Environment and Society

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ABSTRACT:
Undoubtedly man is related with the environment and he is solely dependent on nature, but over exploitation of natural resources disturbed the environment. Environment affects our lifestyles, culture, social components. Technological development also has great impact on social and natural resources. Development does not increase in GNP (Gross National product) but it should be visualized in a holistic manner where it brings benefit to all. Environmental pollution, environmental degradation, environmental deterioration are a few words which are a subject of concern in every walk of life. This is all due to industrialization, rapid population growth, urbanization, changing lifestyles etc. The formulation of various acts and legislation to control pollution and conserve or protect environment underlines the will and concern of the government. But incomplete knowledge, information and ignorance about many aspects of environment has led to misconception.
KEY WORD: Environment; Society; Nature; Culture; Harmony; Religion; Pollution.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Environment is the sum total of what is around something or someone. It can be described as the natural world of land, water, air, plants and animals that exists around us. It includes living things and natural forces. The environment includes all the external factors, such as, soil, air, water, light, temperature, humidity, etc which have a direct influence on the activities of the organism. Closely related to the concept of environment is the habitat that means the particular place in which plants and animals grow and live. Each part of the environment is called the ecological factor or the environmental factors.

The word society may also refer to an organized voluntary association of people for religious, benevolent, cultural, scientific, political, patriotic, or other purposes. The members of a society may be from a particular ethnic group or from different ethnic groups. We have two types of society on mother earth viz. "have" and "have not".

Society is too vast and human nature is unpredictable. Environment and Society is directly related to each other and inter dependent. Any action on one has impact the other and vice versa. Earlier environment ruled over society but over the years due to development of science and technology society shapes the environment. Different social groups and social structures like industrial, agricultural, political, cultural, religious and aesthetic etc. have evolved and developed during various stages of development of human civilization and these social structures represent man's accumulated cultural resources primarily based on natural environment. But the irony is that natural resources are limited while needs of a society are unlimited.

The objectives and limitation of this paper are as follows:
1.   To know the concept and meaning of environment and society.
2.   To know the relationship between environment and society.
3.   To know the effect of environment on human society and vice-versa.

The word environment is used to talk about many things. It is viewed in different ways and angle by different groups of people and disciplines. In psychology and medicine a person's environment is the people, physical things, places, and events that the person lives with. The environment affects the growth and development of the person. So, it can be safely summarized that environment is an inseparable whole and is constituted by the interacting system of physical, biological and cultural elements that are interlinked individually as well as collectively in many ways.

Physical elements (space, landform, water bodies, climate, soils, rock and minerals) determine the variable character of human habitat, its opportunities as well its limitations. Biological elements (man, animals, plants and micro-organism) constitute the biosphere; cultural elements (economic, social and political) are man-

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made features, which go in to making of cultural landscape. The physical and biological elements constitutes natural environment and the built environment by the cultural elements as it is under influence of human.

In biology and ecology the environment is all of the natural materials and living things, including sunlight. This is also called the natural environment.

The term 'environment' originates from the French word 'environ' or environner' meaning 'around', 'round-about', 'to surround' or 'to encompass'.
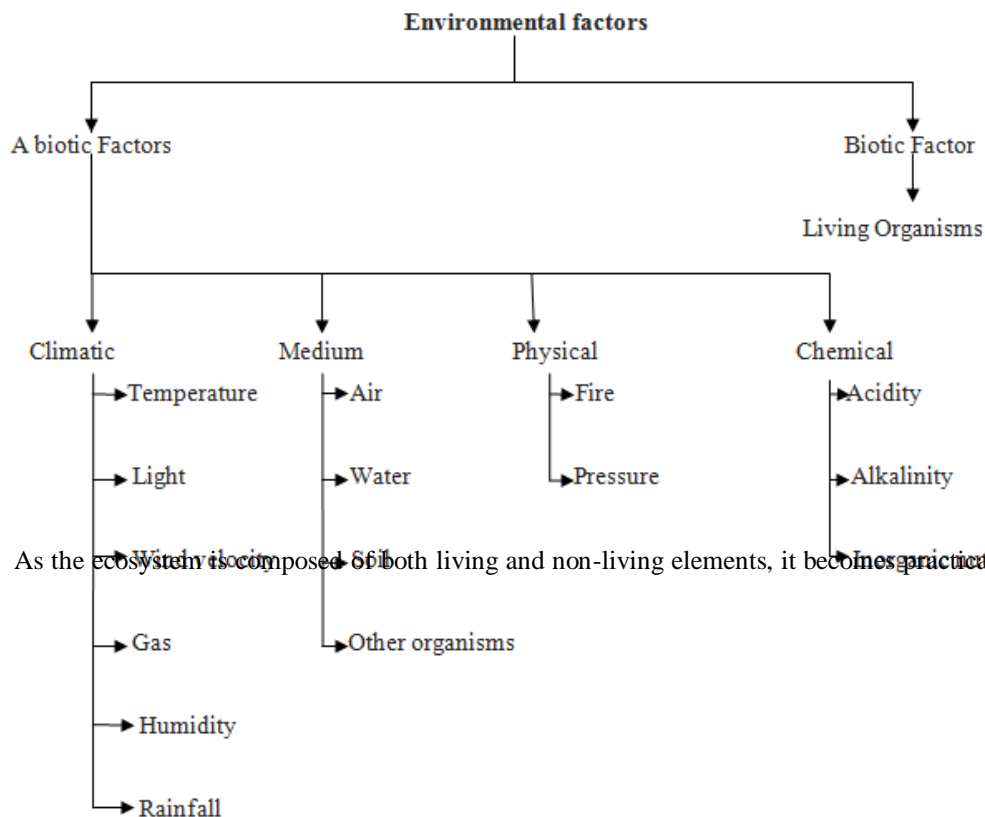
TYPES OF ENVIRONMENT

The environment is both physical and biological concept, it includes both the non- living (a biotic) and living (biotic) components of the planet earth. Thus based on basic structure, the environment can be divided into two basic types i.e.

1)   Physical or a biotic environment and.
2)   Biological or biotic environment.

Based on physical characteristics and state, a biotic or physical environment is sub divided into three broad categories.

(i)   Lithosphere (solid earth)
(ii)   Hydrosphere (water component) and
(iii)   Atmosphere (gas)

The biotic component of the environment consists of plants (Flora) and animals (Fauna) including man as an important component and micro organisms. The above can be easily described as follows:

Environmental factors

A biotic Factors

Biotic Factor

Living Organisms

Climatic	Medium	Physical	Chemical
→Temperature	→Air	→Fire	→Acidity
→ Light	→ Water	→Pressure	→ Alkalinity
→Soil			
→ Gas	→Other organisms		
→ Humidity			
→ Rainfall			

As the ecosystem is composed of both living and non-living elements, it becomes practically impossible to alter any sing

maximum way to satisfy his ever increasing needs in terms of shifting cultivation, forest clearance, forest destruction etc. which leads to ecological imbalance. Species of plants and animals have been introduced in to areas beyond their native zones. Natural vegetation and eco system have radically been affected due to the activities of man in use of land. Development of human society requires many natural resources and interaction between human being and physical environment like land, water, soil, air etc. is always there. But for all practical purposes, land is limited, water too can becomes scarce over a period of time and air though seemingly inexhaustible becomes unusable due to severe deterioration of its quality through drastic change in its composition. All these are mainly attributed to human beings.

SOCIETY

A human society is a group of likeminded people governed by their own norms and values sharing common culture and economy.

The term "society" came from the Latin word societas, which in turn was derived from the noun socius ("comrade, friend, ally"; adjectival form socialis) used to describe a bond or interaction between parties that are friendly, or at least civil. Without an article, the term can refer to the entirety of humanity (also: "society in general", "society at large", etc.), although those who are unfriendly or uncivil to the remainder of society in this sense may be deemed to be "antisocial".

According to sociologists, a society is a group of people with common territory, interaction, and culture. Social groups consist of two or more people who interact and identify with one another.

Territory: Most countries have formal boundaries and territory that the world recognizes as theirs. However, a society's boundaries don't have to be geopolitical borders, such as the one between the United States and Canada. Instead, members of a society, as well as nonmembers, must recognize particular land as belonging to that society.

Interaction: Members of a society must come in contact with one another. If a group of people within a country has no regular contact with another group, those groups cannot be considered part of the same society. Geographic distance and language barriers can separate societies within a country.

Culture: People of the same society share aspects of their culture, such as language or beliefs. Culture refers to the language, values, beliefs, behavior, and material objects that constitute a people's way of life. It is a defining element of society.

Social system and Institution

There are similarities found in a traditional society everywhere in the word. The members of an agricultural society are fanatics, superstitious, fatalistic and ignorant of the world outside their community. The units of loyalty in such a society are the family, village, caste of ethnic group. Indeed, such a traditional society can become a modern society only when there is social change. Technology is the most necessary factor for the change from the traditional state to the modernization one. The rapid rate of urbanization is also affecting the environment. There is still debate whether it is an index of development or distress. In most of the cases, it is perceived as a consequence of economic development.

When a traditional society accepts the change both as a norm and as a value, it becomes a transitional society.

Social values are respected in every society. For this, different means and methods are used like family, school, religion, etc.

Family : A child takes the first lesson of social values from his/her family. She/he is taught to respect elders, respect the feeling of others, etc. Family is the most important training ground for a child to learn the basic social values.

School : After family, comes the school where again, a child learns the social values. In school, the child learns to follow rules and regulation, respect teachers, adjust himself/herself with the classmates, share common interests, obey orders, maintain discipline, etc.

Religion : Normally, it is the religion of his/her parents which a child practices. A child is also taught to respect other religions and to develop good moral conduct and also virtues like sincerity, truth, tolerance etc. and in doing so, a child becomes aware of his/her duties as a good citizen.

Science : Through science, people learn to search for truth. They require practical proof for any belief. They try to control nature and help the society to make great progress in every walk of life.

Thus, social values occupy important position in social change or social institutions. The values are not uniform all over and they do not remain the same all the time.

There is hardly any society in the world where complete harmony is present. Every society is divided by castes and classes. Social stratification is the division of society into permanent groups based on the concept of inequality. We do not know anything about the origin of stratification. We only know that stratification did exist in each and every society.

EFFECTS OF ENVIRONMENT ON HUMAN SOCIETY

Effects of environment on human society have been emerging as a major challenge for quite some time. Development was for long associated with under exploitation of natural resources. It was little realized that obsession with under exploitation may result in over-exploitation. We seemed to have believed that natural resources are inexhaustible. Environment process includes those physical processes, which operate on the surface of the earth both internally and externally. Though man began to interfere with the natural processes right from the beginning of sedentary life, it assumed greater proportion after the industrial revolution.

The impact of modern technology on environment is varied and highly complex as the transformation or modification of our natural condition and process leads to a series of changes in the biotic and components of natural environment process.

We have seen that man, equipped with modern technologies and advanced scientific knowledge, has become an important factor in changing the environmental processes. It has to be realized that disturbances in one of the elements of nature (i.e., air, water, land, flora and fauna) gives rise to an imbalance in others. Natural processes or human factors sometimes aggravate natural environmental process to cause disaster for human society like (earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, cyclones etc.) They result in heavy loss of life and property. Environmental hazards for human health are as follows:

(i)   Air pollution causes respiratory diseases has impact on forest and water bodies, corrosion of buildings and reduces visibility.

(ii)   Water pollution contributes to millions of death and billions of illness annually.

(iii)   Solid waste pollution results toxic urban living conditions and contaminate ground water.

(iv)   Toxic waste cause cancer and neurological disorders.

(v)   Man animal conflict.

(vi)   Depletion of ground water and the empty stretch of the mighty Brahmaputra during winter season.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The concern for the environment in India is old as our civilization. However, concern for environment had started in the late 1970's. In the first phase, various constitutional amendments were made to preserve and protect the environment. Until 1976, environment protection did not appear anywhere in the Constitution. However, in the 42nd amendment of the Constitution in 1976, certain environmental provisions were introduced. Article 48A was added to the Directive Principles of State Policy which stated "The state shall endeavor to protect and improve the natural environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife in the country." The Article 51 A (g) of Fundamental Duties states that "It shall be the duty of every citizen in India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures". With this 'Forests' and 'Wildlife' were dropped from the State list in order to incorporate in the Concurrent (Centre) list.

The National Council for Environmental Planning and Policy was set up in 1972, which later evolved as Ministry of Environment and Forest in 1985. The National Environment Policy, 2006 emphasized on conservation, prevention of degradation and equity of natural resources with an objective to ensuring equitable access to environmental resources and quality for all sections of society, and in particular, to ensure that poor communities, which are most dependent on environmental resources for their livelihood, are assured secure access to these resources. It also takes into account of judicious use of environmental resources to meet the needs and aspirations of the present and future generations.

II.   CONCLUSION

Therefore, education must arouse awareness about the effects, as clean environment is precious for human society right from the primary level. It is also necessary to change the mindset of the people through structured education focusing on environmental ethics. The Government should try to understand the magnitude of social needs and plan future programmes in accordance with the needs of the people with limited available resources to avoid further exploitation on the environment. The Swachh bharat abhiyan (Clean India Mission), the national campaign launched by the Government of India is a right step towards elimination of open defecation, 100% collection and scientific processing/disposal/reuse/recycling of municipal solid waste, behavioral change in people regarding healthy sanitation practices. Finally, with the convergence of educational components with political and institutional components, harmony between environment and society is achievable.

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