

## **Report on**

### **Environmental History and Politics of South Asia**

A One day workshop for Postgraduate Students

University of Sussex, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016, Fulton 201, Brighton

#### **Introduction**

I organized a one day workshop on “Environmental History and Politics of South Asia” on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016, under the auspices of Centre for World Environmental History (CWEH), University of Sussex for doctoral researchers and early career researchers, studying at this university. It was mainly supported by Doctoral School’s Researcher-Led Initiative (RLI) Fund, along with this funding was also provided by HAHP Research Fund, University of Sussex, and Sussex Asia Centre.

The progress of a society is determined by the intellectual strength of a society. Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities and its related disciplines like History can strengthen a society by integrating it and making it productive through societal changes in their behaviour and world-view. Thus, benefits of studying History are often intangible yet inevitable for a nation. History is normally not time-bound for determination of its benefits to a country. Quality research benefits a country in intellectual growth. Environmental History research is part of this endeavour.

#### **Objectives and Goals of the workshop**

This interdisciplinary workshop linked to the Centre for World Environmental History at Sussex addressed the environmental history and politics of South Asia from the early modern period to-date. Environmental History has been described as the study of species both other and our own in terms of the interactions with the world around them. The study of long term histories of environmental change and responses to these have important implications for policy in this age of climate change and in the context of what has been termed the Anthropocene. By seeking to engage with an interdisciplinary group of scholars with specialism in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh this training workshop achieved the following objectives:

- 1- Updated early career researchers on developments in Environmental History, Historical Climatology and Environmental politics;
- 2- Built links with policy and environmental justice activism;
- 3- Helped early career scholars to develop professional career pathways and provide indispensable training for a world that is rapidly being transformed by climate and environmental change.

## **Proceedings**

Workshop was attended by eminent scholars from the UK and India, and the students from University of Sussex.

Overall 14 papers were presented at this workshop in different themed sessions. The list of the scholars who presented their papers includes (also attached program of workshop):

- (1) Dr Vinita Damodaran, CWEH, University of Sussex,
- (2) Antonia Moon and Penny Brook, archivists of natural history collections of the British Library London,
- (3) Prof Rob Allan, a leading historical climatologist specialising in Atmospheric reconstruction Analysis from Met office UK. He gave his presentation through Skype.
- (4) Dr. Felix Padel, a leading Environmental Activists and Malvika Gupta from JNU Delhi India,
- (5) Roger Moody, an environmental activist from London,
- (6) Prof Ravi Raman, an Economic historian from India,
- (7) Peter Satyanand Samuels (Stanford),
- (8) Dr. Shapan Adnan from Bangladesh,
- (9) Dr. Daniel Haines from Bristol University,
- (10) Dr. Stuart Peters from Queen Mary University of London,
- (11) Zahid Ali Khalid Dphil History student Sussex,
- (12) Fakhar Bilal, PhD student from Royal Holloway University of London,
- (13) Fazilda Nabeel, DPhil student from Global Studies Sussex,
- (14) Maira Hayat, PhD student from University of Chicago US

The list of faculty and students who attended this workshop includes:

- (1) Prof. James Thomson, Sussex, (2) Prof. Brian Morris, Goldsmiths, (3) Zuky Serper, Independent researcher & Activist Brighton, (4) Sylvia Katharine, MSc Climate Change &

Policy (5) Alexander Elliot, DPhil Social and Political Thought (6) Paola Moscoso, DPhil Biology, School of Life Sciences (7) Syed Muhammad Faisal, DPhil Anthropology student, Global Studies Sussex, (8) Maxmillian Martin DPhil Geography student Sussex, (9) Shilpi Srivastva, Post Doctoral Researcher Resource Politics and Health & Nutrition Clusters, IDS Sussex, (10) Andy Chapman, Undergraduate student, International Development, Sussex (11) Georgia Coleman, History Undergraduate student Sussex.

### **Learning Experience/ Outcome**

As the aim of this workshop was the training for the research students so as it was hoped that after attending this workshop they are able to learn which kind of material they have and which type of methodology they should apply to utilise that material in their research projects. This workshop disseminated the understanding and learning of young and early career researchers including doctoral candidate of diversified field of environmental history and politics of South Asia. As an organiser, I learnt the academic event management in a tight time compartment and managing themes and scholars. This exposure proved a turning point for my own academic career. Also it is hoped that the workshop provided a good opportunity to foster networking for the participants to share and exchange their new research in unique fields. This workshop contributed to cutting-edge areas of research in Climate Change History. It draws on a wide range of research and engaged directly across the Researcher Development Framework, particularly engagement, influence and impact as well as knowledge and intellectual abilities and personal effectiveness. As I anticipate that this will be a tremendously successful and stimulating interdisciplinary workshop on ‘Climate Change History’ and it is proved with the valuable feedback of the participants which is included at the end of this report.

## **Feedback from some participating scholars (including emails)**

(1)

From: Moon, Antonia [Antonia.Moon@bl.uk]

Sent: 13 May 2016 08:33

To: Zahid Khalid

Subject: RE: Thanks for the participation in workshop on Environmental History

Dear Zahid,

I very much enjoyed the workshop and thought that you created a most varied and interesting programme. I learned a lot from the speakers, who were all excellent. I liked the fact that they came from a variety of backgrounds (arts, engineering, etc.) – this made it better than the usual academic gathering. We also had just the right number of people for an interesting discussion.

Thank you very much for inviting me.

With kind regards,

Antonia

(2)

From: Brook, Penny [Penny.Brook@bl.uk]

Sent: 13 May 2016 08:57

To: Zahid Khalid

Subject: RE: Thanks

Dear Zahid Khalid

Many thanks for inviting me and Antonia. We both found it very interesting. We find workshops at Sussex particularly interesting because of the way they bring together people

from such different disciplines. It is very helpful to us to hear about the different ways in which the sources are being used and new approaches to research.

Best wishes

Penny

(3)

From: Ravi Raman [raviraman2013@gmail.com]

Sent: 17 May 2016 20:17

To: Zahid Khalid; Vinita Damodaran

Subject: Re: Thanks for your participation in workshop on Environmental History of South Asia

Many thanks Zahid for your email.

We will certainly meet again sooner or later. Please see my feedback below.

It was indeed a pleasure and privilege to present a paper at the Environmental History and Politics of South Asia workshop, on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016, at the Centre for World Environmental History, University of Sussex.

I found the participants with their diverse intellectual backgrounds quite engaging. The doctoral/postdoctoral students were highly inquisitive and interactive. The workshop was well organised and Zahid Khalid deserves acknowledgment for the same. I would suggest that it is highly desirable to undertake such programmes by the CWEH as part of widening their activities.

Warmly

Ravi

(4)

From: Daniel Haines [daniel.haines@bristol.ac.uk]

Sent: 10 May 2016 20:27

To: Zahid Khalid  
Subject: Workshop

Dear Zahid,

Congratulations on organising an excellent workshop. I thoroughly enjoyed all the presentations and was very sorry to miss the last few. Thank you for inviting me.

Best wishes

Dan

(5)

From: Bilal, Fakhar (2015) [Fakhar.Bilal.2015@live.rhul.ac.uk]

Sent: 12 May 2016 12:28

To: Zahid Khalid

Subject: Gratitude and Appreciation

Dear Zahid Ali Khalid sahib

I hope this email finds you in good health and relaxing moment after organising such a wonderful and successful workshop on Environmental and South Asian History and Politics.

It was a well organised workshop with variety of scholars and researchers participation from different disciplines, universities and countries. I learned new things and some new ideas for future research too. I hope you will carry on with these type of activities, once you are done with your own PhD project.

Many Many CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU AND YOUR SUPERVISOR, PROF. VANITA FOR SUCCESSFUL EVENT.

Kind regards

Fakhar Bilal

From: Syed Mohammed Faisal [S.F.Faisal@sussex.ac.uk]

Sent: 24 Jul 2016 16:28

To: Zahid Khalid [Z.Khalid@sussex.ac.uk]

Subject: Re: feedback

I am very sorry Zahid. I got busy that day and forgot to send you a response.

I am sending it now. Not sure if this is too late.

“The workshop was very productive and challenging as it engaged with various aspects of development on natural resources in South Asia. I particularly found the pairs on water management and distribution useful for my understanding relations between people and environment”

Thanks,  
Syed Faisal