

Conservation of Biodiversity through Environment awareness

Biodiversity is the variety of different types of life found on the Earth. Our planet is now in the middle of the sixth mass extinction of species, the worst since the loss of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. Earth's Environment and Climate is undergoing drastic changes recently all driven by unsustainable development activities and natural resources are getting depleted. Scientists estimate we're now losing species at 1,000 to 10,000 times the background rate, with as many as 30 to 50 percent of all species possibly heading toward extinction by mid-century.

Sadly 99 percent of currently threatened species are at risk from human activities. Trends in vertebrate species populations, shows a decline of 52 per cent between 1970 and 2010. Habitat loss and degradation, Climate change and forest fragmentation all driven by human developmental activities are the primary causes of decline. Many of the Earth's ecosystems are at critical points of depletion or irreversible change. It is estimated that by 2050, if current consumption and production patterns remain the same and with a rising population expected to reach 9.6 billion, we will need three planets to sustain our ways of living and consumption.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is an international agreement adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and signed by 193 governments including India. It covers the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity. In 2010, governments gathered in Japan at the 10th Conference of the Parties to CBD and set a new strategy to save nature. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 is a ten-year framework for action by all countries to conserve biodiversity. The Strategic Plan is a set of 20 strategic goals and achievable targets, collectively known as the Aichi Targets. Convention on Biological Diversity has set education and Public awareness as the first Target. Aichi Target 1 states that "By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably". The United Nations also declared 2011- 2020 as the UN decade of Biological Diversity. Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) programmes of the government are an important instrument for meeting this target.

India has updated the National Biodiversity Target accordingly. India's National Biodiversity Target 1 emphasises the role of youth in Biodiversity conservation "By 2020, a significant proportion of the country's population, especially the youth, is aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

Youth comprise nearly 30 per cent of the world's population. Environmental depletion will be an irreplaceable loss to the youth. The involvement of student community in environment protection and development decision-making and in the implementation of programmes for biodiversity conservation is critical. It is recognized that lack of awareness of significance of biodiversity is the biggest barrier to conservation. Today's generation has a special responsibility in relation to the environment. A number of environmental risks and hazards affect young people, as they have to live in a deteriorating environment. Many, especially young children, are particularly vulnerable to environmental risks associated with, for example, access to clean and safe drinking water. It is a matter of shame that each year diarrhoea kills around 760,000 children under five. A significant proportion of diarrhoeal disease can be prevented through safe drinking-water and adequate sanitation and hygiene. Our water bodies have become dumping yards for urban waste. As Achim Steiner, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director, pointed out "The right to a healthy environment should be part of the fundamental rights of every citizen",

Environmental protection, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity will be successful only through the involvement of local communities. Individuals also need to be aware of the types of actions they themselves can take in order to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity. Although individual action may seem small in the face of global threats when billions of children jointly raise their voice for Biodiversity conservation, we can make a tremendous difference. Mass media such as newspapers, radio, television, etc plays an important role to create awareness regarding environmental issues. Environmental awareness emphasise the importance of sustainable development i.e., economic development without degrading the environment. You as tomorrow's leaders should be motivated to take active participation in environmental protection and improvement. Furthermore you should change the perception to a more sustainable way of living, and utilization of natural resources more efficiently. In addition to the intellectual contribution and the ability to mobilize support, you can bring in unique perspectives to conservation.

World Environment Day) is the United Nations' principal vehicle for encouraging worldwide awareness and action for the environment. World Environment day 2015 had the theme Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet, Consume with Care. Likewise the International Day for Biodiversity, on 22 May, provides a similar opportunity to show that you care for the environment.

In India, The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) along with the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MoHRD) play an important role in raising awareness. Environment education has been introduced as a mandatory subject in schools. Some of the initiatives of the MoEF are National Environment Awareness Campaign, National Green Corps Programme, Paryavaran Mitra (Friends of the Environment) Programme, Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment.

The Science Express Biodiversity Special (SEBS) train is an innovative mobile exhibition of MoEF, mounted on a specially designed 16-coach air-conditioned train for creating awareness about biodiversity and other environmental issues in the country. The state-of-the-art exhibition aboard SEBS aims to create widespread awareness on the unique biodiversity of India. Eight coaches of SEBS are dedicated to biodiversity, and the remaining coaches are on climate change, water, energy conservation, sustainable development, kid's zone and joy of Science Lab. This year the Science Express focuses on Climate Change.

As the future inheritors of this planet it is your responsibility to involve in conservation projects, assist local authorities in maintaining neighbourhood parks, ponds, streets etc. Youth can play an active role in protecting the environment by helping to reduce waste, plastics, following the principles of 3 R's namely Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. They can play an important part in ensuring compliance with laws and regulations by raising their voice and coming out of the 'Not in my backyard' syndrome. You can make your homes and schools more environment friendly by adopting practices as conserving non-renewable energy. Engaging future generations in environmental protection not only creates direct impact on changing behaviours and attitudes, but can also influence parents, relatives and families. Young people by changing their unsustainable lifestyle and dietary habits can create a positive impact by reducing the food miles. Eating seasonal vegetables and fruits and increasing the intake of locally grown vegetables and fruits can help to minimize the use of frozen foods. The more your food travels to reach you, the more fossil fuels are burnt in feeding you. As rightly told "The Change should come from within". It is your choice to choose foods that have less of an environment impact, organically grown food and seasonal, fresh veggies. Your food miles have a direct impact on our planet's future.

As Mahatma Gandhiji told Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs but not every man's greed. Let us Follow a sustainable lifestyle and let us leave a healthy planet for the

next generation. Let us stand united in this endeavor to maintain a “Healthy environment, the future we want”.