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# Investigating the Online Communicative Practices of an Indian Grassroots Environmental Movement Through Ecostylistics: The Case of #SaveHasdeoForest

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**Abstract** This study investigates the online communicative practices of the grassroots environmental movement #SaveHasdeoForest, in order to investigate their stylistic traits and communicative strategies. Through an integrated approach comprising ecostylistics, ecolinguistics, multimodal studies and postcolonial studies, the analysis shows that background knowledge about (post)colonial policies against the Indigenous peoples of India is necessary to fully decode the texts analysed; that multimodality, oppositions and translinguistic practices are major stylistic traits in the digital communication of this movement; and that engagement and persuasion are its main communicative functions.

**Keywords** Grassroots environmentalism. Indigenous peoples. Online communication. Ecostylistics. Ecolinguistics. Multimodality. Postcolonial studies.



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## 1 Introduction

Ecological and environmental matters are an arena where the fiercest conflicts take place. Ever since the 1970s, when it became clear that the ecological balance of the Earth's ecosystems was compromised, what should have been a swift and collective action to restore that balance became a site of clashes and disputes between environmentalists on one side and corporations and lobbies interested in preventing economic loss on the other (Rich 2019). Within this arena, the link between major social and historical forces, such as colonialism, capitalism, the current environmental emergency and environmental (in)justice has certainly *not* been as foregrounded by many social actors – e.g. governments in the Global North – as other, less controversial cause/effect relations (e.g. that between carbon dioxide and rising temperatures) have been. However, studies in Environmental Humanities exploring various aspects of this link have multiplied in the last two decades (e.g. DeLoughrey, Handley 2011; Huggan, Tiffin [2009] 2015; Nesmith et al. 2021).[1] Even though an exhaustive list of publications on this subject is beyond the scope of this article, it is important to point out that the disciplines that fall under the umbrella of the Environmental Humanities share a common interest in the "interpretation of texts" and in the exploration of such issues as "the entanglements of the Anthropocene with the history of colonialism and imperialism alongside forms of racial and social injustice that still structure global politics" (Bassi, Mason 2021, 9, 11).

For socially committed academic disciplines such as postcolonial studies, ecostylistics, ecolinguistics, critical discourse analysis and ecocriticism, to name a few, it is of particular interest to investigate relations of this kind and to disseminate information about them, even when – especially when – these are deliberately kept out of the spotlight outside academia. An interdisciplinary approach is necessary in the Environmental Humanities (see Bassi, Mason 2021; Stibbe 2021b), if we are to fully comprehend the multifaceted nature of relations so complex that they would be otherwise impossible to conceptualise. In line with this notion, this article provides a contribution at the intersection between ecostylistics, ecolinguistics, postcolonial studies and multimodal studies. Its aim is to investigate the link between the historical roots of current environmental threats in a postcolonial setting, environmental injustice and Indigenous activism. More specifically, the contribution will focus on the online communicative practices of the #SaveHasdeoForest campaign. This was launched by grassroots environmental activists as part of their fight against deforestation and nationalist policies of hostility towards

**1** See also Adami 2025; Zurru 2024b.

minority groups and Indigenous peoples in the Chhattisgarh state in India. A corpus of 16 posts collected from the social platform X will be analysed through ecostylistics (Virdis 2022; Zurru 2017; 2024b), ecolinguistics (Fill, Penz 2018; Stibbe [2015] 2021a; Zurru 2022), postcolonial studies (Adami 2025; Adamy, Roy 2023; De Capitani, Bassi 2023),[2] and multimodal studies (Pérez Sobrino 2017; Machin, Mayr 2023; Zurru 2024a),[3] to explore their communicative strategies and stylistic traits. This will allow the article to a) contribute to the scholarship on ecostylistics by focusing on the link between (post)colonialism and environmental emergency, an area still fairly unexplored in the discipline; and b) investigate the communicative style of this specific campaign and compare it to the communicative style of the #SaveBuxwahaForest campaign previously analysed (Zurru 2024b), in order to trace possible intersections between different grassroots environmental movements in the Indian subcontinent.

Section 2 will provide readers with a brief socio-historical background of the campaign. Section 3 will focus on the theoretical and methodological framework and the analysis of data and discussion.

## 2 Socio-Historical Background

'Adivasis' is the collective name used to identify the many Indigenous peoples of India,[4] who are part of the largest group of Indigenous peoples in the world, with over 84 million of them living in the subcontinent (Samson, Gigoux 2017). Adivasis have traditionally led lives deeply entrenched within the ecosystems they are part of, most specifically forest areas (Xaxa 2021, 53; Sahu, Prasad 2023; see also Rycroft, Dasgupta 2011), so much so that their relationship with and right to their ancestral land has been defined as a "marker of collective identity" (Sen 2018, 173). Encroachment on Adivasi land started during British rule, with the first laws regulating ownership and use of the forests being approved by the colonial government (Sahu, Prasad 2023; Suna 2024). As in any other colonial territory, the Indigenous peoples of India were among those most heavily repressed and/or erased during the Raj (Samson, Gigoux 2017). The term 'tribal peoples' – a term still controversial today – was used to represent Indigenous peoples as primitive, and to infantilise them to the point

**2** See also DeLoughrey, Handley 2011; Huggan, Tiffin [2009] 2015.

**3** See also Ledin, Machin 2018.

**4** See the section "Adivasis in India" at `https://minorityrights.org/communities/adivasis-2/`.


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that a paternal control by the benevolent colonial ruler would be perceived as necessary (53-4). However, colonial forest management was more focused on economic profit than environmental protection, with agriculture, exploitation of mineral resources and construction of roads and railways on indigenous lands being a primary concern (Xaxa 2021, 53).

Once the postcolonial period started, Adivasis were kept on the sidelines of the nation-building process, due to their otherness with respect to the dominant groups who inherited the government of the newly born nation (Samson, Gigoux 2017, 53-4). As in many other Asian countries, the postcolonial Indian governments – especially the current one – have refused to acknowledge Adivasis' Indigenous status and legally refer to them as 'scheduled tribes', as they claim that every ethnic group without European descent is indigenous (53-4). However, various nation states and organisations have started to recognise that an integral part of indigenous identity is represented precisely by histories and ways of life that are noticeably different from those of other ethnic groups, including – but not limited to – their connection to the habitats that provide for them and that they protect and conserve (Samson, Gigoux 2017, 51; see also Natarajan 2021). Nowadays, most forest areas in India are nationalized, which has progressively deprived Adivasis of their rights to their land. Paradoxically, the alleged reason for state intervention has been to stop the destruction of forests by the Indigenous peoples.[5] These claims are in stark contrast with sources proving that Indigenous peoples are the best conservationists (Hindou Oumarou 2024; Santiago 2025; Smith 2025), as demonstrated by the indigenous Amazonian forests being the last carbon sinks (Veit et al. 2023) and by many academic studies exploring and reporting on the link between Indigenous conservationism and thriving ecosystems (see Berkes [1999] 2018; Thornton, Bhagwat 2020).

The environmental campaign that was selected as a case study for this article can only be fully explored and comprehended within this historical context. Indeed, mainly due to the ideological stance of the current nationalist government, Adivasis have been consistently targeted in recent years (see Adami, Roy 2023b, 7-8), so much so that India's Supreme Court ordered the eviction of 8 million indigenous forest dwellers in 2019 on conservationist grounds, in violation of the 2006 Forest Rights Act.[6] The eviction was not

**5** See the section "Adivasis in India" at `https://minorityrights.org/communities/adivasis-2/`.

**6** See the article "India's Indigenous Peoples Under Attack By Modi Government And Conservationists" at `https://www.survivalinternational.org/articles/India-indigenous-under-attack`.

enforced in the end due to political pressure, but other projects were approved, such as the coal-mining project in the Chhattisgarh state, spearheaded by the multinational conglomerate Adani Group, which the #SaveHasdeoForest campaign opposed. This project would have caused around 200,000 trees in Hasdeo Forest to be cut down and 20,000 indigenous dwellers to be displaced.[7] An informal coalition of grassroots movements under the name of "Save Hasdeo Aranya Resistance Committee" launched a number of initiatives: an online environmental campaign, a march to the state capital and a tree hugging sit-in. After 18 months of constant activism, the coal-mining project was cancelled and the Goldman Environmental Prize, also known as the Green Nobel Prize, was won by Alok Shukla, who coordinated the coalition (Drury 2024). This grassroots environmental movement was fundamental in the fight against capitalist greed, nationalist hostility towards Adivasis, and the complete disregard for environmental protection. The communicative style of this successful campaign will be explored in Section 3.2, following an illustration of theory and methodology in Section 3.1.

## 3 Theory, Methodology, Analysis and Discussion

### 3.1 Theory and Methodology

As mentioned in the Introduction, the interpretation of texts is at the core of this contribution. However, since the texts in our corpus are multimodal texts in the context of online grassroots environmental resistance against deforestation, capitalist interests and the violation of Indigenous identity and rights, an interdisciplinary approach combining ecostylistics, ecolinguistics, postcolonial studies and multimodal studies is necessary.

The main theoretical and methodological framework informing this research is ecostylistics, which focuses on communicative, discursive, textual, linguistic and/or multimodal style(s) as indeces of the ideological viewpoint of texts and of the way in which this ideological stance is shaped and communicated (Virdis 2022; Zurru 2017; 2024b). Ecolinguistics (Bortoluzzi, Zurru 2024; Fill, Penz 2018; Stibbe [2015] 2021a) provides a wealth of knowledge, both in terms of theoretical approaches and analytical methods, about the connection between language, dispositions and actions related to ecological and environmental matters, and about how reframing

**7** See the article "India: Massive Coal Mining Expansion in Tribal Forests Green-Lighted" at `https://www.survivalinternational.org/news/12811`.

language usage can help reframe attitudes. Both disciplines shed light on how language and communication are pivotal in guiding people's perceptions of environmental issues, sometimes by erasing certain notions or people(s) from the narrative (Stibbe [2015] 2021a). Therefore, environmental (in)justice is a major theoretical interest in both fields, as is showing the potential of "new narratives to live by" (Stibbe 2024), such as Indigenous perspectives and knowledge. In this contribution, the main theoretical concern is showing how, through acts of resistance, people who have been slowly and steadily erased for centuries – during and after colonialism – are still forced to fight against injustice, while their lives, beliefs and conservation skills keep being ignored or even weaponised against them. On the contrary, Indigenous conservation knowledge is a fundamental source for transformative change, which many consider an important "new narrative to live by", and one of the keys for positive and effective environmental action. O'Brien et al. (2024, 5) state that "transformative change is urgent, necessary and challenging – but possible", if biodiversity is to be conserved and restored. The authors also point out that transformative change needs to be "systemic". This requires a shift in the status quo and a loss of benefits for certain groups in the short term – which has traditionally been the source of the conflicts between environmentalists and economically-focused parties, as discussed in the introductory section. Nevertheless, O'Brien et al. clearly assert that transformative change is inevitable, if we are to build an ecologically healthy and socially just society, and that it must necessarily include Indigenous and local knowledge (6).

This is in line with many voices within environmental studies that underline the unsustainability of the current status quo. These include the notion of "growthism" in ecolinguistics, or the idea that continuous growth is possible and desirable to such an extent that it is often encapsulated in the very language we speak (Halliday [1990] 2001, 196); the "cancer stage of capitalism" in political economy, which clarifies that capitalism will inevitably lead to "global ecogenocide" if left unchecked, as limitless growth in a limited system, such as planet Earth, cannot be realistically pursued (McMurtry 2015); or "degrowth communism" in philosophy, which underlines the incompatibility between degrowth and capitalism, as well as the urgent need to deescalate the capitalist obsession with unchecked growth and individuality (Saito 2023). The latter is perceived as so controversial by some that it was defined as "economically dubious and politically impossible" (Beam 2024). On the contrary, both ecostylistics and ecolinguistics encourage studies which showcase a counternarrative to the idea that alternative narratives to live by, such as transformative change and learning from Indigenous wisdom, are "economically dubious and politically impossible". By investigating the #SaveHasdeoForest campaign, this study shows

that certain stylistic and communicative strategies can contribute to successful grassroots activism fighting both environmental damage *and* environmental injustice. At the same time, this analysis also foregrounds the fact that Indigenous peoples in former colonies are still fighting to defend their habitats as both a source of livelihood and an integral part of their identity, which is a central aspect of postcolonial studies. Indeed, the dynamics of power and resistance which stem from the colonial enterprise are a major concern in postcolonial studies. More specifically, the reference studies of this contribution (Adami 2025; Adamy, Roy 2023a; De Capitani, Bassi 2023)[8] provide the theoretical background on colonialism and postcolonialism in India, and about Adivasi identity and struggles. These studies are pivotal in the exploration and understanding of the link between capitalism, colonialism and environmental injustice against Indigenous peoples – a link which is being explored in an ever-increasing number of studies. As demonstrated by Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson, who were awarded the 2024 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, there is a direct connection between colonial history and the current disparity in economic prosperity among countries.[9] Moreover, the inextricable link between colonialism, capitalism and the appropriation of Indigenous resources has been discussed in terms of "biocolonialism" by Whitt (2009). With this term the author explores a form of neocolonialism which "involves struggles over the politics of ownership – respectively, of spiritual knowledge, of human remains, of plant genetic resources and medicinal knowledge, and of human genetic resources" and "the intervention of western property law in a manner that privileges the already powerful and violates the sovereignty of indigenous peoples" (5-6). Along similar lines is Marya and Patel's study (2021), which explores the effects of colonialism – starting with capitalism and supremacism – as "inflammation" of both society and the human body. In their view, colonialism has shaped societies structured on catastrophic trauma for both ecosystems and social systems, which has led to disastrous consequences such as slavery, genocide and ecocide. Studies that delve deep into the far-reaching effects of the colonial enterprise are, therefore, as timely and necessary as ever.

Multimodal studies (Kress, van Leeuwen [1996] 2021), including multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA; Ledin, Machin 2018; Machin, Mayr 2023) and multimodal metaphor studies (Pérez Sobrino 2017; Zurru 2022; 2024a) complete the theoretical and methodological framework, enabling us to analyse the texts selected

**8** See also DeLoughrey, Handley 2011; Huggan, Tiffin [2009] 2015.

**9** See the 2024 Nobel Prize Press Release at `https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/economic-sciences/2024/press-release/`.


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by focusing on all the modes used. Furthermore, these disciplines allow a critical exploration of the texts against the background of their wider socio-historical context and of the relations of power in the postcolonial Indian subcontinent, as well as of the discourse on grassroots environmentalism on social media. Indeed, social media have become one of the most important sites of contestation around environmental matters such as climate change, mainly thanks to the so-called "Greta Effect" (Mede, Schroeder 2024), so much so that the majority of environmental communication studies focus on social media more than any other digital platform (Díaz-Pont et al. 2020, 16). In addition, research shows that communication on social media reflects patterns of language evolution influenced by social dynamics typical of linguistic contamination and hybridisation (Di Marco et al. 2024, 8). After analysing three hundred million social media posts in English over 34 years and across eight social media platforms – including almost ten million posts about climate change on Twitter – Di Marco et al. conclude that a decrease in the length of the comments and a reduction in their lexical richness can be observed (8). This is likely linked to the overarching function of social media platforms – entertainment – which leads their algorithm to favour emotionally resonant and simplified language, which in turn enhances the possibility of content going viral (8). The counterpart to these processes of linguistic simplification is the increasing visuality and multimodality within social media communication, which leads to greater engagement (see Kanuri 2024; Li, Xie 2020) and which can also be detected within environmental activism on social platforms (see Zurru 2022; 2024b).

Finally, in terms of data collection, we followed the same procedure as in the companion study mentioned in the Introduction (Zurru 2024b). Indeed, as stated above, two of the aims of this contribution are to carry out an analysis of the texts collected from the #SaveHasdeoForest campaign and to compare the results with those obtained from the previous study, in order to ascertain whether common stylistic traits can be identified. Therefore, data were collected as follows:

- the posts were downloaded from the social media platform X on the same day, after being selected from the 'top' results for the main hashtags the movement used: #SaveHasdeoForest and #SaveHasdeo;
- only posts containing language-based text or language-based text in combination with still images were considered, as the meaning-making process in posts containing videos involves other elements (e.g. music), which require additional methodological and analytical tools;
- posts from corporate accounts were excluded, to avoid the possibility of greenwashing;

- posts from individual accounts that posted massively were excluded, to avoid individual voice(s) and/or style conflating with those of the campaign;
- identical posts which were posted multiple times were also excluded for the same reason;
- posts entirely written in a language unfamiliar to the analyst were excluded.

The result is a corpus of 16 posts. Data are analysed and discussed in 3.2 and 3.3 below.

## 3.2 Analysis

Each text analysed shows a multilayered communicative style with many linguistic, discursive and stylistic elements which are used on multiple occasions. Table 1 below summarises the categories identified in the whole corpus:

**Table 1** Categories in the 16-post corpus

| Category | Post number |
|---|---|
| Artivism | 1, 2, 3, 6, 8 |
| Humour | 2, 12 |
| Informative communication | 5, 7 |
| Multimodal figurative language | 1, 2, 8, 15 |
| (Verbal text + visual) multimodality | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 |
| Opposition | 3, 8, 4, 5, 6, 13, 14, 15 |
| Persuasive communication | 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16 |
| Reference to Indigenous peoples | 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 16 |
| Reference to non-human animals | 5, 7, 9, 16 |
| Translinguistic practices | 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 13, 16 |
| Verbal metaphor | 7, 10, 11, 13 |
| Violent narrative | 2, 3, 8 |

In consideration of space constraints, a detailed qualitative analysis of all 16 posts is not feasible. Therefore, the qualitative analysis will be carried out on a limited number of posts[10] representative of the five most frequently identified categories: (verbal text + visual)

**10** All the posts collected were posted by public accounts, which openly share content with the aim of encouraging engagement and fully retain its copyright. This also allows for these texts to be analysed within the remit of Fair Use. However, a decision was made not to show the icons – which often include the face of the author of the posts – and their handle, and to only quote their X name in the caption of each picture.

multimodality, persuasive communication, reference to Indigenous peoples, opposition and translinguistic practices.


**Figure 1** Post 1 – shared by Tribal Army ©

Post 1 **[fig. 1]** is an example of (verbal text + visual) multimodality, persuasive communication, reference to indigenous peoples and translinguistic practices. In addition, it exemplifies the use of artivism and multimodal figurative language. Indeed, the verbal portion of the post makes an explicit reference to the plight of indigenous people and to their exceptional conservationist skills and resistance. The verbal message interacts with the picture, making it necessary to combine verbal text and visual to be able to decode all the layers of meaning created by the post. The visual is an example of artivism, or the use of art for activism, which has become increasingly important within environmental communication (see Rodriguez-Labajos 2022). A multimodal metaphtonymy (Pérez Sobrino 2017), namely a combination of metonymy (A FOR B) and metaphor (A IS B) cued through different modes (e.g. verbal + visual), can be identified in the image: (CRYING WOMAN FOR) INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ARE (HUG FOR) PROTECTING (TREES FOR) HASDEO FOREST FROM (EXCAVATOR, CUT OFF TREES AND FACTORY FOR) ADANI. Indeed, the verbal reference to Indigenous peoples is historically linked to the image of the woman hugging a tree, a reference to the

Chipko Movement, an environmental movement of villagers of rural areas, particularly women, who operated in the 1970s and launched the practice of tree hugging for environmental protection, based on Gandhi's idea of non-violent resistance (Sadak 2024).

That the trees are those of Hasdeo forest and the threat is represented by Adani is, once again, clarified by the interaction between the verbal text and the image. Indeed, the hashtags used in this post are #StopAdani and #SaveHasdeo. The former is an example of co-creation of meaning and proliferation of hashtags within a movement on social media, a salient aspect of "hashtag activism" (Xiong et al. 2019), and it also clarifies that it is Adani specifically, and not deforestation in general, the Indigenous peoples need to protect Hasdeo forest from. The latter has an affiliation function (Zappavigna 2018; Zappavigna, Martin 2018), as it is one of the main hashtags of the campaign, behind which the activists in the movement rally, but it also clarifies the link with the trees portrayed in the visual art. Concurrently, the main hashtags clarify the wider context constraining the interpretation of these posts: these are not texts about environmental activism in general; they are about saving Hasdeo forest and supporting its ancestral dwellers in their acts of resistance. Interestingly, the hashtag #SaveHasdeo is also included, both in English and Hindi,[11] in the visual art, in the two posters at the feet of the woman. This is an example of the translinguistic practices within this movement. As discussed in Dovchin, Izadi (2023), translinguistic practices on social media in the Global South are far from exotic or unconventional, as they are often interpreted in the Global North. Rather, they are the result of linguistic hybridisation and multilingualism which, in the Global South, are almost always an effect of colonisation. Hence translinguistic practices are often ordinary and unremarkable in the Global South. They can, however, be used for specific purposes, such as activism on social media (Silva, Maia 2022), and to increase one's communicative potential (Dryden, Izadi 2023). Finally, the elements discussed clarify that the communicative style of this post is persuasive, rather than informative. The post aims at engaging the audience through the emotional response generated by the art and to persuade them to support the campaign by foregrounding the need to both protect the forest and support the fight of Adivasis.

**11** Every verbal element which was not written in English was translated through machine translation and the translation was cross-checked multiple times through different sources to ensure its accuracy.


**Figure 2** Post 4 – shared by Kewal Kaiwartya ©

Post 4 **[fig. 2]** is an example of opposition, as well as reference to Indigenous peoples, persuasive communication and (verbal text + visual) multimodality. In this instance, verbal text and image support each other rather than interacting directly, as seen in Post 1. The verbal text uses parallelism (Leech 2008), or the repetition of the parallel structures "Save our heritage" and "Save Hasdeo", to trace a connection between the forest and the author's heritage, which, thanks to context, we can deduce is Indigenous heritage. Communicatively prominent is the use of the pronoun "we", which recalls the notion of the forest being a marker of collective identity for Adivasis as discussed in Section 2. Parallelism is one of the strategies used to achieve foregrounding (Leech 2008) in communication, thus making the foregrounded notion especially salient. This connection is reinforced by hashtag proliferation, with the use of the hashtag #SaveHasdeo_SaveTribal in addition to the campaign hashtag #savehasdeoforest. The picture shows an oppositional information value based on a Given-New realisation in terms of composition (Kress, van Leeuwen [1996] 2021, 216-7): two opposed elements are juxtaposed horizontally, so that the left, Given element is presented as the starting point of the message which is already known, while the New element on the right is presented as the novel information recipients need to focus on. By contrasting the image of a lush green forest with desert land, the image presents the forest – which the hashtag at the bottom clarifies is Hasdeo forest – as the Given, "natural" element, and the desert, as the new, "unnatural" one. Overall, the post aims at persuading other users of the importance of the campaign by using verbal foregrounding

in combination with a visual of the consequences of deforestation. By doing so, the post appeals to users' understanding that what is at stake is both Adivasis' heritage and the safeguarding of the forest. The 'forest vs desert' opposition employed in this text is the most frequent opposition in the corpus (posts 4, 5, 13, 14) and, using Jeffries's (2010) terminology, is a conventional opposition, namely a type of opposition that is conventionally made, similar to, e.g., 'sea vs mountain'. However, the corpus also shows a number of unconventional – hence communicatively salient due to their creativity and unexpectedness – oppositions: human vs non-human animal, Adivasi vs government, Adivasis vs Adani.


**Figure 3** Post 5 – shared by Neelam Ahluwalia ©

Post 5 **[fig. 3]** is a discursively rich text, as it is an example of (verbal text + visual) multimodality, conventional opposition, unconventional opposition, reference to Indigenous peoples, reference to non-human animals and informative communication. Indeed, even though the post encourages users to engage with the campaign thanks to one of the main hashtags and hashtag proliferation (#IndiaWithHasdeo), the verbal portion of the post focuses on providing facts and figures about the probable consequences for the forest, the Indigenous peoples, the climate crisis and the non-human animals in the

area. Interestingly, the last piece of information is presented as a verbal opposition (Jeffries 2010), namely "man-elephant conflict", which is then reiterated in the visual, turning the 'human vs non-human animal' opposition into a multimodal one. The image shows a multilayered compositional structure: on the left-hand side is the same opposition analysed in Post 4, namely the conventional opposition forest vs desert with a Given-New realisation; on the right-hand side is an Ideal-Real oppositional information value (Kress, van Leeuwen [1996] 2021, 217): the top half portrays the "ideal" part of the message and the bottom half showcases the "real" part. In other words, the image clarifies that, in case of deforestation, there would barely be space for people, while, ideally, there should be space for both human and non-human animals in an untouched forest. This is a reference to the fact that Indigenous peoples and elephants in the Chhattisgarh state are competing for space in an increasingly smaller habitat (Derhgawen, Mohan 2024), which is another aspect in the environmental injustice caused by capitalist enterprises such as this: not only do humans need to fight against Adani, they also need to compete with non-human animals, just like non-human animals need to compete with humans, when the actual threat to their survival is Adani.

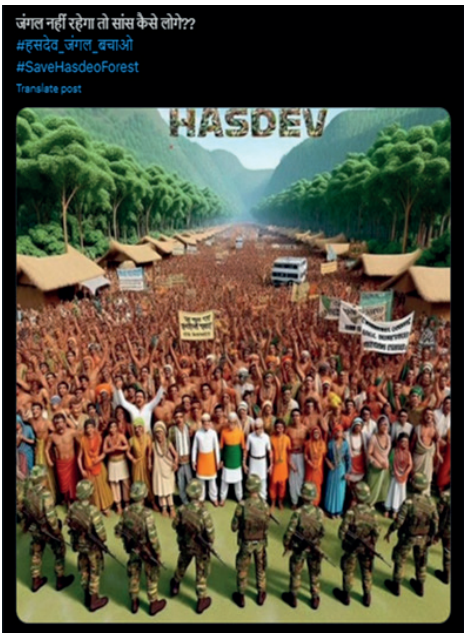


**Figure 4** Post 6 – shared by Manakdeep Singh Kharaud ©

Post 6 **[fig. 4]** is an example of (verbal text + visual) multimodality, persuasive communication, artivism, translinguistic practices, reference to Indigenous peoples and unconventional opposition. The verbal portion of the text presents the main hashtag in both languages and the rhetorical question "How would you breathe without the forest?", which is a reference to the ability of trees to create the oxygen humans need to survive. This verbal message is supported by the digital art, which shows the unconventional opposition 'Adivasis vs government': the Indigenous peoples – identifiable by their clothing and the signs which clearly mark them as protestors – are protecting the forest and facing a line of soldiers, metonymically representing Modi's government and their authorisation of the coal-mining project. The use of artivism in combination with verbal rhetoric gives rise to a persuasive style aiming at engaging the audience through emotional impact, thus amping up the communicative potential of the message conveyed.


**Figure 5** Post 3 – shared by Siddhrajsinh.g ©

Finally, Post 3 **[fig. 5]** is an example of (verbal text + visual) multimodality, translinguistic practices, artivism, reference to Indigenous peoples, violent narrative and unconventional opposition. The verbal part of the text shares the same message in both English and Hindi and criticises the anthropocentrism of the human-more

than human relationship. This message is then supported by three pictures. On the left-hand side is an example of artivism creating the 'Adivasis vs Adani' unconventional opposition. The art shows a protestor holding a poster in the foreground and many other protestors in front of her facing excavators, a metonym for Adani. These are working in front of a forest which is catching fire – one of the few examples of a violent visual narrative in the corpus. The picture on the top right-hand side is the same one analysed in Post 6, which demonstrates that the creative collaboration within environmental activism on social media also involves sharing creative content by fellow environmental artists as a way to reiterate their message. Finally, the picture on the bottom right-hand side is a close-up of the face of an Indigenous woman. As in previous examples, the communicative style of this post is persuasive rather than informative, thanks to the combination of translingual language-based text focusing on the protection of the forest, artivism and repeated visual reference to indigenous peoples at risk.

### 3.3 Discussion

The stylistic trait that is common to all posts in the corpus is multimodality. As summarised in Table 1, persuasive communication is also stylistically salient, while informative communication can only be identified in two posts (and in both cases verbal or multimodal figurative language is also used). Translinguistic practices are prevalent and characterise the communicative style of this movement, as does the reference to Indigenous peoples, which appears in a verbal, visual or verbal + visual format. Opposition is consistently used and, even though the conventional opposition 'forest vs desert' is the most frequently identified, three examples of non-conventional oppositions which require background knowledge to be decoded can be identified. Figurative language, either of the verbal or multimodal kind, appears to be part of the stylistic traits of the communicative practises of this grassroots movement, as does artivism. Both are consistently used to increase the persuasive potential of the text. Finally, reference to non-human animals is also stylistically salient.

With respect to the #SaveBuxwahaForest campaign analysed in Zurru (2024b), a number of similarities and differences can be traced. The prevalent use of multimodal communication, figurative language, either verbal or multimodal, a persuasive communicative style and opposition are stylistic traits the two campaigns share. The #SaveHasdeoForest, however, shows a much greater focus on the environmental injustice suffered by Adivasis than the #SaveBuxwahaForest campaign. Interestingly enough, the latter is characterised by a continuous interaction with the #FridaysforFuture

campaign, which has a larger social reach and has been able to put significant pressure on governments and corporations. The #SaveHasdeoForest campaign does not exhibit a similar interaction with #FridaysforFuture. In the #SaveHasdeoForest campaign, the localised focus on support for Adivasis, in addition to the protection of the forest, is also identifiable in the use of translinguistic practices as a sign of identity, which are virtually absent from the #SaveBuxwahaForest campaign. This shows that, while the interaction between local and global environmental movements can be extremely successful, so can localised activism. Another difference is represented by the reference to non-human animals, which is more frequent in the #SaveHasdeoForest campaign. Finally, differences can also be identified in the type of opposition used. The style of the #SaveBuxwahaForest campaign is characterised by both verbal and multimodal opposition, and unconventional oppositions are predominant. The #SaveHasdeoForest campaign employs mostly visual oppositions, while only one instance of multimodal opposition has been identified, and verbal opposition is absent. Conventional opposition is more common, even though some communicatively salient examples of unconventional opposition are present in the corpus. Interestingly, in the #SaveBuxwahaForest campaign, most unconventional oppositions are of the 'forest vs diamond' type, since the forest was at risk because of a diamond-mining project. In the case of the #SaveHasdeoForest, even though the threat to the forest is represented by coal-mining, there is no reference to coal or use of forest/coal opposites in the corpus.

## 4 Conclusion

The analysis and discussion of the data have shown that some stylistic features are specific to the #SaveHasdeoForest movement, while some can also be found in the #SaveBuxwahaForest campaign, similarly aimed at protecting one of the biggest forests in India and its dwellers from a deforestation project for capitalist purposes (Zurru 2024b). This leads us to conclude that the online communicative practices of environmental grassroots activism in the Indian subcontinent might rely on a number of stylistic choices that are popular on social media, such as the use of multimodality and of verbal and/or multimodal figurative language, which have also been identified in larger environmental movements, such as #FridaysforFuture (see Zurru 2022). At the same time, Indian localised movements seem to integrate idiosyncratic characteristics within their communicative styles which require specific background knowledge for the interpretation of the texts, rather than a general one, such as the life conditions of Adivasi in the #SaveHasdeoForest campaign.

With regard to theory and methodology, this contribution has shown how fruitful it is for ecostylistics to engage with issues of environmental injustice, in term of enrichment of its interdisciplinary cooperation with disciplines it has not interacted with frequently so far, such as postcolonial studies, and of enlargement of its aims and scopes. Indeed, ecostylistic studies focusing on environmental injustice in postcolonial settings have the ability to collect data and spread awareness about timely matters such as the entanglements between colonialism, capitalism, environmental injustice and Indigenous activism in the Global South – a link that in the conflictual space of environmental communication is often denied and written off as 'overreaching'.

With regard to limitations and future research, the data collected are adequate for a qualitative ecostylistic multimodal analysis, which requires a detailed analysis difficult to carry out in the space of an academic article with a larger corpus. However, in order to extend our conclusions, further data should be collected, for example by extending the data collection to related hashtags, e.g. #saynotomining, #indigenouspeople or #StandwithAdivasis. In addition, a future research path might also involve collecting data from different social media platforms than X, in order to investigate possible similarities and/or differences across platforms.

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