

ENVIRONMENT AWARENESS IN PRESENT SCENARIO

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ABSTRACT

Present study is focussed on environmental awareness in present scenario due to unawareness among people towards nature. In present technical era environment is being depleted day by day. Man is an integral part of the natural environment. Today the delicate ecosystem of our planet is facing a danger of destruction on a scale as never before in the history of mankind. Forests are diminishing at an alarming rate, landmasses are getting eroded, climate in different parts of the world is undergoing a change due to global warming and clean air and water are increasingly becoming rare commodities. So it is high time to be aware and alert about environmental protection.

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INTRODUCTION

Today the delicate ecosystem of our planet is facing a danger of destruction on a scale as never before in the history of mankind. In the mad race for development man has been consuming natural resources and polluting the environment. Several species of animals and plants have already vanished from the face of earth and many are on the verge of extinction.

We have reached this state because we have been trained to look upon nature, as a resource. Therefore in the mindless competition for industrialisation and progress, we have exploited the environment to the full, without any thought to the consequences. The attitude of our modern civilization is reflected in the criteria for the deployment which include such parameters as the consumption of electricity, water, newsprints, proteins etc. but do not take into the account of garbage, level of pollution, number of suicides and so on. If the trend continues, the world will soon become an inhospitable place for mankind.

Rousseau said that, "Everything is good coming from the hands of creator; everything degenerates in the hands of man. Now the time has come when we should be careful. Since the present problems result largely from ignorance and indifferent trends of continued misuse of the environment, however, it can be altered by creating awareness among people of man's activities that affect the environment for good or ill. We cannot expect improvement unless attitude of people change, unless a better appreciation of that environment. The environmental movement has focused attention on the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink, on how new dam construction harms wild life and how strip mining devastates the landscape and causes floods. We are beginning to realize that all aspects of the world around us can have profound and potential effects on our health and well being.

There is an increasing realization that human race now stands at the crossroad in choosing the option it has in the areas of environment and development. The industrial countries have enjoyed more than their share of development, have achieved decent standard of living. This has given rise to the biosphere, pollution and ecodegradation, as a result of affluence and underlying greed. It has now become clear that such pattern of development, life styles and quality of life are unsustainable. On the contrary, the developing countries are still struggling to achieve minimum level of sustenance. No doubt, they too have contributed to the ecodegradation and pollution, but this essentially needed and poverty based issue. Thus both over development in the industrialised world and under development in the developing countries pollute and ecodegrade the environment; former out of greed and increased luxury; and latter out of the dire need to eke out an existence. The developing countries need

abundant material growth to fulfil the basic needs of their people, but they cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of industrial countries. Decades ago, when environment was not a buzz word, **Mahatma Gandhi has said, “The earth provides enough to satisfy everyman’s needs, but not everyman’s greed”.**

The relationship between environment and humankind is indeed deep and has recognised from the Vedic period. Furthermore, non-violence towards both animate and inanimate components of biosphere has been ingrained as guiding principle in the Indian psyche. Therefore, awareness and education of environment is the paramount concern of all the citizens of society. Environment protection starts by creating awareness among the people so that it becomes part of their lifestyle. The key to achieving this goal lies in environmental education and its related programmes. The objectives of environmental education include awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills and participation of people in protecting the environment.

MAN AND ENVIRONMENT EXTREMISM

The environment which sustains life is in peril at present. Human actions are responsible for this. Rapid industrialization, further advancement in science is the main causes.

The fast growth of urbanization has posed danger to man himself. Man’s life, in terms of quality and sustainability, is dependent in the interrelationships among the natural environment, social environment and technological environment and the latter two being manmade. As proposed by sociologist William Ogburn, a change in any one of the environment will lead to greater or lesser changes in every other part of the total complex. And these changes, as a result will have a tremendous impact on the very living of the man. The most threatening aspect is the uncertainty prevailing about the fate of our future generations. Generally, people are indifferent to their environment. Newton’s third law states, “every action has an equal and opposite reaction”, this equally applies to man’s relationship with nature as it relates to application of force on inanimate objects. While man sought domination over nature in five thousand year of recorded history, he has begun to realize that his welfare and his very existence are deeply intertwined with the natural cycles and systems.

The uniqueness of man is his ability to subordinate nature and natural resources. So long as the requirements of his economic activities were small in relation to global stocks of critical natural resources, he could count on improving his welfare, but his economic activities have increased at an exponential; rate during the past several decades with the result that the

earth's resource base and life support have become vastly depleted. The principle manifestations of these impacts are on the global climate, the intricate web of forests, and ecology and diversity protective shield to harmful ultraviolet radiation. All these are related directly and indirectly to man's economic activities and to each other. They all have serious implications for his future awake-being.

The various issues that have come to the fore are air, water and land pollution, deforestation, wildlife depletion, acid rains, ozone depletion, desertification, global warming, loss of biodiversity, tropical rain forests, biosphere management, green-house effect and other such issues. Of these, climate change and biological diversity are described as the most urgent, requiring immediate attention. This is essentially because it is now well established that damage to environmental systems and natural resources has assumed massive proportions and the effects are manifesting themselves in very tangible detrimental forms.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Environment is global concept today. Environmental education is an approach to learning. It endeavours to create a way of thinking requiring people to overcome prejudices. It helps in programming learning experiences ranging from the simple to complex. The principle of environmental education is that it makes the pupil educated by problem related to understanding the environment and hazards of its pollution. The environmental education is socially relevant as it helps us to know how unchecked and unplanned development pollutes air, water and soil and thereby threatening our subsistence and existence.

Environmental education is not a separate subject. It is multi-disciplinary approach both to education and to the problems of environment. It is oriented towards development of values that are translated into action. Awareness, appreciation and understanding of the environment are only first steps and do not necessarily lead to effective action. Each student must acquire an environmental ethic, a concern for the commitment to his responsibility to the environment. Further he should have the motivation and competence to make decisions. His ethics must guide him both living with the earth's resources and other species and in living with his fellowmen in social, political and economical relationship.

Therefore, environmental education means the educational process dealing with man's relationship with his natural and man-made surroundings and includes the relations of population, pollution resource allocation and depletion, conservation, transportation technology, energy, urban and rural planning to total biosphere.

On the other hand environment awareness means to help social groups and individuals to acquire awareness of and sensitivity to the total environment and its allied problems. The importance of environmental awareness cannot be over emphasized. We must understand that to improve the quality of life. It is not only a question of air and water pollution. It includes elimination of disease, hunger, malnutrition, and poverty, destruction of forest, extermination of wildlife, erosion of soil and accumulation of waste. Hence there is an urgent need for proper management of the environment.

DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

It must be understood that improving the level of living is the key to development, be it economic development, sustainable development or human development. This is because the level of living is closely related to inadequate availability of life sustaining good and non-existent education, health, sanitation and other social service. Low incomes are also related to large family size and high fertility; high unemployment and low productivity, this link is both a cause and an effect and gets perpetuated as reported in World Development report, 1991 of World bank. Further, it was observed that many of the basic environmental problems link, inadequate sanitation and clean water, indoor air pollution from bio-mass burning and land degradation are closely related to the lack of development. At present the greatest challenge to world community is the well being of these people who live in acute poverty and do not have access to clean water and sanitation at all.

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