



RESEARCH ARTICLE

PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENT: INDIAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEBATE

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ABSTRACT

Progress and pollution go together. The economic growth is essential to combat poverty and deprivation but has exerted considerable pressure on the environmental sustainability. With industrialization, energy consumption has increased, prosperity resulted in building more settlement and using more vehicles, all this deteriorated the environmental quality. The crisis before the world and more particularly before developing nation like India is how to achieve target of economic growth without damaging environment. India's contribution to protection of environments debate is immense.

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INTRODUCTION

The last two centuries triggered of great many changes in the geography of the world. Empire grew and collapsed, population surged, agriculture gave place to industry as the main source of livelihood, technological changes took man to the moon and beyond, fossil fuels became the main source of power, man drifted away from the principle of "simple living and high thinking" to consumerism and unconcern for others. All these have had serious implications for the Earth's natural resources. Today, we are very close to climate change which may wipe out all life from planet Earth, if humanity does not rise equal to the occasions and change its ways.

Protection of Environment

It is universally accepted that protection of environment is a global problem and should be solved globally. Since, Stockholm declaration of June 1972, the world is grappling with the issue of correcting damage caused to environment. Earth summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and Johannesburg in 2002, Kyoto protocol of 1997 or Gleneagle meet of July 2005, all discussed the ways and means of protecting environment. Similarly national governments enacted laws replicating these international declarations. But due to national priorities, moral convictions and compulsions; developed and developing nations have divergent perceptions on environment related issues and found themselves at dragger drawn. For example, the first Earth summit was called to work out a World Schedule for saving the environment, combating the depletion of the ozone layer and reducing "Greenhouse gas

emission". The participants were to adopt an "Earth Charter" to protect the environment in the 21st century, called Agenda: 21. The Southern nations hold the rich nation responsible for environmental mess and questioned about their efforts for controlling greenhouse gas emission and curbing the export of hazardous waste (Roy, 1992). They also look with suspicion on Global Environmental Facility (GEF) set up for cleaning the globe. Because the decision making in GEF rests with developed countries only, a G-15 meeting was called in Geneva in March, 1994 before signing the final act of Uruguay Round in Marrakash. Third world countries cautioned against the attempts of OECD countries to use environmental standards as a means of non-trade barriers.

In a position paper called "WTO: Trade and Environment" presented to GATT Director General, the Third World Network (TWN) states that inclusion in the WTO Agenda of new areas as environment, labor standards and human rights is being sought by the North not for advancing the noble cause of protecting the environment or people's rights but to use them to reduce the competitiveness of the South in its home markets and enlarge the market space of MNCs in the world. The developed countries are imposing their values on less developed nations in the name of biodiversity, the Tuna-Dolphin case (Koul, 2001) and Shrimp-Turtle case are examples of 'eco-imperialism'. It relates to Mexico and India respectively. It is a sort of 'moral militancy' of environmentalists who are imposing trade sanctions unilaterally on other nations, who don't share their values and preferences (Mathur, 2003). Similarly, the developed countries are exporting their industrial waste into poor Southern countries. Instead of reprocessing it at home, they prefer to dump it into less developed countries. India has become a

major dumping ground for such toxic waste. The Basel ban of March 1994 prohibits the trans-border movement of hazardous waste from OECD to non-OECD even for recycling after 1997. India has become a 'Willing Recipient of this toxic waste under the influence of domestic industry who recycles the OECD waste. Climate change is taking place due to global warming caused by the Greenhouse effect Kyoto protocol on climate change required the participating countries to cut back emission to 6.2 per cent of carbon-dioxide of 1990 levels. The USA and Australia refused to ratify Kyoto protocol in 2005 under the influence of 'Short-sighted bizmanship. Poor countries held the rich nations responsible for environmental mess. The rich nations argued that poverty and underdevelopment were greatest source of pollution. G-8 countries account for 47 per cent of world carbon emission but the USA supported studies has held developing countries responsible for environmental devastation. The example of 'Asian Brown Haze' has been given in this regard (Mathur, 2006). The Asian Brown Haze study is controversial. The Chairman of the IPPC Dr. R. K. Pachauri said that it would very well be that these are being generated in North America or even in Europe and traveling all the way. Recently, similar to Asian Brown Haze, pollution cloud has been spotted in other parts of the world also. It has been renamed as 'Atmospheric Brown Cloud' (Menon, 2007). However, the presence of haze has to be researched for the sake of protection of (health and wealth of the people of the world) environment.

Collaboration for Environmental Sustainability

According to World Watch Institute (WWI), Washington D.C, environmental powers such as U.S.A, Russia, Japan, Germany (developed) and China, India, Brazil, Indonesia (developing) must play a pivotal role in determining the quality of the global environment. They must evolve such strategy that harmonize economic, environmental and equity considerations into a synergistic whole essential for the sustainable development of the world.

Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development strives for a perpetually stable resource base and a perpetually stable economic growth. Development should not only be growth oriented, but should be environment friendly, and then only the objective of sustainability will be achieved. The new global focus of power is sustained economic growth. The reckless exploitation of national resources for economic growth is detrimental to environmental sustainability. With economic growth and environmental sustainability, the social dimension of sustainable development is equally important. Mere economic progress is not an end in itself. Beyond the formal growth statistics, what is needed is not only increase in gross national products but also gross national happiness. We need to do justice to subjective and soulful aspect of development.

Traditional Wisdom and Practices

The wisdom of our fore fathers has much to offer in pursuing an environment friendly and sustainable development path. In an Indian folklore, a wise farmer said he placed one-third of

his income in God's feet, other one-third for personal use and last one-third he used to throw in a well. Offering a portion of income to God means paying tribute to ancestors who left this planet Earth ecologically viable for us, other portion of income is for growth and enjoyment for present generation, throwing in well means to pay for conservation of the environment so that the posterity could enjoy the bliss of pollution-free environment. The country of South Asia has capability as well traditional knowledge for preservation of environment. One of the provisions of Kyoto Protocol known as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) establishes a frame work within which the industrialized countries can meet a part of their carbon-dioxide emission requirements by purchasing certified emission reductions (CER) from India and other developing countries. In fact, South Asian countries can also offer to the rest of the world valuable lessons on green practices that are part of their traditions.

Indian Contribution to the Debate

Indian scholars have also profusely contributed to the protection of environment debate. These contributions have emanated from various disciplines. N. S. Jodha's, an economist, Seminal work on the deterioration of rural common property resources (CPR) in arid and semi-arid Rajasthan has informed the international debate on CPR that the privatization of village, commons and incorporation in the market economy, has eroded of traditional community institutions; which through social sanctions regulated sustainable use of village commons like pastures (Jodha, 2002). The study of desiccation of the Luni river has added on to Jodha's hypothesis by exploring the erosion of ecological niches occupied by different caste groups. The acute water crisis in Gujarat caused by over extraction of ground water is the result of the decline of the village community and a corresponding growth of economic Individualism (Aggarwal and Narain, 1997). Similarly, the Chipko movement of Garhwal Himilayas, which emerged in 1970s in response to national economic policies and strict forestry regulations, has been articulated by a number of Indian Environmental Scholars and activists as an emblem of grass root movement with a new ecological consciousness that challenged the traditionalist GEM approaches to development whose pursuit destroyed local ecology and traditional ways of life and have contributed to the populist discourses (Bahuguna, 1987; Dwivedi, 1998; Gadgil and Guha, 1992; Shiva, 1989).

The aforesaid scholars have contributed immensely to demystification of the colonial myth that 'Traditional' is 'Irrational', but the arguments are problematic as well in various ways. The vision of 'organic\ green village community' advanced by Aggarwal and Narain ignores the fact that these communities were not egalitarian entities but differentiated along caste lines (Bavisker, 2007; Hardiman, 2007). Undoubtedly, the circumstances of environmental degradation in any one instance are complex and unique. Therefore, analysis should be able to explain the local conjuncture of physical and social processes as well as provide a clearly understood basis for generalizations about process worldwide. Certain environmental movements and discourses, consciously or unconsciously, have expressed themselves in ways articulating revivalist and nationalist Hinduism. Indian

environmental politics is extremely heterogeneous. This heterogeneity offers hope. However, authoritarian environmentalism and its politics are found in various movements in different forms. At least five principal inference points can be identified: ultra-nationalism, a yearning of brahmanical Hindu religion culture; emphasis on authority, social order discipline; implicit hostility towards Muslims, Dalits and Christians; and a pragmatic politics entailing communalism. In different regional and organizational locations, from Anna Hazare's Ralegan Siddhi to conservation in Virndavan, it is found environmentalism allying with feudal attitudes to instill moral codes, rules and discipline justified as central to the nation. This kind of environmentalism has made huge inroads into popular consciousness and gained a far wider acceptance in India. India's environmental paradigms often render caste and Dalits questions invisible. It needs to be recognized that caste is one of these central categories framing environmental politics. In the past and present, Dalit thinkers have had wider critique of environmental articulations-new ecological studies should also bring fourth not just fresh dimensions about environment and people but also help in redefining their inter-relationships with polity, democracy, justice and modernity (TOI, Feb. 2012).

Conclusion

Ecological and societal problems that confront humanity are complex and difficult to surmount, but just a sustainable development are not all doomed. To quote Ciscero, nature has granted the use of life like a loan without fixing any date for repayment. It means that gift of life is not an absolute right, it is coined with duty: duty to take care of fellow beings and duty to preserve all resource for future generations. Finally, the discourse on protection to environment is endless.

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