GLOBAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL FRAMES ON ECOLOGY AND SUSTAINABILITY: INTERROGATING THE RHETORIC OF DENIAL AND DISENGAGEMENT

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Some of the most visible developments in the current political economy are shrouded in rhetoric. Across the border, a failed nation tries to bleed India by thousand cuts, but then denies that there are no terrorist camps in Pakistan. The US attacks Iraq for sheer control of a geography rich in resources but attributes the attack to control of chemical weapons, terrorism, and restoring ethnic and regional balance. In India, political leaders and bureaucrats have robbed the national economy by thousands of failed and non-existent projects; but then, escape the wrath of public by resorting to the rhetoric of growth or the formulaic denial of involvements.

The rhetoric of denial is at worst when it comes to admitting that the development propagated by globalization and world economy is unsustainable and climate change is an inevitable consequence of this process. Trans-generic equity of economy and ecology was the point of concern in the Rio de Janerio Summit, 1992. Alarming carbon dioxide emissions, global warming, and climate change, and attendant greenhouse effects were the focus of Kyoto Protocol 1997. However, consensus on environmental action plans still eludes us and is marred by divisions of developed and developing nations.

In the US, industrial lobby and paid media have been busy in promoting a parallel discourse that global warming is a natural process and anthropo-centric pollution do not have much to do with it. Researchers working on corporate environmental responsibility in India have frequently complained that industries are not co-operating on providing environment related data. All these issues together mandate a revision of the existing environmental communication and education strategies.

In this context, the two important research questions are raised:

1) In which ways do the economic, political and cultural powers significantly affect the ability to participate in and influence the nature of public 'mediated' communication about environment?
2) What is the role played by media and communication processes in the contestation and denial of climate change issues?
3) What is the role of rhetoric in the denial of issues related to ecology and sustainability across the globe by the political elites and economic powers?

Theoretical Background

This study is based on Daniel Goleman's (2009) concept of *Ecological Intelligence*. Goleman is a critic of the practice of assigning too much of importance to human intelligence, which he considers as one of the defects of current civilization. Goleman emphasizes on the principles of *Emotional Intelligence* and *Ecological Intelligence*. According to Goleman, ecological intelligence lies in our ability to understand the inter-connected threads of nature and to use the eco-system in a holistic way and thereby, to live of life of fuller satisfaction.

At a theoretical level, this study is founded upon Dryzek's (2005) typology of eight environmental discourses which employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for analysing environmental discourses. Dryzek's (2005) builds upon the study of Hajer (1995) that demonstrate how politics impact environmental policies and expose the use of language to shape opinions process.

Dryzek's (2005) typology categorizes eight environmental discourses that represent the range of approaches to environmental policy and politics from the 1970s to the present. According to Dryzek, industrialism is "characterized in terms of the overarching commitment to growth in the quantity of goods and services produces and to the material wellbeing that growth brings" (2005, p. 13), Dryzek groups two overarching classifications of environmental discourses: 1) reformist versus radical and 2) prosaic versus imaginative. The reformist or radical classification is defined by the modes of discursive departure from industrialism. A reformist discourse is a departure from industrialism by altering a part of its function, and not the whole. An aggressive, altogether departure from industrialism is defined as radical.

Dryzek's analysis of environmental discourses in the US brings out eight environmental discourses. They are:

1. administrative rationalism
2. democratic pragmatism
3. economic rationalism
4. survivalism
5. sustainable development
6. ecological modernization
7. green consciousness
8. green rationalism

Table 1 aligns these eight types of discourses into a visual typography. The vertical sides of the table displays the prosaic and imaginative forms of environmental discourse whereas the horizontal sides display the reformist and radicals agendas of environmental discouses.

Table 1: Dryzek's Environmental Discourse Classification

	Reformist	Radical
Prosaic	*Problem Solving* Administrative rationalism Democratic pragmatism Economic rationalism	*Survivalism*
Imaginative	*Sustainability* Sustainable development Ecological modernization	*Green Radicalism* Green romanticism Green rationalism

Dryzek's typology displays the environmental politics in the US from 1970s onwards. The prosaic and imaginative classifications summarize modes of departures from industrialism. Prosaic accepts the social, economic and political structures set by industrialism. In this category, environmental problems are defined within the established structures. On the other hand, the imaginative category seeks to redefine the existing framework of industrialism and aligning the social, economic and political structures as a whole.

Taking clues from Goleman's conceptualizations of human intelligence and the inter-dependent modes of survival, this study posits that human beings should be able to recognize the ecological consequence of growth, development and expansions. Mankind should be intelligent enough to understand the ecological messages embedded in the development narratives and should use adequate interrogation skills to deconstruct the hidden structures of denial and disengagement embedded thereby.

Concepts and Operationalization of Key Constructs

• *Rhetoric*

Rhetoric refers to the art of persuasive expression through addition, deletion, amplification, suppression, camouflaging of information. This operates though offering a system of narrative which influences and often overrides the logic of understanding and expression. For example, a married couple is talking about wine and alcohol.

Husband: Honey, where is my bottle of *liquid delight*?
Wife: My goodness! You have again fallen to that *old shit*?

In the above discourse about wine, the italicized words substitute alcohol, first as a glorified product and second, as a dirty practice. This is the power of language to provide rhetorical parallel to human logic and understanding.

Rhetoric is also a practice of artful deviation. Rhetorical language or modalities deviate from the normal, information-oriented language or communicative modes in print and television media. Rhetoric, depending upon the users intentions, excites human emotion and imagination to different heights and completes the act of persuasion.

In the context of this paper, rhetoric refers to the art of speaking too much or too less about ecology and sustainability through deliberate misinformation or dis-information. For example, assigning the term 'clean energy' to atomic energy hides the long term ecological issues associated with such ventures and puts the economic elites who are the major beneficiaries of such projects into a privileged position of interpreters.

Environmental rhetoric operates through a deep structure of selective speaking or verbal camouflaging. We should not forget that during the materialisation of the Indo-US nuclear bill under the Monmohan Singh government, India and the US were described as 'partners in progress'.

• *Frames*

Frames are logical or rhetorical constructions in language or other modes of expression through which ideology takes shape or gain powerful positions. Using frames, good things may be deceived as bad or the evil can be positioned as the saviour. One of the spectacular examples can be the framing of the Iraq War by CNN and BBC where the Anglo-American positions were given legitimation through the

distortion of facts and other deliberations. Similarly, the World Wars and the Cold War Era also witnessed nationalistic rhetorical f5rames creating fear and horror in the minds of national citizens and demanding greater allegiance to the political state and their ruling elites.

The recent use/abuse of rhetorical frames can be traced to the media portrayal of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi from a communal bigot and an autocrat and subsequently revising the old frame by an emerging frame that showcased the same person as the symbol of progress and good governance and an economic icon.

In this study, I shall focus on a several frames with regard to ecology and sustainability which are crucial to India's position in the global politics and economy. Together, these frames represent the ideological positions, constraints, and transitions of India, the nation state, in addressing the issues of industrialization, energy planning, transport, and urban planning. These frames will be located in the larger syntax of ecology and sustainability worldwide, especially the ones espoused by global super powers and various international summits, conventions, and resolutions.

Table 2. Rhetorical frames of denial and disengagement

Frames	Examples
Denial	• Climate change and global warming is part of the natural evolution and an evitable stage in the grand cycles of nature. • Pollution, climate change and global warming are the lived reality, and therefore, cannot be given higher importance than industrialisation, economic devilment, and employment generation.
Disengagement	• Developing countries do not have the resources such as green technology, capital, citizen knowledge and skills, and the overall political and economic environment to remain engaged in ecological actin plans. • Global standards of environmental management would hinder the growth local industries of the poor nations. • The so-called global powers and developed economies had committed higher degree of pollutions during the formative stages of their industrialization. • While mapping pollution, nation will be the unit of measurement and per capita pollution will not be considered.

Conceptualization of Global and Local

This study attempts to analyse India's commitment to addressing the issues of ecology and sustainability in an integrated perspective which includes: 1) the global frameworks led by the US and the UNO; 2) the national policies and specific projects by the government of India; and 3) the perceptions of local citizens in various parts of India.

Table 3: Identifying the global, the national, and the local

Players	Conceptualization
Global	• The unipolar world post-Cold war and post-Gulf War headed by the US and followed by the UK, Italy, France, Germany, Australia and others. • The Rio de Janerio Summit, the Kyoto Protocol, UN Resolutions, etc. which are often used as the bench mark while talking about sustainable development.
National	• The national policies of India on ecology and sustainability • Specific cases of development related crises related to dams, atomic energy projects, mining, deforestation, urbanisation, transport and new industries.
Local	• Response of environmentally-educated public to various national policies • Response of the common man affected by specific projects

Method of Study

Primary and secondary literature on select issues related to ecology and sustainability are collected. They will be analysed following the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework of van Dijk(1998a). According to van Dijk, power gaps are manifested not only in the domain of world politics, economy, and military, but also in the formation of language and other modes of expression at different levels of life. Likewise power gaps are also salient in the construction of environmental discourses and the very recognition of these powerful or powerless positions are crucial to environmental education.

This study follows a critical rhetorical framework where rhetorical frames are developed by Durant (1987) and McQuarie and Mick (1992). While CDA will be used to unravel the power-asymmetry at the deep structure of environmental dialogues, policies and action plans, rhetorical analysis will strengthen this process by

deconstructing the rhemes and   tropes contributing to rhetorical extension, rhetorical replacement, rhetorical comparison, rhetorical contradiction, rhetorical substitution and many other rhetorical functions.

Implications of the Study

In the recent years there was mounting pressure on the developing nations to conform to the so-called global standards of ecology and environment. Headed by China and India, the developing countries could successfully resist the consensus and the implementation of stringent environmental laws at international level with a possible imposition on the developing nations. However, of late, China has decided to switch over to green technology and cleaner modes of production. Given the speed with which the Chinese oligarchy works in implementing its visions, China will soon join the elite, global league of 'eco-friendly' nations. This may lead to some sort of global isolation for India and the nation may have to rush for drastic and unprecedented changes which may hinder growth and cause citizen unrest. Therefore, the environmental education of the national citizenswill play an important role in fostering ecological citizenship and supporting sustainable development. This study is committed to promoting citizen understanding of ecological issues at global, nationa, and local levels.

Possible Outcomes of the Study

The study expands our understanding of ecology and sustainability in a number of ways.

- It unravels how power, greed, and vested interests are embedded in ecological discourses.
- It offers insights into differing worldviews and how to relate each to sustainable development.
- The study will serve best as a part of the broader *instrument mix* (e.g. combined with legal, technological, financial and other instruments) used to develop, implement, and manage various ecological strategies and action plans.

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