Short Communication

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: In the past three decades, protecting the global environment has emerged as one of the major challenges in international relations. No fewer than ten global environmental treaties have been negotiated as well as literally hundreds of regional and bilateral agreements. Environmentalism can be seen as a social movement that seeks to influence the activism and education in order to protect natural resources and ecosystems. A concern for environment protection has recurred in diverse forms, in different parts of the world, throughout history. The environmental movement is a diverse scientific, social, and political movement. In its recognition of humanity as a participant in ecosystems, the movement is centered on ecology, health and human rights. Today, it is universally recognized that environmental protection is a parcel of national policy and programme. The well recognized mode of achieving this humble goal is "sustainable Development". In fact, modern law and policy governing environmental protection and human development whether at national or international level, have the objective of achieving "Sustainable Development". In spite of the gigantic environmental protective measures promoted by man over three decades of period, neither the warming of earth is put at naught, nor are the growing abnormal incidents of atmosphere reduced with the available scientific and technological knowledge. Despite the many environmental regimes and action plans negotiated in the past quarter century, important gaps still exist in the international environmental policy framework. The framework has not developed in any systematic or strategic way. Rather it is a collection of numerous treaties, each addressing relatively discrete global or regional environmental issues. Nature has become unnatural causing adverse impact on the atmosphere on one side and the health and safety of all the living and non-living on the other hand. The ecosystem is echoing with abnormal noises, vibrations, dust and smoke due to human activities. These incidents remind the mankind about the compelling need for protecting the environment willy-nilly with all zeal and vigour. Given how far we have come in damaging the global environment, international environmental efforts in the future will have to be focused more on environmental restoration than protection. Human rights laws may also present important opportunities for gaining better environmental protection.

Keywords: Environmental, Human Rights, Sustainable Development

INTRODUCTION

Environment is the source of life on earth and it not only directs but also determines the existence, growth and development of mankind and all its activities.[1] The term 'environment' etymologically means surroundings. Literally, it is an English term formed by two words, i.e., 'enviro' and 'ment' which means 'encircle' or 'all round'. Thus, environment is a complex of many variables which surround man as well as all living organisms. Any external force, substance or condition, which surrounds and affects the life of the organism in any way becomes a factor of its environment. Environmental studies are necessary to understand the environment, ecology and their impact on man. Environment is a controller of life on earth. It is not only necessary for the growth but also for existence of life on the earth.[2]

According to the UN report, "Sustainability means meeting the needs of present generation without compromising the abilities and opportunities of future generation."It thus, implies both intergenerational and intra-generational equity.

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[1] H. M. Sexana (2006): *Environmental Studies*, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, at p. 1.
[2] R. Arvill (1967): *Man and Environment: Crisis and the Strategy of Choice*, Penguin, at p. 12.

Sustainability is an important dimension of human development. Human development is a process of enlarging people's choices. But such enhancement must be for both present and future generations without sacrificing one for the other. Environment education denotes a study of environment and its dynamics, environmental degradation and its various forms, factors degrading environment and its impact on man's life.

In India, as elsewhere in the world, uncontrolled growth and consequent environmental deterioration are fast assuming menacing proportions and most of the Indian cities and majority or the population are afflicted with the problems. The fundamental question before us today is whether we can allow the destruction of the environment leading to the destruction of the environment leading to the destruction of living creatures, including human beings on this planet. Despite our brutal exploitation of forests, indiscriminate quarrying, pollution of rivers and other water resources, rapid increase of air and noise pollution, it is still possible to protect the deteriorating environment through proper policies and management.[3]

Man has continually, and at an increasing rate, been changing the forms and modes of his interaction with the environment. Natural processes and factors that depend on the structure and other characters of the earth and social processes and factors that depend on the structure and other characteristic of our society have been closely interwoven. In ancient Indian writings 'nature' or 'environment' has been considered as the controller of all human activities including economic development. It was only after the industrial revolution, followed by transport revolution and urbanization that degradation of the environmental started, which has given rise to the concept of sustainable development. The sudden interest in sustainable development is, of course, a response to warnings that the world is facing an environmental and therefore, social catastrophe in the near future unless mankind radically modifies certain practices and perspectives which have created the present crisis.[4] This crisis is characterized among other things by the poisoning of our rivers, seas and underground water resources, the thinning of the ozone layer, global warming, the rapid extinction of species, massive deforestation and soil improvement,

rapid population growth and uncontrolled urbanization with its attendant social problems.[5] Environmental problems are not new. Human societies have long and major impact on their environment. Their tendency to exploit it as if it were an inexhaustible resource has repeatedly led to disaster, sometimes leading to the loss of entire human communities.[6] However, over much of human history, the environmental impacts of over exploitation or pollution have typically been quite local.[7] However, widespread industrialization and rapid population growth changed this situation. Severe environmental damage and unsustainable exploitation occurred over the whole regions of the world. By the late twentieth century, the impacts had become truly global.[8]

By the twenty-first century, environmental issues had been high on the international agenda for a whole generation of political leaders, government officials, scientists, industrialist and concerned citizens. Since the late 1960's, awareness of the risks and implications of a wide range of international environmental problems has increased greatly and justifiably.[9]

Civilization from the time immemorial has respected environment as an essential base for human survival. The cultural and social practices developed as customs have imbibed in man, the reverence for nature and environment. As the lifestyles changed due to cultural confluence and ever expanding economic activities, especially globalization, the environment is being put under heavy pressure. Concerns over deteriorating environment and people's claim for better quality of life have assumed primary importance in recent years. The Stockholm conference of 1972 is the beginning of concerted efforts to protect environment globally for sustainable development and perpetuation of human race. An acceptable environment constitutes a precondition for the enjoyment of certain human rights.[10]

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[3] L.C. Jain (1986): Heritage to keep: the Handicrafts Industry, Economic and political weekly, Vol. XXI, No. 25 and 26, June, pp. 21-24, at p. 23.
[4] Luke Martel (1994): Ecology and Society: An Introduction, U.K. Polity Press.

[5] E. H. Brown (1970): Man Shapes the Earth, Geographical Journal, Vol. 136, pp. 74-85, at p. 76.
[6] Ibid. , at p. 42.
[7] Id.
[8] M. Karshenas (1994): Environment, Technology and Employment: Towards a New Definition of Sustainable Development, Development and Change, Vol. 25, No. 4, at p. 17.
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ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

The world population of six billion people is not only disrupting and destroying natural ecosystems but is also impairing earth's capacity to support an ever increasing and demanding population. Achievement of sustainable and equitable development therefore remains the greatest challenge facing the mankind. Despite good progress made over the past few decades, our failure to eradicate poverty and remove inequitable access to the resources required for better living, education, health services, infrastructure, land and credit remain the areas of concern. While development is about improving the well-being of the people by raising living standards, improving living standards, improving education, health and providing equitable opportunity to all, it is possible that despite a good performance on these indicators, the environmental degradation caused due to developmental activities affects the welfare of the people. (a) Recent human impacts on the atmosphere have been enormous with anthropogenic emissions, a prime cause of environmental problems. Emissions of almost all greenhouse gases continue to rise. (b) Ground-level ozone, smog and fie particulates have emerged as significant health risks, triggering or respiratory and cardiac problems especially in vulnerable people such as children, the elderly and asthmatics in developed and developing nations alike. (c) Overexploitation of many of the surface water resources and great aquifers upon which irrigated agriculture and domestic supplies depend has resulted in more and more countries facing water stress and scarcity. (d) The Earth's biological diversity is under increasing threat. (e) Land degradation continues to worsen, particularly in developing countries. (f) Many remaining forest ecosystems have been degraded and fragmented. (g) Inadequate maintenance of vehicles (h) Unfriendly automobile and fuel technology

STEPS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE GOOD GOVERNANCE

Sustainability cannot be achieved without good governance. The Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2001 stated that governance and sustainable development are intimately tied together and the future role and architecture of institutions from local to international levels will be crucial determinants to whether future policies and programmes for sustainable development will succeed. Governance and sustainability examines the possibilities of integrating the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development within the framework of governance processes and how that might steer societies towards sustainability.

The aim of ecologically sustainable development is to maximize human well-being or quality of life without jeopardizing the life support system. The measures for sustainable development may be different in developed and developing countries according to their level of technological and economic development. But developing countries like India can focus attention on the following measures: (a) Ensure clean and hygienic living and working conditions for the people (b) Ensure safety against known and proven industrial hazards (c) Encourage a forestation (d) Find out substitutes for proven hazardous materials based on local resources and needs instead of blindly depending on advances nations to find solutions (e) Ensuring environmental education as a part of school and college curriculum (f) Encourage use of non-conventional sources of energy, specially solar energy (g) As far as possible production of environment-friendly products be encouraged (h) Use of organic fertilizers and other bio-techniques should be popularized (i) Environment management is a key for sustainable development, it should include monitoring and accountability (j) Need for socialization and also humanization of all environmental issues.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Global Action: Along with the action at the Governmental level, the local population, the polluters, the action at the global platform will also be essential. The developed countries can go longer sit and watch the object poverty and degradation of natural resources in the developing countries.

Collective Action: One of the instruments of the environmental policy formulation could be the collective action by the polluters and the effected community to abate pollution.

Information And Communication: Ignorance is a serious impediment to finding solutions. It is suggested that the international initiatives are needed to overcome grave lack of knowledge in some areas relating to environment.

Conservation Of Natural Resources: Recyclability affords near virgin polymers, and here resources are not wasted. Recycling is a major challenge today. Apart from reuse, the composites from the polymers provide us many useful properties not hitherto availed of from the natural materials like metals and wood.

Renewable Energy: For sustainable industrialization the state has to move from non-renewable energy sources to renewable energy sources, e.g. from coal and water based sources to solar and wind based sources.

Transport System Management: As a result of poorly designed transport system in the urban areas, especially large sized, it has led to the problem of traffic congestion resulting in crawling speeds on the roads. The overall impact of such traffic system is of environmental deterioration, primarily air pollution. (a) To create environmental awareness among the people is one of the important measures to protect it from decay and degradation. For preservation and up keeping of pollution control measures, we have to start educational and literacy drive for the people to develop consciousness as to why conservation of environment is necessitated. For injecting the sense of awareness among the people the organization of seminars, conferences, and symposia, etc. is indispensable to provide literature on it and making use of vast mass media in various spheres of environment. (b) Environmental sanitation is an important aspect of ecological balance. In a developing country people are not so conscious and literate about environment sanitation and so it is advisable to educate people not to throw any kind of refuse, dust, dirt and other waste inadvertently and indiscriminately all over. They must be motivated to put them into the dustbins or maddens. (c) There are various kinds of pollution which demands the health and hygienic status of environment. Some are in gaseous form, smoke from automobiles and noise which cause diseases. (d)The 1972 UN conference on the Human Environment was organized in response to the dramatic issues in the international environmental concern in the 1960's. The aim was to establish and international framework to promote a more co-ordinate approach to pollution and other environmental problems. (e) Environmental catastrophe transcends all barriers of nationhood. The need of the hour is the protection of the human race for its survival and perpetuation. The goals of environmental protection are to be pursued in harmony with the established and fundamental goals of peace and of global social and economic development. (f) To achieve the environmental goal will demand the acceptance of responsibility by citizens and communities and by enterprise and institutions at every level to shape the world environment of the future. Local and national governments need to bear the greatest burden for large scale environmental policy and actions within their respective jurisdictions. International co-operation is essential in order to raise resources to support the developing countries carrying out their responsibilities in this field. Environmental justice may provide lasting solutions to all aspects of environment-related problems of human life. Environmental justice could be achieved with the state, the judiciary and the people acting in co-ordination with each other and have commitment to the desired objective.

CONCLUSION

Man has played with the delicate balance of various constituents of nature in order to meet his ever increasing demands without understanding its ill-effects. Nature's precious resources are getting scarce because of indiscriminate and unplanned acts of man. Rapid industrialization, mechanization of human life and scientific inventions have made human life comfortable but at the same time have created new problems of pollution and many new diseases. In the blind race of development, man has forgotten to take care of side effects of environmental pollution. The need of the hour is to prepare suitable strategies of environmental education for saving our environment. There is a need of mass awareness about the environment.

It can be concluded that the sophistication of modern living in society has led to pressure on the natural resources. It is not out of the context to say that world is living on a sword's edge. Any further disturbance in eco-dynamics may be hazardous and infinite. With the modernization pervading almost all aspects of our social life we are not becoming responsible, enlightened and awakened. Our duties towards the nature are still far from being nature-friendly. Let us all work together for better future and make the Earth a better place for living. The environmental policy has to be guided by the factors like participative management of natural resources. It is no longer possible to practice the age-old dictum of superiority of wisdom of the government. There is a need to implement programs of a forestation, soil management, park protection, water management, sanitation, and drainage and flood control.

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