

# Need of Environmental Education at School Level in India

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*Abstract- In the present scenario, due to anthropogenic activities, environmental degradation is in an alarming rate and it results in various environmental issues such as global warming, ozone layer depletion, greenhouse effects, raise in sea water level, improper monsoon and acid rain. In spite of conducting more conferences, seminars and world summits towards the protection of environment for the past two decades, the present world is environmentally less sustainable than in the previous days. Therefore, in order to achieve the acceptable level of global environmental sustainability, the citizens must be empowered with essential knowledge and information especially in developing countries like India. Since educational institutions are the places where the contact of the society is more, it is possible to bring remarkable changes in the mindset of the public. To protect children living in polluted regions, environmental education represents a relevant means of prevention because this type of education encourages learner's awareness of their environment's ambient conditions, as well as their active participation in solving local problems. It is the need of the hour to propose environmental education with the essential elements of moral philosophy.*

*Indexed Terms- Environmental Education, Aims & Objective, Environmental ethics.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Environment is degrading at a much faster rate than our imagination. Human activities are responsible for the degradation of environment at global and regional level. Therefore, whatsoever wrong has been done by us must be rectified by us only. To protect and manage environment it is imperative to have a sound environmental education. It is a way to teach people and societies on how to use the present and future resources optimally. Through environmental education they can gain knowledge to handle the

fundamental issues leading to local pollution. The aims of introducing the Environmental Education at schools' level to improve the quality of environment and creating an awareness regarding environmental problems and conservation.

Environmental education emerged in the 1960s as the term for the educational dimensions of the environment movement which, at that time, was concerned about air and water quality (pollution), the growth in world population, continuing depletion of natural resources and environmental degradation.

In the 1970s, as a result of the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Environment, the formation of the United Nations Environment Programme, and several UNESCO-UNEP intergovernmental conferences on environmental education, a set of goals and objectives for environmental education were agreed upon that have continued to form the fundamental principles for the field. However, through successive UN meetings, environmental education has evolved over past decades to have a contentious relationship with the more recently described area of "Education for Sustainable Development".

Environmental Education is a process aimed at developing a world population that is aware of and concerned about the total environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, attitudes, motivation, commitment, and skills to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones. It allows individuals to explore environmental issues, engage in problem solving, and take action to improve the environment. As a result, individuals develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues and have the skills to make informed and responsible decisions. Environmental education does not advocate a particular viewpoint or course of action. Rather, environmental education teaches individuals how to

weigh various sides of an issue through critical thinking and it enhances their own problem-solving and decision-making skills. India is a highly diverse country in terms of its climate, geography, geology, ethnicity, flora and fauna, society and economy. Therefore, environmental education in the country has to be location-specific.

At the level of the university, environmental education is looked after by the University Grants Commission. A high-powered committee has been set up to suggest areas of environmental education to be taught at postgraduate level. Ten universities currently teach courses in environmental areas. There are other research institutes and professional institutions like Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), engineering colleges and schools of planning & architecture which have been offered the graduate and post-graduate degree courses in environmental engineering, conservation and management and environmental health & social ecology.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests launched the Environment Education, Awareness and Training Scheme in 1983-84 to enhance people's understanding regarding the human- environment relationship and to enhance skills and capabilities to protect the environment and improve it. It gives importance to promotion of non-formal environmental education and creating environmental awareness among the people through seminars, workshops, symposia, training programmes, the National Green Corps and eco- clubs. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has set up nine centres of excellence to increase awareness, research and training in areas of environmental science and management. In the context of environmental education, it needs to be pointed out that environmental education opens up many Career opportunities. With increasing awareness and stress on study of environment and on its impact at various levels, there is a growing need for environmental educators and professionals.

The National Museum of Natural History, New Delhi, set up in 1978, promotes non-formal education in various aspects of environment through exhibitions and educational programmes and activities for children and people in general.

The Indian Council for Forestry Research and Education is the focal point of forestry education and extension development in India. The Forest Survey of India, the Wildlife Institute of India and others offer training on various aspects of environmental education and conservation.

Business too needs a new class of environmentally literate and responsible leaders who can study how products and services affect our environment. Environment-related jobs would occupy a prominent place in the years to come. So environmental education, as a discipline and as an aspect linked to all other disciplines, is not only vital in it but also has a tremendous scope in terms of job creation. The awareness among the public and industrial generators have to be created and motivated by the updated techniques and incorporating the innovative and implementable solutions to reform our economy. These can be achieved through environmental education.

Good quality education is an essential tool for achieving a more sustainable world. This was emphasised at the UN World Summit in Johannesburg in 2002 where the reorientation of current education systems was outlined as key to sustainable development. Education for sustainable development (ESD) promotes the development of the knowledge, skills, understanding, values and actions required to create a sustainable world, which ensures environmental protection and conservation, promotes social equity and encourages economic sustainability. The concept of ESD developed largely from environmental education, which has sought to develop the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours in people to care for their environment. The aim of ESD is to enable people to make decisions and carry out actions to improve our quality of life without compromising the planet. It also aims to integrate the values inherent in sustainable development into all aspects and levels of learning.

## II. THE CONCEPT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The basic concept of environmental education is education for the environment, education about the environment and education through the environment.

- Education for the Environment: Environmental education is a kind of education which make aware the people regarding problems related to their environment so that they will be able to tackle these problems with a sense of responsibility and with the technical skills.
- Education about the Environment: Environmental Education includes conservation, outdoor and natural resource education as well as nature study but it also includes everything that relates to man and his environment. E.E. is the study of man and how he shapes his total natural and cultural surroundings for good or ill.
- Education through the Environment: Environmental education is not a separate subject. It is a multidisciplinary approach both to education and to the problem of environment. The entire subject in the existing curriculum does have some information pertaining to environment but in their present form the subjects fail to relate to one another. Therefore, multidisciplinary approach integrates environmental education into all learning, in all subject in all grades all year long and beyond the formal school years to a lifelong education.

### III. AIMS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

- To provides individuals and communities with a basic knowledge and understanding of the environment and the inter-relationship between humans and the environment.
- To promotes awareness and a sensibility in individuals and communities about the environment and its problems.
- To encourage individuals and communities to value the environment and consider it important and tries to inspire participation in the process of improving and protecting the environment.
- To provide people with skills to identify, predict, prevent and solve environmental problems.
- To provides individuals and communities with the chance to actively participate in solving environmental problems and to make educated decisions about the environment.

### IV. OBJECTIVES OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Objectives of Environmental Education at Primary Level:

- To know and understand true aspects of the environment in general.
- To know and understand the interaction between mammals, between human and their environment and interaction between the various elements and components of the environment.
- To develop skills in thinking, reasoning and enquiring the world around them.

Objectives of Environmental Education at Secondary Level:

- Inculcate the attitude in using the knowledge and skills towards solving problem and issues related to individuals, society and the environment.
- To emphasize the relevance of science to daily life.
- To build the values and attitudes towards the need and necessity to live together in harmony in the context of the heterogeneous society.
- To develop a scientific attitude in student.
- To develop an outlook which emphasizes the method employed in different disciplines of science.

### V. ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

In order to develop an environmental ethics; "Man is a part of this earth rather than careless exploiter of it. If we exploit the nature in unwise manner, it will be difficult to support even a small population. But if we protect the nature, it will continue to meet the needs of all living things and not only for man. The consideration of environment as natural heritage may be the integral part of environmental education. Only when our life is guided by respect for the earth and all living things. We will be able to live in harmony with our environment." they must now throw off their arrogance and perceive with humility, their place in the earth's ecosystem and their ability to manipulate the environment. Their energies will have shifted from material growth to 7 environmental protection. In short, the environmental ethic must provide them with a new rationale for their existence, or all the technology and power will not sustain their existence.

## CONCLUSION

Environmental education deals with every issue that affects an organism. It is essentially a multidisciplinary approach that brings about an appreciation of our natural world and human impacts on its integrity. It is an applied science as it seeks practical answers to making human civilization sustainable on the earth's finite resources. To this end a generic outline syllabus, including essential elements of moral philosophy has to be proposed for environmental education in schools and also undergraduate students in college level. Environmental education empowers learners by enabling them to participate in a sustainable future. Thus, the foundation for a lifelong learning is laid by environmental education.

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