

LIVING AN ENVIRONMENT FRIENDLY LIFE

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Abstract

*Our environment is constantly changing. However, as our environment changes, so does the need to become increasingly aware of the problems that surround it. With a massive influx of natural disasters, warming and cooling periods, different types of weather patterns and much more, people need to be aware of what types of environmental problems our planet is facing. Our planet is poised at the brink of a severe environmental crisis. Current environmental problems make us vulnerable to disasters and tragedies, now and in the future. We are in a state of planetary emergency, with environmental problems piling up high around us. Unless we address the various issues prudently and seriously we are surely doomed for disaster. The paper reports a research study that was conducted to find out the general opinion of the public about the environment preservation and self initiatives for mitigating the problems. It was found that the people are aware about the environmental issues and agree that humans are responsible for environmental problems but the initiatives need to be taken on a personal level. Only awareness is not enough action has to be taken. The action can be taken by consciously following the 5rs guidelines for achieving environmental sustainability. These 5 r's are only the initials of some words that determine actions to mitigate our impacts: **5rs - recycle, reuse, reduce, refuse and rethink***

INTRODUCTION

The future progress of man rests upon his ability to apply the achievements of science to the betterment of mankind. This being the case, it is of utmost importance that our youth be thoroughly educated in the principles of environmental studies so that they may be properly understand and contribute to the process of national progress.

Today man has entered space, landed on the Mars, launched satellites, established space stations, laboratories and is experimenting with star wars. He has harnessed nuclear energy, exploded atom bombs and destroyed part of his own family homo sapiens. Man's first appearance was no less than a miracle and then as he gained consciousness from cave dwelling, fishing, hunting or herding, he made strides through agricultural and industrial revolutions, moved cities and metropolises. In this process, he has built skyscrapers, put up huge plants, gigantic dams and factories and even produced test-tube babies. But with these advancements, man has also accumulated stockpiles of hydrogen and neutron bombs and can destroy him and Mother Earth by just pressing a button. In fact, man has become a threat to nature. Gandhiji has rightly said "The earth has everything man needs; only it cannot satisfy his greed." For his own comfort and material gain man has been exploiting nature mercilessly.

Those who have gone to the Shivalik Hills and noticed the bare treeless bleeding surfaces of the slopes which once sported thick vegetation know how far we have gone in destroying our best treasure. Add to the dissimilation of forest the pollution of the air around chimneys, which shoot out into the sky, providing outlets air around. Reports indicate how Taj Mahal is losing its shine and appeal due to acid rains. It is not merely the Taj Mahal which is threatened, but chemical wastes, belched out by the chimneys into the air, have already enveloped Delhi and Mumbai as also several other cities in poison packs. The danger continues to increase at a fast pace. Environment is thus under siege. It is time we ponder over whether man should survive, accommodating to the limits of nature or perish, by destroying nature and its ability to sustain life. Of late there has been an appreciable spread of Environmental Awareness among the people. In 1973, in the hill district of Chamoli, Uttar Pradesh, for instance, the village people started the "Chipko

Movement “for protection of forests. The movement is preventing the felling of trees in some areas and in others it is engaged in reforestation. People involved in this movement would cling to a tree if someone comes to cut it.

In the present world scenario we often come across various news regarding environmental disasters. The increasing awareness regarding man environment relationships and the realization about the effects of human induced changes has made it necessary that all of us who live on this planet need to understand importance of our environment.

There are rallies, there are special efforts being made with reference to creating awareness and programmes related to the preservation and conservation of the environment directly through introduction of the subject in schools and colleges or by initiatives by the government like banning of plastics and the Swacch Bharat Abhiyaan. Hefty fines for pollution of environment etc. This will be successful only if the attitude of the people is positive and they are not selfish and greedy. They think for the environment and curb their needs even if they can afford luxuries.

A research study was undertaken to find out the general opinion of the educated people regarding the environment. What they feel about the environment and the initiatives that can be taken at a personal level. An opinionaire was developed for this purpose.

The tool in the form of 5 point rating scale was given to the experts for the content validity and as per their suggestions, was further modified. The total items to be rated were 16.. The developed tool was administered to the people (sample size being 100) from Mumbai . The data collected was analyzed by calculating the percentage of people agreeing or disagreeing or neutral (Cant say) on each item. The findings are shown in the following table: (opinions of Strongly agree and Agree as well as Strongly disagree and disagree were clubbed together while calculating the percentage since the purpose was to just check their opinion in general)

Sr. No	Statement	Response		
		AGRE ED	CS	DISAGR EED
1	Humans are meant to rule over all of nature	15	14	71
2	We can afford to lose some of the world's biodiversity	17	10	73
3	The environment is a low priority for me compared with a lot of other things	08	12	80
4	The effects of climate change are too far in the future to really worry	30	03	67
5	Climate change is beyond our control- it's too late to do anything about it	16	19	65
6	I don't believe my behaviour and everyday lifestyle contribute to climate change	18	21	61
7	If things continue on their current course, we will soon experience a major environmental disaster	76	5	19
8	The so-called 'environmental crisis' facing humanity has been greatly exaggerated	30	20	50
9	Humans are severely abusing the environment	81	8	11
10	I sometimes feel guilty about doing things that harm the environment	75	15	10
11	People have a duty to recycle	78	11	09
12	It's only worth doing environmentally-friendly things if they save you money	25	20	55
13	It takes too much effort to do things that are environmentally friendly	19	22	59

14	Being green is an alternative lifestyle; it's not for the majority	23	16	58
15	I don't pay much attention to the amount of water I use at home	17	12	71
16	I find it hard to change my habits to be more environmentally-friendly	18	16	65

Interpretation:

As shown in the table above the following pattern of students' opinion is seen: Most of the Respondents felt that looking after the environment is necessary and their opinion was favourable towards the environment preservation and conservation. The respondents opined that Humans are not meant to rule over the environment and environment is not a low priority anymore. They opined that if things related to the environmental degradation continued there is going to be a major environmental disaster. Many felt guilty for their own behaviour. The respondents also felt that changing habits to become more environmental friendly was not difficult and efforts could be made for the same. It was also agreed that humans in general are abusing the environment.

Discussion:

In general the people are concerned about the environment and know about the cons of damaging the environment but this opinion remains an opinion. Special efforts need to be made to preserve and conserve the environment by making small changes in the lifestyle. In the urban areas though we find educated youth and people who understand the issues and effects on the environment due to Human activity do not make special efforts in this regard. Using a lot of disposable stuff, wastage of water, buying the unnecessary things which are not used and just stuffed in the house, running after status

by avoiding public transport etc. are few of the things which are a threat to the environment. Thus special efforts by oneself have to be made in this regard.

Conclusion

Our environment is constantly changing. However, as our environment changes, so does the need to become increasingly aware of the problems that surround it. With a massive influx of natural disasters, warming and cooling periods, different types of weather patterns and much more, people need to be aware of what types of environmental problems our planet is facing. Our planet is poised at the brink of a severe environmental crisis. Current environmental problems make us vulnerable to disasters and tragedies, now and in the future. We are in a state of planetary emergency, with environmental problems piling up high around us. Unless we address the various issues prudently and seriously we are surely doomed for disaster.

We can use the 5 R's as guidelines for achieving Environmental Sustainability. These 5 R's are only the initials of some words that determine actions to mitigate our impacts: **5Rs**

- Recycle, Reuse, Reduce, Refuse and Rethink

-RECYCLE

It is transforming materials already used in raw materials for others or the same product. We can make the separation of our waste for recycling encouraging this action. Consciously separate the dry waste and the wet waste to help recycle the dry waste and the wet can be used for composting.

- REUSE

It is a way to avoid going to waste what can be reused in the same or for other functions. By reusing materials that would be discarded, the life of this material and also the place where it would be discarded can be increased

REDUCE

It is to avoid waste and to consume less products that attack the environment. Consuming less is great for nature. One must not spend as much money on clothes and electronics as you will use. Think twice before buying something: Ask our self -Is it really necessary? Do I need it ?

- REFUSE

It is to refute the possibility of unnecessary consumption and products that generate significant environmental impacts and that pollute our atmosphere, tides and waters. Avoid the use of plastic bags and packaging. Always have a cloth bag to carry for shopping.

- RETHINK

Regarding the need to consume and the patterns of production and disposal adopted in our lives. We must ask ourselves: How is this produced? Why should I consume something unnecessary? Where does my waste go when you leave my gate? Does it stop being a problem? These and other questions can lead us to actions that improve the quality of life for all. We must rethink how our beaches, rivers, forests and groundwater will be. Our lives depend on the balance of our Environment and for that, **we could follow some R's in our daily lives**

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