

Name: Anas Muhammad

Username: AnasMuhammad

School: Madhupur Shahid Smrity Higher Secondary School

After researching them I learnt that Both Ecuador and New Zealand have pioneering legal frameworks recognizing the **Rights of Nature**, but they have taken distinct approaches:

Ecuador: Constitutional Rights for Nature

- **Legal Basis:** Ecuador became the first country in the world to enshrine the Rights of Nature in its 2008 Constitution.
- **Key Provisions (Chapter 7, Articles 71-74):**
 - **Article 71** recognizes that Nature, or Pacha Mama (Mother Earth), has the right to "integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes."
 - **Universal Legal Standing:** Crucially, *all* persons, communities, peoples, and nations can call upon public authorities to enforce these rights. This broad standing allows any citizen to file a lawsuit on behalf of Nature.
 - **Right to Restoration:** Nature has the right to be restored, which is separate from the obligation of the state or individuals to compensate people who depend on the affected natural systems.
 - **Precautionary Principle:** The State must apply preventive and restrictive measures on activities that might lead to the extinction of species, the destruction of ecosystems, or the permanent alteration of natural cycles.
- **Foundational Philosophy:** The laws are rooted in the Andean Indigenous worldview of Pachamama and the principle of Sumak Kawsay (Kichwa for "good way of living" or *buen vivir*), which emphasizes harmony with nature.
- **Scope:** The rights apply broadly to all Nature and ecosystems across the entire country

New Zealand: Legal Personhood for Specific Natural Entities

- **Legal Basis:** New Zealand's approach is based on a series of settlement agreements between the Crown and Māori (Indigenous) iwi (tribes), which are then enacted into legislation. This approach recognizes the deep spiritual and cultural connection of Māori to the land and water (Kaitiakitanga - guardianship).
 - **Key Examples (Granting Legal Personhood):**
 - **Te Urewera Act (2014):** Removed the national park status of the Te Urewera Forest and granted it legal personhood, giving it the same rights, powers, duties, and liabilities as a legal person or citizen. It is managed by a Board that acts on its behalf.
 - **Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act (2017):** Granted Te Awa Tupua (the Whanganui River) legal personhood, recognizing it as "an indivisible and living whole." The river has two appointed guardians—one from the Crown and one from the Whanganui iwi—who speak for its interests.
 - **Taranaki Maunga (in process):** Similar agreements are underway for other sacred sites like Taranaki Maunga (a dormant volcano).
 - **Foundational Philosophy:** The laws integrate the Māori worldview, where the landscape is personified, and the health of the natural world is inseparable from the health and wellbeing of the people ("I am the River and the River is me").
 - **Scope:** This model is site-specific, granting legal personhood to particular natural entities (rivers, forests, mountains) rather than to Nature as a whole, as in the Ecuadorian Constitution.
-

My Local Ecosystem – Madhupur Forest

For this reflection, I chose the **Madhupur Forest**, also known as *Madhupur Sal Forest* or *Madhupur Garh*. It's one of the oldest and most biologically rich forests in Bangladesh. Home to Sal trees, wild animals, medicinal plants, and the Garo and Koch indigenous communities, this forest has been slowly shrinking due to deforestation, illegal logging, and human settlement.

If Madhupur Forest Could Speak

I am the Madhupur Forest — ancient, green, and alive.

I have stood for centuries, long before your towns rose and your roads split my heart in two.

I have seen generations come and go, yet my roots remember every footprint, every bird call, every whisper of wind that ever passed through my leaves.

I was once vast and endless, a kingdom of Sal trees stretching to the horizon. My air was pure, my soil rich, my heart filled with life. Deer, monkeys, and wild cats danced in my shade, and the Garo people walked among my trees as friends, not owners. They spoke to me, cared for me, and took only what they needed. In return, I gave them fruits, shelter, medicine, and peace.

But then came the sound of axes and the hunger of men who saw only wood, not life. My trees fell one by one. The songbirds fled. The soil cracked and dried beneath the sun. My streams shrank into silence. What was once my home has become a battlefield of survival.

Now I breathe heavily — my air filled with dust instead of dew. I feel the sting of smoke where my leaves once shimmered in sunlight. The machines still come, and every day I lose a little more of myself.

If I could speak to you — really speak — I would not shout. I would whisper, like the wind that rustles my leaves:

Please, protect what remains of me.

I do not belong to one person or one time — I belong to everyone and to the earth itself.

I would ask you to see me not as empty land, but as a living being — one that feeds your breath, cools your cities, and balances your storms.

I would remind you that without me, the rains will falter, the soil will die, and your air will choke with dust.

If I could, I would say to every child who walks my trails:

Listen.

When you hear birdsong, that is my laughter.

When you feel cool shade on a hot day, that is my embrace.

When you see a fallen tree, that is my wound.

Protect me as you would protect your mother — because I am one.
Replant what has been taken. Let my rivers flow free again. Let the Garo people guard me as they once did, for they are my voice and my heart.
Teach your children my stories so they never forget that I am alive.

And if you care for me, I will give back more than you can ever imagine — clean air, calm rains, fertile soil, and the quiet beauty that reminds you of who you are.

*Do not let me become just a memory in your textbooks.
Let me live, so you can too.*

I made a video regarding “Declaration of Rights for Nature” for Madhupur Forest.

Here it is on Instagram,

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DQJbQcwk8yA/>

