

**ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND EDUCATION: A GLOBAL NEED****SUSHMA MENE<sup>a</sup> AND DEEPTI CHAUHAN<sup>b1</sup>**<sup>ab</sup>Bhilai Mahila Mahavidyalaya Bhilainagar, Durg, Chhattisgarh, India**ABSTRACT**

Degradation of the environment has touched an all time low. To reverse this trend, it has become increasingly obvious that people must become aware of the seriousness of the situation. To impart environmental education and create awareness, efforts have therefore been greatly enhanced at global, national and local levels, by different organizations. The present paper discusses the activities of some of the organizations, especially in India. At the same time, it is stressed that contributions by individuals—singly and collectively—are in no way inferior. A few success stories have also been briefly described.

**KEYWORDS:**Environment, Education, Degradation

Pollution of air, water and soil. And mindless utilization of natural resources have raised environmental degradation to dangerous heights across the globe. One of the very best methods to reverse this trend, undoubtedly, is creating environmental awareness and educating the populace. What is needed is a holistic approach, involving all strata of the society.

The issue of environmental education (EE) has been discussed at national and international levels. Goals of EE are to develop a world population that is aware of and concerned about environment and its associated problems, and committed to work individually and collectively towards solving current problems and preventing new ones. To achieve this target, an action plan is needed at all levels of implementation—global, national and local, including efforts by individuals and researchers in environmental and social sciences.

**OBSERVATIONS**

(A) Environmental Organizations and Agencies at the International Level: There are many such organizations active in different fields like United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Traffic to monitor international wildlife trade, Greenpeace etc.

“Greenpeace” can be cited as a typical example. It is a nonprofit organization with a presence in 40 countries. It organizes public campaigns for almost everything related to environment. The work done by Greenpeace in preventing asbestos-laden French ship from reaching the Indian shores for ship breaking is truly commendable.

(B) At the National Level: All countries have different governmental and other organizations to promote environmental awareness and education.

(i) Governmental or Government supported agencies and universities in some other countries: Many such institutions are active in all countries. A few of them are briefly described here.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): The best known among these are the federal Agency of the U.S. Govt. established in 1970.

Universities: Scientists from the University of Auckland in New Zealand recently confirmed by DNA tracing whales are being sold in fish markets of Japan. Wide publicity was given to this finding and soon corrective action was taken and the culprits punished (Hilary French and Lisa Masonry, 2001). Many foreign universities are doing such useful work.

Ministries and Departments: In Denmark, the Govt. has always promoted wind energy since the adoption of the national energy plan and has established wind cooperatives. More than 100,000 Danish families now own wind turbines (Gary Gardner 2001). Many have shares in wind cooperatives. There are subsidies for wind and taxes on polluting fossil fuels.

Bangladesh has successfully banned the use of plastics. This has been made possible by the massive campaigning by the ministry of Environment. Various NGOs and environmental activities have helped the Govt. in this enormous task (Shukla, 2003).

(2) Governmental organization in India: The Government naturally yields the maximum power and does most of the environment-related work.

Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) of the central Govt: It was set up in 1980. From 1986 onwards, MoEF has been organizing National Environment Awareness Campaign (NEAC) every year.

The objective is to create awareness at the national level. The funding is entirely by the MoEF. Jamshedpur women's College Eco-Club comprising of student members taken from all the three streams of studies – Arts, Science and Commerce – has been participating in NEAC for the past 4 years under the guidance of the author. Who is the moderator of the club. We have organized many environmental awareness programmes like seminars, workshops, competitions, exhibitions, demonstrations, rallies etc. on various themes like water conservation, solid waste management etc. Our experience has been that the general public is keenly interested in environmental issues and all they need is just the right guidance.

The ministry also gives many awards annually to citizens/institutions. Some examples are the Indira Gandhi paryavaran puraskar, National Environment Fellowship Award for Biodiversity, Rajiv Gandhi Wildlife conservation Award, Indira. Priyadrsni Vrikshamitra Award, Dr salim Ali and Dr. Shankala Fellowship etc.

MoEF has 24 divisions. Including the Ganga Action Directorate. EE is one important is on among these. The centre for Environmental Education (CEF), Ahmedabad can be taken as a typical centre. Its primary objective is to impart awareness and an understanding of the environment to the public. Conservation and wise use of natural resources is promoted, leading to a better environment and a better quality of life. The centre has started EE programmes in many schools across the country. CEE is a resource agency for National Green Crops (NGC) that promotes formation of eco-clubs in schools. Rs. 1,000/- is given to, each school that starts an eco-club. CEE, with offices in many parts of the country, organizes treks. Camps, seminars, workshops, panel discussions etc., publishes books in 15 languages and conducts training courses of different durations.

Autonomous institutions, universities, colleges and schools: do research on various environmental issues and popularizes their findings. UGC has recently introduced a syllabus on environment for undergraduates in all sections – Arts, science and commerce. Earlier, Environmental Science was taught only to science students. In many Universities and colleges, research works are done and results are published. In many colleges and schools, eco-clubs been established which conduct various types of awareness programmes. Educational institutes are leaders in the socio-economic development of a country; research has therefore been done by workers like Agarkar and Thombre 2005 on the level of

awareness among students regarding important environmental issues.

State Governments: Governments of all the states in India have Ministries of Environment and different Developmental Authorities. These and also the corporations, Municipalities and panchayats implement various programmes for creating awareness from the top rung to the grassroots level. Celebration of van Mahotsav is one such event. Area under plantation forests in our country has increased greatly in recent years.

Government of chhattisgarh has declared the state as “Herbal state” and under “Hariyar Chhattisgarh” enormous plantation of medicinal plants have been started in urban as well as rural area.

The Chilika lagoon along the eastern coast of India is a Ramsar site. This hotspot of biodiversity had been facing multiple pressures. For the restoration of the lagoon, Govt. of Orissa created Chilika Development Authority (CDA). With the active participation of the local community. The lagoon has been restored now. The prestigious Ramsar wetland Award 2002 was conferred on CDA in appreciation of this work Pattnaik.2003.

In Pune, thousands of scrap collectors participated in a series of protest demonstrations and Rallies demanding official recognition by issuing identity cards as their work were socially useful. Economically productive and environmentally beneficial. The municipality agreed to their demand and thus become the 1<sup>st</sup> governmental authority in the country to issue ID cards to rag pickers. Today members of the union have a sense of pride. For the 1<sup>st</sup> time there was felling of support from outside Shrunivasan 2003.

Many processes of environmental changes are essentially irreversible. It has huge impact on scenery and recreational activities sites, yield of timber resources may be affected. The uses of a virtual forest make it possible to assess the consequences of each alternative before they occur Larsen et.al.1991.

(C)At the local level: Though governments have formidable regulatory and fiscal powers they look to Ngo's. Businessmen, media and citizens for help.

Non Governmental Organization (NGO's): The role of NGO's in creating environmental awareness and promoting EE is most significant. It was one of the pioneering NGOs in India. Karalla Sastra Sahitya Parishad, which piloted the silent Valley Movement an

successfully stalled a hydel project in the silent valley. One of the best bio-diversity spots in the world. Business houses: these have an important role too. Consumers are increasingly getting interested in green products and are willing to pay more for them. As a result, organic industry has blossomed globally. Waste reduction is another common greening business strategy. Companies increasing view pollution and waste as proof of inefficiencies in the production process many companies prevent pollution, rather than continue traditional expressive approaches. Their aim is to become "Zero waste companies" "By recycling the byproducts. They generate new avenues. Sanyo Toyota etc, report having achieved this status Gary Gardner, 2001 such action by actions by Business houses create awareness in society.

Media: mass media like radio T.V. Newspaper weeklies Documentary films hoarding boards etc. have a great influence on the people. They have a pivotal position among civil society business and government their capacity to manipulate image – still moving and computer generated is an efficient tool to educate the masses Gary Gardner 2011 this image generating capacity is especially valuable for the many cases of environmental degradation that remain unseen by most people. Like depleted aquifers, hole in the ozone layer etc the more visible changes are given sufficient coverage by the media for example, we regularly get information on population growth and disappearing forests, however to have a more positive impact the need to understand the issues and develop a long range outlook mass extinction is a very important issue but as there is not much change is a day it is not considered newsworthy if news organizations expand their horizons such long term change will also receive they realized that the company was drawing an enormous quantity of their ground water.

Groups and individual: Recently in Pichimada. Kerala villagers arose in protest against the powerful multinational Coca Cola when away Drinking water is our birthright read the placard of one of the protests and demonstrations is such situations spread information about environmental degradation for and wide.

Swami *et al.* 2004 have described in detail how with the help of a powerful awareness campaign the environmental conditions of a slum in Chandigarh were improved beyond recognition. With the help of group discussions with the general public, household visits by medical students and by involving mothers, teachers and school students, 40,000 slum dwellers

were motivated into living hygienically. The motivating factor here was a feeling of well being coupled with monetary gain due to reduced medical expenses from improved hygiene. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques will always have a very high success rate Sabri 2004.

Efforts by individuals are no less commendable in creating awareness among larger sections of society. The first forest movement against indiscriminate tree felling was perhaps fought in 1730 in India. Amrita Devi, a rural woman and her 362 companions sacrificed their lives while resisting illegal tree felling in Jodhpur. A similar movement started by tribal women in U. P. in 1972 later became famous as Chipko movement. It was soon popularized by Sunderlal Bahuguna, who presented its details at the UNEP meeting in London in 1982 Sharma, 1982. The movement has now crossed all geographical boundaries.

Rajendranath Singh, Magsaysay Award winner, by his continued efforts and with the help of the local people, formed an NGO, and made a river that was dry for 15 years flow again, Medha Patkar is still fighting the "Narmada Bachao Andolan".

Much less known are people like Simon Oraon, the 71 year old uneducated tribal in a village near Ranchi, who persuaded his villagers to construct dams to conserve water, to practice rain water harvesting and to follow multiple cropping for better utilization of soil. Sarah Jewitt, who did her doctorate from Cambridge university, stayed with Simon for 9 months to learn his methods. A copy of her thesis is Simon's prized possession though he cannot read it. Setting practical examples like this. Goes a long way in creating awareness and imparting environmental education.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Increase in global population and the imbalanced distribution between urban and rural areas creates a pressure on the available resources. Industrialization increased pollution, dust, gas and smoke into air. Chemicals that are harmful are drained into rivers and sea. Thus particularly urban areas suffer from phytochemical smog which are hazardous to human health. Larsen *et al.*, 1991; Yi and Prybutok, 1996.

India is a country of villages. 70% population of it is rural. The rural masses are unaware of the importance of environmental education. Therefore, there is an urgent need to root awareness programmes

in the village itself. Bohra et al, 2003. The environmental educators must give importance to the efforts at international level, state level, at the level of groups of people, non government organization, individual level and local people considering the priorities expressed through social representations for better results.

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