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4. GLOBAL WARMING AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMBALANCE

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INTRODUCTION

The natural resources like earth, wind, water, trees are the basis of human-life. For the bright future of human beings, it is essential to use these resources with a great care. 'Environment' means the physical, chemical and biological surroundings in which an organism exists. Thus, environment is the gift of nature. Prior to 20th century, there was no major evidence of human influence on environment. Environmental degradation up to this period was mainly due to natural disasters, like cyclone, earthquake etc. Up to that period; natural resources were not used beyond their regenerative capacities. So, what was used, was regenerated. But, after the population explosion in the world, the situation started changing. Gradually, this led to serious environmental degradation behind which, the need and greed of human kind is responsible. Ever increasing pollution, demolition of forests and bio-diversity, increase in global warming, etc. have alarmed us for awareness of environmental protection. Worldwide environmental awareness was started during the 1960s. The main impetus came from the publication of a book 'Silent Spring' by Rachel Carson in 1962. This book revealed the risk of using some pesticides and their bad effects on human life and thereby showed the necessity for the protection of earth. The world summit held at Rio-de-Janero in 1992, had focused the attention towards environmental problems. The economists also started looking afresh to the central economic problem of resource scarcity in relation to their possible uses. After 1970, many economists started arguing that development can be made sustainable only with efficient and judicious use of natural resources. In this paper, we have described various factors responsible for environmental hazards and we have also suggested our duties regarding the protection of the earth.

GLOBAL WARMING

Climate change is the single biggest environmental and humanitarian crisis of our time. Western countries are major contributors to global warming and toxic air pollution. Climate change means a change in climate that persists over a sustained period of time. Examples of climate change are global warming, changes in rainfall patterns and

changes in the frequency of extreme weather events. The instrumental temperature record shows increased global warming of around 0.6 C. over the entire 20th century.

Global Warming will affect India because, in South Asia, warming has been projected to be above the global average. The impact projection for India indicates an increasing trend in the annual mean temperature.

The effects of global warming are the environmental and social changes caused by human emissions of greenhouse gases. Many impacts of climate change have already been observed e.g. glacier retreat, changes in the timing of seasonal events and changes in agricultural production and productivity. In all regions, some people are particularly at risk from global warming e.g. the poor, children and elderly.

GLOBAL WARMING AND FOOD SUPPLY

Low-latitude areas are at the most risk of having decreased crop yields. Some evidences suggest that, droughts have been occurring more frequently because of global warming and they are expected to become more frequent and intense in Africa, southern Europe, the Americas, Australia, south East Asia and west Asia. Droughts results in crop failures and the loss of pasture grazing land for livestock.

An increase in temperatures of 0.5 C. to 1.5 C. could produce a decline of wheat and maize production in India between 1% to 2.5%. In India, with predominantly agrarian economy, the projected increase in temperature will dampen economic growth by reducing agricultural productivity.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

The world had to accept two very serious problems as unwanted gifts in the 20th century; first is population – explosion and another is environmental – imbalance. The problem of population explosion is limited up to Asia, Africa and Latin America; while the problem of pollution or environmental hazards has spread over the whole world. In this context, necessity to protect the earth should be the first priority. The proper combination and balance between the natural resources and human-population is called environment, and environment is a part of the earth. When excessive use of natural resources due to unlimited human-wants takes place; the earth becomes unsafe,

Before two generations, the human-wants of our elders were very limited, so, the earth was safe and protected. But ever increasing population and ever-increasing demand for the materialistic consumption; it is very difficult for human beings to live on this earth. Since the inception of 20th century, there has been a fast industrial development in various countries of the world. The production of necessities and prodigal goods has increased a lot. In the 2nd world war, atom bombs were dropped on Japan, and thereafter so many countries have been experimenting atomic energy privately or publicly for the destructive purpose. The problem of pollution has increased seriously with the process of national economic development. In India at least 86,400-ton insecticides are used annually, which creates air pollution as well as soil-degradation. In urban areas, heavy industrialization and increasing number of vehicles are the major responsible factors in generating pollution of air, water and sound. 8.5% of the total vehicles in our country are in Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata. So, 470 T.P.D. in Mumbai, 810 T.P.D. in Delhi and 1887 T.P.D. in Kolkata, Carbon Monoxide mixed in the air, in 2001. But, due to use of CNG, this volume has decreased a little now. Carter Brandun and Christan Homan have written that every year at least 40,000 people die in India due to pollution. Industries like aluminum, cement, bricks, chemical, colour, plastic, rubber, pharmaceuticals, pesticides, fertilizers, thermal power, etc. pollute the atmosphere leaving carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and hydrocarbons. The temperature has been rising due to pollution. Undue changes are coming in the climate. The rivers, ponds, lakes and oceans have become means to dispose the industrial waste. These increase problems regarding human and animal health. T.B., Cancer, Skin diseases, Bronchitis etc. are the outcome of pollution. The polluted water gets absorbed in the cultivation land and it creates serious problems regarding the fertility. Though forests are very useful for environment, in our country only 23% land is forest land and in Gujarat only 8% land is forest land. Every year 13 lakhs hectare land under forests decreased due to cutting of trees and land encroachments. Floods, land erosion, construction of dams etc. are also responsible for deforestation.

Considering the whole narration, we can say that there is a serious crisis of environmental and ecological degradation in this century. It is certain that, the time has come to think some plans and actions regarding the protection of earth. It is not certain that India would be

super power of the world, but it is certain that India is and would be one of the most polluted countries in the world. We are not able to breathe pure air, not able to eat pure food and not able to drink pure water.

OUR DUTIES TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

For the protection of the earth economists, scientists, engineers, environmentalists, government and the people should think some concrete policies.

(i) Environmental policy is essential for solving environmental hazards. It may be defined as a set of legal, administrative, governmental and social plans and policies to control pollution and to protect the earth. In India, we have also formulated such policy, but the implementation part is somewhat weak. Such type of policy must be implemented strictly by the administration.

(ii) Government alone can not solve the environmental problems. There should be co-ordination of government's action with N.G.Os., pollution affected people and the polluters. Peoples' participation is essential in all stages of environmental protection. In our Indian culture, we worship natural resources or environment, so, without peoples' involvement, this great task cannot be done. People with some social movement can protect the earth. The 'Chipko Movement', Narmada River movement, Samaj Parivartan Samuday's movement, Silent Valley and Dun Valley movement are the good examples.

(iii) Various industries should manage to control pollution. The industries like textiles, cement, chemicals, drugs, plastic, petrochemicals should be established at least 15 km. away from the residential areas of cities and villages.

(iv) Tree plantation is the best way to protect the earth. Trees absorb polluted air and provide clean air. After the tree plantation, it is our duty to maintain them in proper way. Students can accelerate this work with the help of N.S.S., N.C.C. and Scout-Guide activities.

(v) Gandhiji wanted ruralisation instead of urbanization, as he knew the dangerous outcome of urbanization and industrialization. In this context, cottage, rural and small-scale industries should be motivated by the government. These industries create a little pollution. Prof. Schumacher also agrees about the usefulness of Gandhian thoughts for solving environmental problems.

(vi) The new buzzword in the international industrial circle is clean technology. The ultimate aim of clean technology or technology to ensure clean production is to reduce the

generation of wastes and toxic emissions. It is a creative way of thinking about products and processes that help in reducing pollution at source and enhance profitability. Organic farming is also useful for the protection of earth, as it does not require chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

(vii) We should increase the use of various natural energies like solar energy, wind energy, water energy, ocean energy, bio-gas energy etc. The use of CNG in automobiles is also useful to reduce the pollution. Some proportion of ethanol must be mixed in Petrol / Diesel. It reduces the pollution of air.

(viii) Our Indian culture has the respected place for festival and celebrations. We should celebrate the following days, so that the work of earth protection can become speedy:

(a) February 2 – World Wetland Day – Wetlands are very important part of our biodiversity and it is necessary to see that they are well protected.

(b) February 28 – National Science Day – It is necessary to highlight the contribution of science in the protection of the environment.

(c) March 21 – World Forestry Day – Planting the trees and highlighting the urgency to increase the green cover, is useful for the earth.

(d) March 22 – World Water Day – The decision to celebrate this day has been taken recently as drinking water source are fast depleting.

(e) March 23 – World Meteorological Day – Just to remind everybody that weather is an integral part of the environment.

(f) April 7 – World Health Day – WHO was established on this day in 1948. In the changing environment, health is an important issue.

(g) April 18 – World Heritage Day – Just to give equal respect to human beings.

(h) April 22 – Earth Day-Since 22/4/1970, this day has been celebrated all over the world as Earth Day.

(i) May 31- Anti Tobacco Day- We can take up an anti smoking campaign in our society or in our office.

(j) June 5 – World Environment Day – On June 5, 1972, the Stockholm Conference on Human Environment was held in Sweden. Tree plantation should be done on this day.

(k) July 11 – World Population Day – Increasing population is a serious problem and such message should be spread.

(l) September 16 – World Ozone Day – The United Nations declared this day as the International Day for the prevention of the Ozone Layer.

(m) September 28 – Green Consumer Day

– Awareness building on the importance of recycling and reusing goods should be taken up seriously.

(n) October 3 – World Habitat Day – Increasing human activities is threatening the habitat of other living things.

(o) October 1-7 – World Wildlife Week – Celebrate this week by creating awareness on the importance of preservation of our wildlife.

(p) October 13 – International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction – Efforts should be taken to reduce the natural disasters.

(q) November 14 – Children’s Day in India – Children can work together for a better future by improving the environment around them.

(r) December 2 – Bhopal Tragedy Day – Mark this occasion by our best efforts to prevent such a tragedy from occurring again.

We humbly hope that by above mentioned efforts we can make our earth clean and green. That will control global temperature also. It is after all a planet, we borrowed from our children and when we leave behind this property let it not feel like a burning cauldron of waste, all in the name of convenience.

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