

## Day 19 Greener

### **The Rights of Nature Movement: A Path to Environmental Harmony in Bangladesh**

The Rights of Nature movement, as witnessed in countries like New Zealand and Ecuador, has started to permeate global environmental discourse, garnering considerable attention. In Bangladesh, a nation known for its rich biodiversity and vibrant ecosystems, the question arises: how can this movement evolve, and what impact does it have on our country? This response of mine delves into these aspects, highlighting the potential for growth, the movement's current influence, and the key individuals and organizations driving this policy change in Bangladesh.

### **Comparing Bangladesh to the Global Landscape:**

Bangladesh shares several characteristics with countries that have already adopted Rights of Nature legislation. New Zealand and Ecuador, like Bangladesh, boast a wealth of natural beauty, ranging from vast forests to unique species, nurtured by diverse ecosystems. However, they have one critical advantage - comprehensive legislation that recognizes the rights of nature. In Bangladesh, no such legislation currently exists.

Bangladesh faces a series of environmental challenges, including deforestation, river pollution, and habitat loss. The Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, which spans across Bangladesh and India, is home to numerous endangered species, such as the Bengal tiger and river dolphin. It's also a natural buffer against cyclones and coastal erosion. These natural entities lack formal recognition and legal protection.

### **Potential for Evolution:**

To evolve the Rights of Nature movement in Bangladesh, we can draw inspiration from New Zealand's Te Urewera Act. Te Urewera Act was a key part of the Treaty of Waitangi settlement negotiated between Tūhoe and the Crown. This groundbreaking legislation granted legal personhood to Te Urewera, a unique geographic area with deep cultural and ecological significance. Likewise, Bangladesh can consider designations for ecologically critical regions such as the Sundarbans, which face immense threats from illegal logging and pollution. The adoption of similar legislation for these natural entities could provide legal safeguards, granting them the rights they deserve.

This potential evolution may not only protect vital ecosystems but also promote sustainable development. Just as New Zealand's legislation has led to the empowerment of the local Tūhoe community in managing Te Urewera, Bangladesh's adaptation of such measures could bolster the involvement of indigenous communities in preserving their environments.

## Impact on Bangladesh:

While Bangladesh has yet to introduce specific Rights of Nature legislation, the movement has already started to affect the country indirectly. Environmental nonprofits, such as Earth Law Center, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), and Earthjustice, have been instrumental in advocating for the legal recognition of natural entities worldwide. Their work influences global environmental policies and inspires local activists.

These organizations work tirelessly to push for the rights of nature, and their efforts resonate with environmentally conscious individuals in Bangladesh. Their work is indirectly influencing our environmental policies and inspiring local advocates to pursue similar initiatives. The global nature of these organizations means that the lessons they have learned in New Zealand and Ecuador can inform and inspire our local efforts.



## Key Advocates and Organizations:

In Bangladesh, organizations such as the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) and the Arannayk Foundation have emerged as key advocates for environmental conservation and the recognition of the Rights of Nature. BELA, in particular, has been pivotal in pushing for environmental rights and has even initiated legal action in defense of our environment.

The Arannayk Foundation's efforts in conservation and sustainability projects have contributed to the broader environmental dialogue in Bangladesh. These organizations and individuals are pivotal in driving the Rights of Nature movement in the country. Their work extends to research, awareness campaigns, and legal advocacy, bringing the importance of environmental protection to the forefront of public consciousness.



## Global Learning:

Bangladesh's experience in nurturing the Rights of Nature movement can offer valuable lessons to communities worldwide. By highlighting the successes and challenges faced by local advocates and organizations, we can provide inspiration and guidance to similar movements on a global scale.

The Rights of Nature movement is set to transform the environmental landscape in Bangladesh. The lessons and influence of New Zealand and Ecuador are motivating our country to consider similar measures. The relentless efforts of local advocates, such as BELA and the Arannayk Foundation, and the global network of organizations like Earth Law Center and NRDC, are pushing for the legal recognition of nature's rights. Bangladesh stands at the threshold of embracing this profound change, safeguarding its unique ecosystems and contributing to the global environmental movement.

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