

Environmental conservation in the Indian context

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ABSTRACT

Environmental protection and conservation have now become the major concern the world over. India has a complex spectra of diversity, reflected physiographically, culturally, socially and biologically and is one of the seven megadiversity areas of the world in terms of biodiversity. The major areas of environmental concern are agriculture, forestry, industry, population, etc the realisation of the value and need of intercropping and other methods has paved agroforestry systems. India being a tropical country is enriched by rain forests. The origin of various indigenous medical systems owes to the herbal wealth of these forests. However, degradation of forests warrants their protection and conservation so as to ensure our rich green heritage. The various environmental problems caused by the growth of industry and the multipurpose projects warrant their better management. For the prevention of the rapid loss of biological diversity and environmental degradation, a multidisciplinary effort combining political, social and science-technological systems are required which enables sustainable management and utilisation of the world's environment.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The environment around man is practically what environment means. In fact, man is the architect of environment and vice versa, considered in terms of development. The rich diversity of life-the plants, animals, micro organisms including bacteria and viruses and the array of factors both physical, chemical and biochemical among others, all have a bearing on welfare of man, in terms of economic benefits, health, occupation and the entire habitat. In short, the life and life support ecosystems resolved into the air, the water and the ears are the essential requisites of the environment scenario of the earth, the concern of which has gripped the whole world almost like a fever by the sudden feeling for saving the earth. The answer is that man wants to care himself and for future generations, having taken stock of the growing revolution in natural resources due primarily to the increase in human activities around the world. What concerns the world also concerns India as the commonality of environment problems are many in different parts of the world.

as far as India in concerned it is among the developing countries or the third world countries with the satisfying situation that the country is first among the third. Apparently such a categorisation of the first (US and Western countries), second (south America, Australia and associated countries) and the third (forming the rest of the world and significantly Africa and India) is an economic division and partly also a political, social and cultural demarcation. It is high time that such a

human circumscription is modified taking stock of present day situation. infact, India has certainly made a sea change, in the post-independent phase of history which merits its consideration as a unique entity and as an example of unity in diversity physically, politically and biologically and the country is in the lead in several spheres of human activity. This diversity is not just in human terms but is reflected physiographically, culturally and socially and in turn biologically. Infact, India has been demarcated as one of the seven megadiversity areas of the world, in terms of the biodiversity which of course is the most visual form of diversity unearth and which has the closest bearing on human life.

AREAS OF CONCERN

It has been mentioned earlier that India has a variety of physiographic reigns reflected amply in its biodiversity. We have the Himalayas in the North with its highest peak in the world, Mount Everest, a vast flood plain formed by the river network formed of the Ganges and the Bramhaputra to which may also be added the Indus (now in Pakistan) followed to the south by chain of Aravalli and Vindhya ranges which is again followed by a long plateau subtended in the West by the Western Ghats mountain ranges and the disrupted mountain groups in the eastern side. This plateau is surrounded by the oceans, the Arabian Sea in the west, the Indian Ocean in the south and Bay of Bengal in the east, spotted also by islands like the Andaman and Nicobar and the

Lakshadweep besides the neighbouring country viz., Ceylon. We do have the Great India Desert, the rich mangrove system like that of the Sunderbans and also a long coast line with a variety of habitats. Apart from all these are the languages which is considered to have a common origin in Sanskrit. The above scenario provide a complex spectra of diversity almost like a zig-zag puzzle, but united by an orderly administrative system.

In economic terms agriculture is primary, industry is secondary and other areas tertiary in importance. In fact, India had an agricultural economy and the thrust to a sudden change to industrial economy seems to have done more harm than good although a slow change would have been immensely beneficial. In the field of agriculture, India has achieved self sufficiency in food, thanks to the green revolution and even the white revolution and many other seen or unseen micro revolutions. Among these, the role of Science and Technology has been significant but under evaluated.

i. Agriculture:

agriculture is generally understood as the practice of growing food crops among which wheat, rice and pulses are the most significant in terms of nutrition to the humans. Out of over 2 lakhs of flowering plants so far reported, only a small number of over a hundred species have come into active cultivation, although the primitive communities like the tribals still can provide as the direction for bringing many other plants into cultivation. In addition, there is growing understanding of the importance of wild relatives of crop plants, and also the interactive symbiotic, sociological relationship between a variety of life forms living in an ecosystem. For example, the production of the lack through the interaction of the insect on the root of Butea fronds which in turn are commonly planted as a fence tree in rice fields in some parts of Madhya Pradesh may be cited. In fact, agriculture as a mono crop is giving way to a multi crop system and even an agroforestry system in consideration of the growing understanding of the value and need of intercropping in conformity with the reducing pattern of land holdings for meeting the needs of man in food, clothing, shelter and other needs.

ii. Forestry

Associated as almost with agriculture is forestry sector which perhaps has a multidimensional environmental relevance. India, as mentioned earlier has the distinction of variety of biodiversity of genes in conformity with the physical and climatic differences from the equator to the temperate Himalayas. As in the rest of the

world, the tropics form the cradle of rich biodiversity by virtue of the rain forest, and That desert of Rajasthan is perhaps the brownest spot of the country with least degree of visible biodiversity. The Himalayas has a different greenery as compared to Western ghats evidently due to the species content in either. The forests at the border of Eastern Himalayas and china is even considered to be the centre of origin of angiosperms or at least a few of them.

the forests are the provider of a large number of human needs and hence the need for preservation. Being the easiest available green belt of plants of economic utility and even biomass, the forest is the victim of plunder with the result that world over the area under the coverage of forest have been reduced to pockets of original vegetation. Apart from the major reservoir of wood, the forest is perhaps the richest seen or unseen area of herbals. Throughout history the green remedies have been a way of life, thr resources and technology having genesis in microecosystems. In the context of India with perhaps one of the largest diversities of the human kind, the indigenous approach in health care system ought to have been and still have a few like Ayurveda, siddha and nani. In spite of a long history of medical systems, India still is far from a managed, regulated management system for the cultivation and culture of the herbal medicine. This certainly is a field of very great concern not only in health care but also for the protection, preservation and perennation of our rich heritage.

iii. Other sectors

An area of major environment concern is population growth and taking Kerala as a model, the problem has been contained considerable. In fact it is even known as a land of grace because of the high decrease of child mortality, and containment of population growth. However, in other parts of the country there are large tracts of villages which have yet to get the benefit of environmental awareness and to promote community participation in saving the environment for themselves.

A small part of the country is all what is urbanised which promoted migration from the villages to the towns and cities accompanying which were problems particularly of water, air and shelter, least to say proper occupations. The urban problems by its concentration of people have almost outgrown those of other problems with the result that there is total chaos and complexity every where.

The industrial sector is another area of concern not so much in India as compared to western countries. The problem of pollution form a

variety of sources, the predicted climatic changes due to ozone depletion, physical changes due to developmental activities natural disasters like floods, earth quakes, canons (not in India), oil spills in seas, land slides, erosion, etc. have all become almost every man's information, and needs no narration. But man made disasters like the one of Bhopal, the unperceived hazards caused to water bodies through a variety of sources of pollution,, sewage, garbage, silt, gaseous depositions etc., are the ones with needs better management for improving human life.

Concluding remarks

The problems are many, the solutions are also available because of the fast developing technological revolutions in the improvement of the environment. The greatest need of the hour is the protection and conservation of biodiversity on account of the fact that it is a non renewable resource. Among the various methods of saving biodiversity and conservation of the precious life resources, the approach is multidirectional, economic, political, social and scientific. Instead of destroying what we have, we should make intensive exploration for discovering what we do not have discovered so far, as what is not discovered could prove to be more important than what we have already discovered. similarly, leaving aside narrow political considerations, the intellectual property rights should not become a rigid dictum and knowledge should be available to all and technology should e available to all for appropriate applications for appropriate needs.

In fact a to tap appraisal of the problem needs and potential for technological applications, environment complimenting with development has yet to emerge and such an approach ought to be a people's saga of sacrifice and feeling of oneness of the human race. There is abundant resources around us still available which we should conserve and preserve for the posterity at the same time as laying new foundation for a redeemable future. The Indian context is perhaps the best example for demonstrating the value of a unified approach and concerted efforts combining political, social and science-technological systems from micro to mega levels for the rest of the world to imitate. Problems have yet to be properly identified, priorities for action to be fixed and methodology for action to be evolved and strategies for implementation are to be formulated so aa to conserve, preserve and reserve our resources for sustainable growth of the human environment in our country

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