



Environmental Awareness: - Nature beacons us

“Earth provides enough for every man’s needs, but not for every man’s greed” - Mahatma Gandhi

From the aeon our forefathers lived harmoniously with nature. They loved and died in nature. Following the evolution theory, we know that our past was very much interwoven with nature where nature provided everything a man needed to survive. Man did worship nature because nature was considered as the ultimate reality that sustained life and if required it destroyed life too.

Environment has been a burning issue today. Whole world is concerned to protect the environment. The issue has affected even the policies and international agreements to a great extent. Recent international steps like sustainable development goals, Paris Climate Change Conference, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change, promulgation of the National Disaster Management Plan, 2016 etc... have ushered in awareness to the world about the need of the environment conservation and strict regulations to preserve the degradation of the environment. There was development and even new discoveries at that time. For us, development is at the cost of the environment. Today we hear of air and water being polluted, birds and animals vanishing from environment, living organism suffering from contamination and unheard viruses. Day to day news on environment warns mankind to protect environment, combat climate change, save earth etc. Government also has come out with schemes and legislations for the same, i.e. to warn humanity to mend their ways and save the environment. Go green policies, Swachha Bharat Mission, carbon control, odd-even policy, ban on plastics and many other such regulations are being imposed on people to protect the earth, the only planet where life thrives.

There have been many conferences, protocols and summits to discuss on how to save environment. The recent world climate summit in Paris, which was the 21st Conference of Parties (COP-21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), marked a major milestone in the efforts of the global community to combat climate change. The 12-day summit of 195 member-states held from November 30 to December 11 set the direction, after 2020, for a world faced with a warming climate, which is already having an adverse impact around the world in various forms, and a looming threat of a global temperature increase of over 2 °C by 2100. The threat is not only on the environment, but on the very existence of humanity too. Hence, Maurice Maeterlinck, in his book “The Life of the Bee” writes “if the bee disappeared off the face of the earth, men would have only four years left on earth to live”. (Maurice, 45-63)

It requires strong awareness and change in human life style where man should go back to the nature and live in accordance with the nature. India has been growing at an average GDP growth rate of 8.025 per cent for the last eight years (Ministry of Finance, 2013). The cities, in particular, have grown at rapid rates according to the Census of India 2011. The urban population increased from 286.1 million in 2001 to 377.1 million in 2011, at an average annual growth rate of 2.76 per cent. Rapid urbanization has resulted in environmental degradation caused by increased pressures on the limited land available, leading to reduced open spaces, increased air and water pollution, and problems of waste disposal and its management.

Environment has been intrinsic to our tradition and culture much before we developed writing. It's only in the past decade or two that environmental literature has become a main stream. There is a growing need to protect and preserve the environment. With the emergence of science and technology there is a gradual depletion of environmental resources. It is often taken for granted that natural resources are to be exploited for sound economy. The issues like rampant sand mining, ever increasing greenhouse gases, gradual depletion of the ozone layer, spread of epidemics, unheard diseases, e-waste dumping, devastating incidents, etc. have alerted humans against environmental hazards and disasters. Man who looks for economic growth only and not ecology conversion is the main cause behind environmental hazards.

The rise of the concepts like go green, green policy, environment market, carbon trading, etc., have been entering human day today life. There is a growing need to curb environmental exploitation as it has reached the saturation point. In the ancient times, man lived in the nature and nature did never let him sleep hungry. Man learned from nature to live and love and thenceforth literatures and cultures emerged from the womb of environment. The same man is destroying the nature that nurtured him. The recent observations have warned that the danger is lurking near us. Thus, there is a strong need for an eco-friendly attitude and environmental awareness. Moreover we know the dictum, "A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people." – Franklin D. Roosevelt

In this global wake, it is befitting to research the literature where the authors have age's hence envisaged humanity to preserve and protect the environment. Analyzing the history of existence we find three major aspects. They are:-

1. Man always existed within some natural environment.
2. Man feels lost in this hustle and bustle of the world.
3. Man is always in search of his true self, identity and peace which he finds in Nature

The first is concerned with man's interconnectedness to nature. And the second results from the fact that the man feels vitally threatened in the ecologically degraded world. Eventually man goes in search of his true self and wanders in the nature. Human beings lack roots; hence they quest is in the ecosystem where they belong.

Environmental protection is a part of our cultural values and tradition. In Atharva Veda, it is said that "Man's paradise is on earth; this living world is the beloved place of all; it has the blessings of nature's bounties; live in a lovely spirit". Earth is our paradise and it is our duty to protect our paradise.

Many poets and writers have depicted the beauty of nature vis-à-vis the wrath of nature. The constitution of India embodies the framework of protection and preservation of nature without which life cannot be enjoyed. Indian constitution clearly imposes duty on every citizen to protect environment. Article 51-A (g), says that “It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forest, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures.”

Various climate related changes pose additional stresses. In this situation humanity should think not only about development and comforts but also of survival and protection of environment. It is rightly said “protect environment and environment will protect you”. A poet, Sylvia Stults warns us by her poem titled Warned to protect environment. She writes:-

Protect what has been given for free
Our waters, skies, wildlife and trees
For once they're gone, don't you say
Consider yourself warned of that fatal day. (Warned, Sylvia Stults, 2015)

Today, due to heavy industrialization, carbon emission, pollutions, etc., the environment has become a burning issue. The recent reports revealed that internet videos and associated cloud services, information and communication technologies, aviation industries etc. have a major role in the emission of carbon dioxide that are detrimental to human health. It seems that it's the right time to burn the candle at both ends to save humanity by protecting the environment.

Changing the world is easier said than done but its duty of mankind to undo the harm done to an ecosystem. There is a need to just toss around an idea to all who are eco-sensitive and wants to do something for the universe. It's time to draw the line to age long exploitations of resources and kick start a new era of eco-friendly and sustainable environmental practices. If we want to preserve the nature, we need to love the world as our own. Environmental knowledge is not enough for inculcating a sense of respect and responsibility, love and empathy are more important when it comes to preserving the environment.

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