

## **ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS: A NEED OF NATURE**

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**Abstract:** *As a matter of fact, a clean environment is essential for human being. We live in the environment and utilize the environmental resources like air, land and water to meet our needs. Development also signifies 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. 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. The environmental degradation poses a great danger to man's own survival. It should be realized, sooner than later, that conservation and improvement of the environment are vital for the survival, and well being of mankind. Keeping in mind these facts, try to discuss about environmental awareness in the paper.*

**Keywords:** Pollution, Environment, Greenhouse gas, Media, Environmental awareness.

### **Identified Environmental Problem**

We notice that there are number of problems identified which affect the environment and make it unhealthy. Land, water, air etc are major area of it. 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. Urbanization is also one of the sources of pollution. 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. The 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.

### **Efforts for Environmental Awareness**

Environmental awareness has become an issue at International level and all major organization and countries are working on that. In India, the environmental awareness gained importance since 1970s after the UN sponsored conference on environment in Stockholm (1972). Indian government took many environment friendly activities. Ministry of environment and forest was established and laws were enacted on environment protection in 1986.

For 25-30 years 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. We all have to aware about environment and try to clean it properly. 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. Environmental Brigades, Afforestation Brigades and Ecological task Force have been organized by Non-government organizations (NGOs.) India's wild life conservation projects have met with remarkable success. India has a protected network of 75 national parks and 421 wild life sanctuaries. The Tiger project has been a great success. India also has an elaborate laws relating to the prevention of pollution of water, soil and air and a system of environmental audit of most industrial projects. While this is voluntary for most countries, India has a mandatory rule in this regard. India is also engaged in serious and systematic efforts to develop alternative and renewable sources of energy like solar, wind and wave energy which are environment friendly. Emphasis is laid on solar energy on which some significant technological progress has been made. India is taking all these measures partially with international assistance.

### **Environmental Awareness through Education**

All the countries are facing serious environmental problems. While some of the problems might be alike due to their global nature, others are specifically local ones. Action can be taken in a variety of areas to increase environmental awareness and education. Some of these categories are: environmental legal rights and responsibilities and associated consequences, use of the media, awareness raising campaigns, incorporation of environmental issues in mainstream education, increasing awareness and education in target groups and encouragement of public participation in environmental matters. As the following case studies illustrate, many sectors of society are involved in developing and delivering educational courses and public awareness campaigns. These include Government institutions at the national, regional, and local levels; domestic and international NGOs; primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools; journalists and the media; celebrities; and other individuals and institutions.

Moreover, educational and awareness efforts can target practically any sector of society. They can seek to raise public awareness broadly on environmental issues or they may be a targeted campaign or educational effort focused on a specific sector on a specific issue. Funding for awareness and education initiatives may come from a variety of sources. Often, it comes from the budgets of specific agencies or Ministries; it is uncommon for such initiatives to receive funding directly from the central budget. Some States have accessed their national Environment Funds to provide partial funding for environmental awareness and education. Environmental education and awareness raising can include any of the following types of activities:

- Reorienting current education and awareness programs to include environmental dimensions
- Basic education and awareness programmes
- Adult and community education and awareness programmes
- Education, training, and awareness programmes for professional, technical, and vocational personnel.

A new approach to address environmental issues at school is the Eco-club scheme that aims to bring NGO's more closely to the school system. It has been introduced in 2001 and up to now a coverage of 100 high schools chosen by the district administration in each of India's 559 districts has been realized (a coverage of 100 high schools per district results in a coverage of all high schools in 40% of the districts). Further expansion is planned. The most important difference to normal classes on environment is the project manner Eco-club scheme uses to address environmental issues. These projects that are suggested by the Ministry of Environment and Forests tackle a wide range of topics, the schools can choose on their own which campaigns they want to launch: The projects range from campaigns like "Say no to plastic bags", against the use of crackers at Deewali or campaigns promoting the use of natural colors at Holi to efforts in creating a green and clean surrounding of the school by collecting waste and planting trees and flowers. In addition to that, projects on how to save energy and offering information on renewable energies have been launched. Most of the projects urge the children to deal with environmental issues they are confronted with in their everyday life and give concrete suggestions how to behave in an environmentally friendly way. The idea of the Ministry is that among the younger part of the population awareness of environmental problems is quite high, but this awareness will only result in a environmentally beneficial behavior if the students are told how to react. The campaigns mentioned above are fostered by special competitions organized by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, e.g. poster painting, essay writing or debates. The winners receive money prizes additionally to the small annual amount of financial aid (4000 rupees) every Eco-club is granted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests. The publicity of events like these and the role of children as multipliers in their families and neighborhoods enhances the effectiveness of Eco-clubs and extends it to groups different from schoolchildren.

Eco-clubs usually meet once or twice per week under the guidance of a teacher. Especially considering the lack of education of teachers on how to teach environmental issues, it has to be appreciated that Eco-club teachers are not only offered special literature, but also further training in the form of workshops organized by the Ministry in close cooperation with NGOs. Although participation in Eco-club activities is voluntary, the number of students involved in Eco-club activities is usually ranging around 100 to 150 and by this, even exceeds the target figure of the Ministry of Environment & Forests of 50 students per Eco-club. Furthermore, Eco-club teachers who are selected by the criterion of personal interest in ecological issues by the school's principal reported great commitment of students to Eco-club related activities. In addition to the introduction of EVS and Eco-club scheme, the Ministry evaluated all textbooks used in 8th to 10th grade in nine Indian states to figure out their content of environmental issues. This project sponsored by the World Bank aims at rewriting textbooks to enhance the coverage of environmental issues in subjects like languages and social studies.

Environmental Education is a process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and added tools necessary to understand and appreciate the inter-relationship among man, his culture and his bio-physical surrounding. It creates an overall perspective, which acknowledges the fact that natural environment and man-made environment are interdependent. The perspective should consider the environment in its totality and should be a continuous lifelong process beginning at the pre-school level and continuing through all stages. The environmental education should be inter-disciplinary and examine major environmental issues from local, national and international points of view. It should utilize various educational approaches to teach and learn about and from the environment with stress on practical activities and first-hand experience. It is through this process of education that people can be sensitized about the environmental issues. NCERT in India has been playing a crucial role in developing the curriculum of environmental education. It has pointed out that good environmental education at school stage of education is not transformation of information and knowledge but it is all about developing environmental sensitivity and awareness by going out in nature and integrating outdoor knowledge with classroom environment.

### **Environmental Awareness through Media**

The print, broadcast, and Internet media can be a powerful ally in educating the public on environmental matters. In order to perform this role effectively, it is often necessary for the Government to work with the media. This is often done informally, through regular briefings and information centers. Some States have found that educating the media can be quite effective in building capacity to report on environmental matters. The case study from Bulgaria is but one example of how the Government has worked closely with the mass media to build its environmental reporting capacity through regular press conferences and large public awareness campaigns. Capacity building efforts can provide journalists with basic environmental information on a specific topic or general environmental information. Information centers that are accessible to the media and to the public constitute one approach. These centers may be run by a governmental agency or Ministry or by an NGO. An information centre may disseminate recent information, have a public library with a range of environmental resources, and actively disseminate information.

### **Conclusion**

Awareness campaigns are often most successful when they are targeted at specific groups because information can be tailored to the activities, needs and challenges of the group. Additionally, involving organizations and communities in environmental protection and enforcement can create a sense of stewardship towards the environment, ease hardship through the collaboration and provide a forum for new ideas and greater participation. Examples of such collaboration and stewardship are provided in the initiatives of some NGOs and organizations in the private sectors in States around the world. They have been active in raising public awareness of environment development issues and mobilized people to take actions that have contributed to positive changes for the environment.

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