

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION THROUGH UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

**Dr. Sharmila Bhausaheb Paradhe,  
V. P. S. College of Education  
Kedgaon, Devi Road, Ahmednagar.**

One of the most important factor in achieving rapid development and technological progress is through Education. Cultural development and national integration are more easily achieved by educating the masses. Education is a human right, Literacy provides access to knowledge, development of skills and there by brings about the awareness of rights and responsibilities in every individual and the community as a whole.

Government's investment on education have increased from 153 crores in the First Five-year Plan to Rs. 1955 crores in the Sixth Five-Year Plan. The investment on education as a percentage of GNP in our country in 2.6 Approximately 22 per cent of the total Government investment on education goes to higher education. However, the standard of education differs from State to State and from University to University. It is felt that the standard of education is falling from day to day. In India education is imparted primarily through two ways.

1. Formal education ; through School, Colleges, universities, technical institutes etc.
2. Non-Formal education; through extension services of colleges, state Governments, voluntary organization etc.

### **Environmental Education**

With the rapid increase in the human population and industrialization we have not focused our awareness on environment with the result our environmental conditions are severely undergoing a decline leading to ecological imbalance. So long as the pressure of population was limited, it did not have serious consequences on the environment and ecology as a whole. The growing pressure of population is resulting into a serious environmental disequilibrium. It is largely due to the human intervention in the functioning of nature. Several examples could be cited of human intervention in destroying the ecosystem for his survival. I do not wish to go into details. However, I would limit my paper to some of such problems pertaining to North-Eastern Region.

The economy of the hill people of the North-Eastern Region is primarily based on agriculture with shifting cultivation the main occupation of the bulk of the people in the hill areas. Shifting cultivation is also known as slash and burn agriculture or jhuming. In shifting cultivation a portion

of the forest land is cleared by burning and used for cultivation for a period of one year or one season. Shifting cultivation is an age-old practice in the hill region of North-Eastern region. When the pressure of the population was limited the cycle of shifting cultivation was 20-30 years and did not have any serious consequences on the environmental equilibrium. With the increase in the pressure of the population the cycle of shifting cultivation has been reduced to 2 to 3 years leading to serious environmental disequilibrium, indiscriminate destruction of forests, siltation in rivers due to soil erosion, decline in production and other associated problems. Another example of environmental degradation in our region is the exploitation of forests in a variety of ways. As a result India's per capita forest has come down to 0.109 hectares against world average of 1.0 hectares.

Every since the existence of man on the planet, earth he has been exploiting the environment for his survival with the impression that he is providing better environment for him and his community not realizing the adverse ill effects of the same. For instance the establishment of an industry in a town, the industrial wastes of the industry are deposited in the nearby river which is also the source of water for human consumption and irrigation.

Thus the industry becomes a source of hazard to man and his crops. Treatment of industrial waste before it comes in contact with the water of the river should have been the normal course of action. However, our planners have overlooked such aspects of the growing industrialization. This has led to ecological disequilibrium.

One of the ways to prevent this ongoing environmental disequilibrium is to bring awareness of the same on masses. Man as an individual and community as a whole must be cautioned about the possible ill effects of the disturbance caused in our eco-system. The awareness must be brought at all levels particularly at grass root level through several voluntary as well as government organizations. Universities and colleges must play a leading role in disseminating this message to the masses.

The tragedy of modern man is that he has forgotten the ancient wisdom bequeathed to him. Man is part of nature and nature is an organised integrated whole. There is no need to evoke Aristotelian teleology that there is a purpose in nature different parts of it are well designed to fulfill that purpose. As a matter of fact, a cursory glance at the environment reveals the fact, as if different parts of nature are organically related. In other words, there is a homeostatic-balance available in nature. To illustrate it one can say that the increase in deer population leads to damage of standing crops in the field. The presence thereby bring about a balance. Similarly increase in rodent

population is kept to minimum by snakes and thereby a balance is maintained.

In different cultures of the world, the tree and plant worship has been enjoined on man. Till today we come across people in different parts of the globe who offer worship to trees. It clearly indicates that realization by our ancients that plant kingdom as well as the animal kingdom play a vital role in preserving the eco-system of which human kingdom is a tiny part. Unfortunately this traditional wisdom has been lost sight of. It is the crying need of the hour to propagate to the masses the importance of plant and animal life for the reservation of the hominids. For the last one hundred years throughout the world the motto has been to manipulate and exploit nature. Ultimately resulting in wanton destruction of plant and animal kingdom, thereby

Greatly affecting the bio-sphere. The objective of education is not only to create skilled technicians, scientists and technocrats but to impart to the masses a clear sense of awareness about the environment. Aim of education is not only to preserve the culture of a particular group but to preserve the eco-system at large. Extinction of eco-system includes extinction of human life.

Informal education is the best suitable medium to propagate this wisdom and educate the masses. Fortunately, international agencies have worked up to the situation. We submit to propose that environmental education should be an integral part of education at all levels. The motto should be “to preserve man, preserve eco-system; save eco-system, save man” and thereby ensure the future of human progeny.

### Conclusion

In our view the environmental education should not be exclusively a part of formal education as formal education remains limited to a very few people in our society. Considering the urgency of creating awareness about our environment it would be extremely good if the centers for continuing and adult education in different universities take upon themselves the task of bringing about this awareness through their programme of mass contacts.

### Reference

1. Desh Bandhu, “Environmental Management”, Indian Environmental Society, 1981.
2. Sharma, R.C. “Environmental Education” Metropolitan Book Co.
3. Bacon, E.N. (1961). “Downtown Philadelphia; A lesson in Design for Urban Growth.” Architectural Record, 129
4. Bacon, E.N. (1963). “Urban Design as a Force in comprehensive Planning”. Journal of American Institute of Planners, 29: 1, p. 2-8

5. Barlyne, D.E. (1969) “Measures of Aesthetic Preference” in James Hogg(Ed.) IPsychology and the Visual Arts Selected Readings.” Harmondeworth, Penguin Books.
6. Dosiadis, C.A. (1960) . “Dynapolis” Athens, Doxiadis Associates
7. Papers in Environmental Education - S.C. Bhatia  
Cambridge, Houghton Mifflin & the Riverside Press.
8. Lynch, K. (1963). “The City as an Environment.” Scientific American, 213 :3, p. 209-19.
9. Bhatia, S.C., The Environmental Concern Centre for Adult, Continuing Education and Extension, University of Delhi, 1983.

