

Environment and Sustainable Living

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INTRODUCTION

Also called as nature, environment is the summation of both living and non living elements that directly or indirectly affect human life. Living things include plants, animals, forests, birds and sea fisheries. Non living things include sun, water, land, air, soil etc.

FUNCTIONS

We human beings and also animals are totally dependent on environment for all our needs. Environment is the supplier of natural resources both renewable sources like hydro, solar, wind, tidal energy and non-renewable sources like fossil fuels (coal, natural gas etc).

There are 9 planets in the Solar System yet life exists on one. This is due to the lack of environment on their surfaces. Environment is also responsible for waste management of all the trash thrown and the pollution produced by human beings, through safe absorption (including breaking down the waste, storing it and recycling it). Hence environment is also referred to as the “sink” of the Earth.

Environment helps preserve biodiversity and our ecosystem. The environment of the entire planet is not uniform wrt topography, type of soil, climate etc. This thus influences the type of vegetation, plants, animals and birds that thrive there.

Another important function of environment is the spiritual aspect it provides us with. It also enables us to observe the environment from a recreational, aesthetical aspect. It helps us to escape from our daily mundane and hectic lives and helps to destress ourselves in the lap of nature. This leisure time thus spent helps improve family bonds. This in turn alleviates psychological tension and negative thoughts.

PROBLEMS

The Western countries include those in Europe and America have been an example of over consumption of resources for over many years. Now with the rise of developing countries, the environment is being largely compromised with -in the name of development and expansion. This consumerism has not only lead to erosion of the environment, it also has led the poor side-lined by posing a threat to global food security. Human beings not only destroy the environment by cutting trees indiscriminately, also called deforestation, but also by over population which in turn leads to pollution and mass burning of forests for agriculture and human settlement.

Shortage of water, air pollution causing lung cancer, melting of snow cap mountains, global warming are some of the most visible effects of environment in the current scenario.

The pollution in the air is caused by CO₂ released by vehicles and waste generated by industries in the form of smoke which is released from factories.

Due to expansion of cities and human life, we have led to animals losing their natural habitat and hence becoming extinct or endangered.

Ozone layer is getting depleted by the massive use of pesticides, refrigerators, air conditioners etc. The gas emitted by these electrical appliances/substances causes holes in the protective ozone layer and thus the harmful sun rays penetrate through these perforations. Exposure to these UV rays causes diseases like skin cancer in human beings- the cure for which scientists still are unable to develop.

SOLUTIONS

As humans are getting conscious about the effects of environment, more young and aware youngsters are actively participating in various plantation/environment related activities. We should take inspiration from such people.

We should slowly but steadily stop the use of plastic for shopping/carrying items. We must understand the value of trees and make sure we do not encourage cutting of trees. We should plant trees in our neighbourhood and make it an activity involving more people hence actively encouraging the community to lend a hand too. We must save water by getting all dripping taps and leakages repaired. Also, we must shut the tap while brushing or washing hands. The industrial waste/residue should be regulated before being discharged in air or in water following government regulations.

This will help curb the emission of Carbon dioxide. We should try to use public transport/carpooling as often as we can. We must try to never litter our surroundings/ while traveling or anywhere else. This accumulates as heaps of garbage that are difficult to be recycled or managed as waste. Rising mountains of garbage has become a menace in Leh. The beautiful place doesn't have the capacity to manage nearly 20 tonnes of waste per day. Most of the waste thrown by tourists doesn't get decomposed. Animals should be protected in their natural environment by preserving their habitat. We should discourage consumerism and adapt a lifestyle that practices recycling and reuse of old clothes/materials. We should make sure that we don't make luxury a necessity.

We should encourage our children to learn about the environment and how we should protect it. World environment Day is celebrated every 5th June to make organizations and people know environment safe practices better. We must reduce the usage of AC in summer. This will not only help keep ozone layer intact but also will reduce our electricity bill. We can reduce our daily waste that includes vegetable/fruit peel by making compost out of it. Every time we peel them, we can put the food waste into a bag that will turn into nutrient rich garden compost that we could use back in our garden as its food.

Lets understand that every effort counts. We must start at home and practice these small yet significant ways to help protect our flora and fauna including our family.

As Mahathma Gandhi, our father of the nation has rightly said "Earth has enough to satisfy every man's need but not every man's greed", we must understand and realise that sacrificing the environment for the "greater good" of the society will have its hazardous and enormous effect in time to come. And that time has come already.