

ENVIRONMENT AWARENESS - I

Environment includes all living and non-living objects. We live in the environment and use the environmental resources like air, land and water to meet our needs. Development also means meeting the needs of the people. While meeting the ever-growing needs, we put pressure on the environment. When the pressure exceeds the carrying capacity of the environment to repair or replace itself, it creates a serious problem of environmental degradation. If we use any environmental resource such as ground water beyond its limit of replacement, we may lose it forever. Therefore, there is a need to create 'awareness' about Environmental protection. While efforts are being made at the national and international level to protect our environment, it is also the responsibility of every citizen to use our environmental resources with care and protect them from degradation.

23.1 Environmental Degradation

Environment constitutes a very important part of our life. To understand life without studying the impact of environment is simply impossible. The need to protect environment can be ignored only at our peril. We use environmental resources in our day to day life. These resources are renewable and non-renewable. We have to be more cautious in consuming non-renewable resources like coal and petroleum, which are prone to depletion. All human activities have an impact on environment. But in the last two centuries or so, the human influence on environment has increased manifold due to the rapid population.

23.1.1 Environmental Problem

Some of the notable problem of environment can be identified as under: -

a. Land Air And Water:pollution of land and water has affected plants, animals and human beings. The quality of soil is deteriorating resulting in the loss of agricultural land. The loss is estimated to be about five to seven million hectares of land each year. Soil erosion, as a result of wind and/or water, costs the world dearly . The recurring floods have their own peculiar casualties like deforestation, silt in the river bed, inadequate and improper drainage, loss of men and property. The vast oceans, after being turned in to dumping grounds for all nuclear wastes, have poisoned and polluted the whole natural environment.

b.Population Growth :population growth means more people to eat and breathe, and putting an excessive pressure on land and forest, and ultimately disturbing the ecological balance.

Our growing population is putting pressure on land, leading to poor quality of productivity, deforestation (the loss of forest land so necessary for ecological balance and extinction of wild life leading to imbalance in the ecological order, loss of wild life heritage and ultimately dwindling of several species. The growing population is not only a problem for the natural environment; it is a problem for any other aspect of environment, say, for example social, economic, political etc.

c. Urbanization :Urbanization is no less a source of pollution, and therefore, a threat to the environment. Urbanization means maddening race of people from villages to the cities. The net result of urbanization is dirt, disease and disasters. In a state of growing urbanization, environmental problem like sanitation, ill-health, housing, water-supply and electricity keep expanding. On the other, the environmental degradation is caused in the rural life due to indiscriminate collection of firewood, overgrazing and depletion of other natural resources.

d. Industrialization :Industrialization coupled with the development of the means of transport and communication has not only polluted the environment, but also has led to the shrinking of the natural resources. Both ways, the loss is really heavy . Increasing level of heat fluxes, carbon dioxide and particulate, radioactive nuclear wastes and the like create environment hazards. On the other hand, the consumption of conventional source of energy leads to the loss of natural resource. We are building a world without caring for future generations.

23.2 Awareness about Environmental Protection

In the past two decades, environment has attracted the attention of decision makers, scientists and even laymen in many parts of the world. They are becoming increasingly conscious of issues such as famines, droughts, floods, scarcity of fuel, firewood and fodder , pollution of air and water, problems of hazardous chemicals and radiation, depletion of natural resources, extinction of wildlife and dangers to flora and fauna. People are now aware of the need to protect the natural environmental resources of air , water, soil and plant life that constitute the natural capital on which man depends.

The environmental issues are important because the absence of their solutions is more horrible. Unless environmental issues are not solved or not taken care of the coming generations may find earth worth not living. The need of the planet and the needs of the person have become one.

There is no denying the fact that environment has to be protected and conserved so to make future life possible. Indeed, man's needs are increasing and accordingly the environment is also being altered, indeed, nature's capacity is too accommodating and too regenerative yet there is a limit to nature's capacity, especially when pressure of exploding population and technology keep mounting. What is required is the sustenance, conservation and improvement of the changing and fragile environment.

23.3 The Concept of Sustainable Development

The world commission on environment and development (the Brundtland commission) submitted its report entitled "Our common future" in 1987. This report highlighted and popularised the concept of 'sustainable development'. Sustainable development has been defined on meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the need of future generations. All developmental activities involve some amount of environmental degradation. What is required is to take into account the damage to environment as a result of development, and strike a balance between development and environmental protection. The aim should be to achieve sustainable levels of people's welfare and development. The primary concern is how many people can ultimately be supported by environment and at what level of quality of life.

The mainstream greens scholars like Carr, Brown, Dala, Schumacher . Does not make sense and others, all lay stress on "sustainability" of environment together with development. The emphasis of the mainstream green' are not on pollution, but on (1) energy and its resource may be renewed, and be kept renewing, (2) the waste be changed into

raw-material, raw-material into waste, waste into raw- material: recycling of waste into raw-material; (3) gross national product and its growth targets need not be sought, but what should be sought is the satisfaction of real human needs'. The greens say that growth means cancer, a cancer that threatens to spread worldwide, and destroy all life. They accept industry if it is on small scale and is for purpose of self-sufficiency . They advocate extensive decentralization.

The concept of sustainable development is more about environment and less about development; more about stability and less about change; more about restricting one's wants and less about the continuing material development more about the non-exploitative attitude towards environment and less about harnessing it; more about small communities and less about the larger ones. It is not a concept of development with environment, but is environment without growth.

Indeed, ecological degradation should stop. But why should the pace of development stop?

A disciplined uses of environmental benefits go a long way for all round development.

Scholars and activists assert that environmental degradation can be controlled and reversed only by ensuring that the parties causing the damage should be made accountable for their action and that they should participate in improving environmental conditions. What is needed is a set of norms, which bring the demands of development and the compulsion of environment closer to each other.

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