

The Ailing Planet: The Green Movement's Role

-By Nani Palkhivala

Critical summary:

Our Earth is a living organism—an enormous being, of which we are parts. This is our planet; its destruction will make us all homeless. We are dependent on Earth and not the other way round. However, the thankless creature, man, is unconcerned about the dangers that pose threats to our survival. The article by Nani Palkhivala deals with the concerns of the environmentalists at this eleventh hour and talks about the new awareness that has dawned upon our race. A holistic and ecological view of the world has been brought into consideration. The Green Movement launched in 1972 has never looked back. There is a growing need of sustainable development, which was popularised by World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987.

Man is the most dangerous creature, as it was declared by a Zoo in Lusaka, Zambia. Human beings are taking too much time to realize the need of the hour. One of the members of Brandt Commission, Mr L.K.Jha, raised a vital question, “are we to leave our successors a scorched planet of advancing deserts, impoverished landscapes, and ailing environment?” Mr Lester R. Brown expressed his worry over the fact that our four biological systems are reaching an unsustainable level. The tropical forests, “the powerhouse of evolution”, as Dr. Meyers called them, are being destroyed causing extinction of several species. The fear hovers, what if the words, “forests precede mankind, and deserts follow”, come true. And the reality is that India is losing its forests at the rate of 3.7 million acres a year. The Article 48A of the Indian Constitution provides that the State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forest and wildlife of the country. To conserve the environment and to bring down the population of the world, which is 5.7 billion, Palkhivala suggests that development is the only solution. Fertility falls as the income rises, education spreads, and health improves. Nani supports compulsory sterilisation and defends it by saying that there is no other alternative but coercion. The population of India today is 920 million, which is more than the entire population of Africa and South America. What is happening today is that rich are getting richer and poor are begetting children, which begets them to remain poor. Now the folks have realised what endangers our race. It is not about the survival of human race but the survival of the planet Earth. It is an Era of Responsibility. The industrialists have to understand the present concern with most

consideration. The view of the Chairman of Du Pont, Mr Edgar S. Woolard is much appreciable, “Our continued existence as a leading manufacturer requires that we excel in environmental performance.” Let us be grateful to Mother Nature and keep Margaret Thatcher's felicitous words, “No generation has a freehold on this earth. All we have is a life tenancy– with a full repairing lease”. In the words of Mr Lester Brown, “We have not inherited this earth from our forefathers; we have borrowed it from our children.”

(The Data used here are all related to the chapter, it is not as per the present survey)

Short Answer Questions:

1. What does one see on the mirror inside the cage in the zoo at Lusaka Zambia?

Answer: Standing in front of the mirror inside the cage in that zoo, one finds his own reflection on the mirror, suggesting that human beings are the world's most dangerous animal.

2. According the Lester Brown, what are the four principal biological systems of the earth? Answer: They are four: fisheries, forests, grasslands, and croplands.

3. What do you mean by the concept of ‘Sustainable development’?

Answer: Sustainable development means: development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”, i.e., without stripping the natural world of resources future generations would need.

4. ‘What goes under the pot now costs more than what goes inside it’ what does that suggest?

Answer: That suggests that the cost of firewood has become higher than cost of rice and other staple food.

5. What is the role of industries in the preservation of environment?

Answer: Industries and industrialists have to exercise control in use of natural resources. The top officials need to become the guardians of our environment if we have to think about our future generations

Long Answer Questions:

1. What are the factors as enumerated by Nani Palkivala that have made our earth an ailing planet?

Answers: In the lesson Nani Palkivala has discussed the different factors that have made our earth an ailing planet, needing immediate attention from and treatment from the human race.

One major factor that has left our planet earth ailing is that the claim of human race on fisheries, forests, grasslands, and croplands, which comprise the earth's principal biological system, has become an unsustainable level. They have been consumed in such a way that there cannot be fresh resources for consumption for the future generation. Thus, farmlands have become infertile, and there has been overfishing. And then for reasons like demand for firewood, industrialization and urbanization, huge areas of forests have been cleared all over the world in alarming rate everyday.

The factor responsible for such mindless and mad exploitation of all the natural resources is uncontrollable growth of population. Although it took thousands of years for the world population to hit the first billion mark, now every ten years is burdening the earth with a billion population. The problem of overpopulation is greater in countries like India. Such overpopulation is the root cause of our planet earth becoming deceased needing treatment in the form of care and concern and population control and lower carbon emissions.

2. 'We have not inherited this earth from our forefathers: we have borrowed it from our children.' Discuss.

Answer: Value Points:

-earth's resources are limited.

-The resources have been almost exhausted by the generations so far

Uncontrollable populations growth is responsible for such demand on the available resources

-Every generation needs to think about the future generations

-Borrowed things are treated and handled with care

-Thus the resources are not to be exhausted as they belong to the future generations.

3. What is the remarkable shift in our attitude towards the earth brought on by the Green Movement?

Answer:

Value Points:

- a remarkable change in the attitude of the human race towards the earth -
- Shift from the mechanistic view to the holistic and ecological view -
- Mechanistic view- that the earth is an inanimate thing like a brick, a rock etc.
- Holistic view- that the earth is a living organism, like a human being, an animal.
- Thus earth is considered to be ailing, suffering from diseases.
- Needs treatment from human beings
- Treatment- population control, control of carbon emissions

Questions for practice:

Long Questions:

1. Why does Nani Palkhiwala call the Earth an ailing planet and what is the role of the Green Movement?
2. Nani Palkhivala in his essay 'The Ailing Planet': The Green Movement's Role', calls man 'the world's most dangerous animal'. How does he defend his viewpoint and at the same time holds out hope for the world?
3. What picture of the future of the planet does the author paint? What can thwart that scenario?

Short Questions :

1. What causes endless anguish to common man?
2. What are the unusually alarming statistics about the population that the author talks about?
3. Why is the Green Revolution important?
4. Justify the title of the essay.
5. Explain the statement 'forests precede mankind; deserts follow'.