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Environmental Degradation: Causes and Impact on Human Life

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"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed"

-----**Mohandas K. Gandhi**

"A civilization which destroys what little remains of the wild, the spare, the original, is cutting itself off from its origins and betraying the principle of civilization itself"

-----**Wilderness Connect**

Abstract:

Environmental degradation has become a major threat to human health in the world. Environmental degradation has harmful effects on human health, these effects will be felt more in the next 20 to 30 years, there is a very big relationship between environmental degradation and human health. Therefore, environmental and healthcare policies should complement each other, in this research article, environmental degradation and the social role of citizens as well as national and global causes of environmental degradation, the main cause of environmental degradation at the international level is human intervention, humans and human behavior are the main causes of environmental degradation.

In this research article, both man-made and natural causes have been explored while understanding the causes of environmental degradation. At the same time, it has been discussed what role one should play as a citizen and as a component of society to protect the environment. At the same time, it has been discussed what measures the government should implement to protect the environment.

Similarly, as natural resources are being depleted, it is not possible to say whether the current generation will have any left over for the next generation to use. Therefore, the current generation should limit the use of natural resources and preserve and pass on these natural resources to the next generation. Therefore, environmental protection is the responsibility of every person.

Keywords: Environmental Degradation, Climate Change, Poverty, Agricultural Development, Urbanization, Deforestation, Economic Growth

Introduction:

"The subject of environmental economics is at the forefront of the green debate: the environment can no longer be viewed as an entity separate from the economy. Environmental degradation is of many types and have many consequences. To address this challenge a number of studies have been conducted in both developing and developed countries applying different methods to capture health benefits from improved environmental quality. Minimizing exposure to environmental risk factors by enhancing air quality and access to improved sources of drinking and bathing water, sanitation and clean energy is found to be associated with significant health benefits and can contribute significantly to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals of environmental sustainability, health and development. In this paper, I describe the national and global causes and consequences of environmental degradation and social injustice. This paper provides a review of the literature on studies associated with reduced environmental risk and in particular focusing on reduced air pollution, enhanced water quality and climate change mitigation." (Tyagi 2014)

"Environmental degradation may be defined as any change or disturbance to the environment perceived to be deleterious or undesirable. Environmental degradation is one of the Ten Threats officially cautioned by the High Level Threat Panel of the United Nations. The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction defines environmental degradation as the primary cause of environmental degradation is human disturbance. The degree of the environmental impact varies with the cause, the habitat, and the plants and animals that inhabit it. Humans and their activities are a major source of environmental degradation." (Wikipedia.com)

Objectives:

1. To understand the causes and impacts of environmental degradation.
2. To develop ways to protect the environment.
3. Educate people about environmental issues, the impacts of climate change, and how to live more sustainably

4. Encourage people to get involved in environmental decision-making and governance processes.

Research methodology:

Secondary data have been used to complete this research paper, in which information has been collected mainly from newspaper news, books, research articles, reference books, and websites.

Environmental Degradation:

Environmental degradation and the use of natural resources on the earth by humans are closely related. The overuse of the air, water, and soil available on Earth is a major cause of environmental degradation. In the 21st century, deforestation, mining, human occupation of large mountains to live there, and the decreasing number of wildlife are seen as environmental degradation. Population growth is also considered a cause of environmental degradation. A high-level panel in the United Nations has warned that environmental degradation is a major threat.

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Causes of Environmental Degradation

Increasing Population:

“Population is the largest resource of any country and a major contributing factor to development, and yet it is a major cause of environmental degradation. As we find, the rapid pace of population growth has led to the overuse of natural resources. The huge population also leads to huge production of wastes. This results in loss of biodiversity, pollution of air, water and soil and increasing pressure on arable land. All these are putting a lot of pressure on the environment. If you take the case of India, it supports 17 per cent of the world's population while having only 2.4 per cent of the world's land area” (Colchester, 2003).

Poverty:

Poverty is also considered a cause of environmental degradation, such as cutting down trees for fuel and using their wood for fuel. “Poverty also affects environmental degradation in other ways. People living in poverty may not have the resources to educate themselves about environmental issues or invest in sustainable practices. They are more likely to engage in activities that are harmful to the environment, such as burning wood for fuel or dumping waste in rivers and streams. These activities can have long-term negative impacts on the environment, including air and water pollution, soil erosion, and loss of biodiversity.” (Nayak, 2004)

Urbanization

As agriculture is becoming more and more profitable, it has become difficult for people to find employment in villages. Moreover, it has become difficult for people to earn a living from agriculture. Due to this, people are seen migrating from villages to cities and due to this, the basic facilities available in cities are put under pressure. People have to make arrangements to live somewhere to meet their needs like food, clothing and shelter. This increases the number of slums and causes more pollution. In order to arrange accommodation for the migrants, agricultural land or forest land has to be proposed by different builders, which leads to deforestation. And land useful for agriculture is also used for living. As a result, water, air and soil pollution occurs,

Agricultural Development:

Agricultural development is very important for a country like ours. But it is having an adverse effect on the environment. It is very important for a country like India to develop agriculture, but instead of developing agriculture, various chemical fertilizers and environmental pollution lead to losses in agriculture, which have more harmful effects on the land. Excessive use of pesticides causes land pollution.

Economic Development:

Environmental problems are created in the name of economic development, excessive use of natural resources for economic development, and this excessive use becomes the cause of environmental degradation.

Deforestation:

One of the important reasons for environmental degradation is deforestation, whether it is for roads or railways, trees are cut down on a large scale in the name of this development, resulting in changes in the seasonal cycle, affecting rainfall, soil degradation,

Climate change:

Climate change is a major factor in environmental degradation, soil degradation affects the natural elements of air, water and snow, storms caused by deforestation cause soil degradation,

Soil damage:

Soil erosion can have serious environmental impacts, as it can reduce soil fertility, increase siltation in waterways, and increase the risk of flooding. Soil erosion can damage the topsoil, which is essential for plant growth and food production. Soil erosion can also increase air pollution as it is carried by the wind and deposited in other areas.

Natural Causes:

“Things like avalanches, quakes, tidal waves, storms, and wildfires can totally crush nearby animal and plant groups to the point where they can no longer survive in those areas. This can either come to fruition through physical demolition as the result of a specific disaster, or by the long term degradation of assets by the presentation of an obtrusive foreign species to the environment.”(Nayak, 2004) When people exploit resources or release harmful chemicals into the air, our land, water, and soil are harmed.

Impact on Human Life

“The environment affects human health might be at the receiving end as a result of the environmental degradation. The degradation occurs when earth’s natural resources are depleted. It causes directly or indirectly by humans, including some factors that are modifying the environment to fit the needs of society is causing severe effects, which become worse as the problem of human over population. Technology is often perceived as unavoidable for several reasons, similarly transport is the fastest going emission sector. Areas exposed to toxic air pollutants can cause respiratory problems like pneumonia and asthma. Some of the air pollutants are carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide, and the main factors are vehicular pollution, industrial emission, automobiles exhausts are harmful to us. Water pollutants are sewage, industrial wastes, pesticides, fertilizers, garbage dumping and toxic waste into bodies of water, humans suffer. Water and soil pollution usually occur together as polluted. Water seeps into the soil and contaminated it. We are killing our planet and the consequences are tremendous.” (Hamsaveni, 2019)

Impact on Human Health:

Environmental degradation can result in damage to human health Climate pollution exposes people to deadly air pollution People in the affected areas may also suffer from respiratory diseases such as pneumonia and asthma, and may be killed.

Loss of Biodiversity:

Biodiversity is considered very important for maintaining ecological balance because biodiversity controls pollution.

Depletion of Ozone Layer:

The ozone layer protects the earth and human life from harmful rays reaching the earth. Due to environmental degradation, the ozone layer also deteriorates and human life is at risk

Impact on Tourism Industry:

Environmental degradation also affects the tourism industry, for example, the lack of cool air in places with cold air, such as the "Kaas Plateau" near Mahabaleshwar in Maharashtra, which is famous for its flowers all over the world, and the time to visit here is usually August, September, but due to the change in the seasonal cycle, this time has been changing to November, December, January for the past few years, so sometimes tourists come back disappointed, and people also go to Mahabaleshwar as a place with cold air for tourism but return disappointed after seeing the increase in pollution, the nature of many tourist destinations is changing, the main reason behind this is environmental degradation and seasonal changes, soil, air, water pollution

Economic impact:

Environmental degradation affects the economic condition of any country, as seen in the previous points, if the tourist destination is affected by environmental degradation and the number of tourists decreases, then the income of the state, country, district Moreover, the administration itself has to bear the cost of repairing the natural resources that have been degraded due to environmental degradation. The administration also has to bear the cost of maintaining them. If people's health deteriorates due to water, air and soil pollution, then the responsibility for it also falls on the administration and its financial burden also falls on the administration.

The possible solutions

Implementation of Agricultural Studies

To prevent soil degradation, soil erosion can be stopped by applying the studies that have been done in the agricultural sector and reducing the use of harmful pesticides and using organic fertilizers

Waste Management:

The wet and dry waste that is collected in the city and stored at one place can be recycled in a scientific manner,

Rules, Regulations and Action

To prevent water, land and air pollution, the government should formulate as many rules and laws as possible and strictly implement them and protect deforestation and wildlife,

Population Control:

Population control can be a good option to prevent environmental degradation because population growth leads to increased use of natural resources and thus environmental degradation. If the population is controlled, then the use of natural resources will also be controlled, as a result, control over the environment can be achieved.

Environmental Education:

Environmental degradation can be prevented through environmental education, which can create awareness among the people. While providing environmental education, environmental education can be provided not only through books or school education but also through advertisements in newspapers, television and other media.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with International Organizations

By collaborating with international organizations, it will be possible to control the environment by conducting research on issues like global warming and global environment with their help.

Policy Reform:

Creating policies that protect the environment, controlling deforestation, developing villages, and developing agriculture can be done by making such strategic changes.

Reduce, Recycle, and Reuse (3Rs):

“Through the principles of reduce, reuse, and recycle (3Rs), this waste can be transformed into a valuable resource. Composting, especially vermicomposting, is effective for recycling organic waste at home, yielding nutrient-rich compost. Recycling involves collecting and processing discarded materials, ingrained in Indian culture where reuse and waste retrieval are traditional values. Common practices like repurposing old clothes and creative reuse, as seen in the Chandigarh rock garden, highlight the importance of sustainable practices. Individual actions, such as reducing consumption and reusing materials, contribute to environmental conservation. Understanding human activities' impact on environmental degradation emphasizes the need for proactive measures and education to manage resources effectively and preserve the environment for future generations.” (Ali, 2024)

Conclusion:

Overall, in these research articles, we have discussed the causes of environmental pollution and how we can control it. It is the duty of today's generation to preserve natural resources for the next generation. Therefore, we should use natural resources less and protect them. We should try to avoid water, air, and soil pollution individually. We should take the stance that at least one tree should be planted by each person. We should avoid using personal vehicles and four-wheeled vehicles when not needed. And if each person plays their role in environmental pollution, only then will the environment be protected and this natural Resources will be transferred to the next generation,

Keeping the environment in mind, keeping the ecosystem in mind, health, biodiversity gains, economic growth and development are essential. Aesthetics is not the only luxury, but it is also the human activity that is responsible for environmental conservation.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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