and contextual theologies.

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