

CHAPTER 01

The Ailing Planet

The Green Movement's Role

—by Nani Palkhivala

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Chapter Sketch

This newspaper article is a sad commentary on the gradual deterioration of Earth's environment. Our planet is no longer a pleasant place to live in. Fisheries, forests, grasslands and croplands need to be preserved and protected. The article suggests that we should try to limit the rise in population and stop the perpetuation of poverty. The Green Movement, started in 1972, is the only hope for the survival of this planet as well as that of the human race.

Chapter Summary

The chapter is based on an article written by Nani Palkhivala. The article was published in the Indian Express on 24th November, 1994 and raised the issue of environmental degradation of the planet.

The Green Movement

The Green Movement, which started nearly 25 years earlier than the publication of the article, is one of the most important movements that captivated the entire human race. The movement gained popularity in 1972 after the creation of the world's first nationwide Green party in New Zealand.

Since then a revolutionary change has been seen in the perception of human beings. There has been a shift from the scientific understanding developed by Copernicus to a holistic and ecological view of the world.

For the first time, there is a growing worldwide realisation that the earth itself is a living organism. It has its own metabolic needs and fundamental processes which need to be respected and preserved. With the Earth showing signs of declining health, humans have realised their ethical obligations to protect and preserve the planet for the future generations.

The Concept of Sustainable Development

The concept of Sustainable Development was popularised in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development. It was defined as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future generations. In other words, we should pursue development without emptying the resources the future generations will need.

Man and the Other Living Species

A cage in the zoo at Lusaka contains a mirror with the notice that reads ‘The world’s most dangerous animal’. This along with numerous efforts of many agencies across the world has made human beings come to the realisation that they should live in harmony with other living beings of the planet and not seek to control them anymore.

Scientists till then had listed 1.4 million living species on Earth and believed that about 3 to a 100 million species still remain unknown and endangered.

Earth’s Principal Biological Systems

The Brandt Commission was one of the first international commissions which dealt with the question of ecology and environment. It had Mr LK Jha as its member. The First Brandt Report raised a question of how we want to leave our planet for our successors.

Mr Lester R Brown, in his book, ‘The Global Economic Prospect’, points out that the Earth has four major biological systems. They are fisheries, forests, grasslands and croplands. These four form the foundation of the global economic system. Besides providing us food, they provide nearly all the raw materials for industries except minerals and petroleum derived synthetics. In many parts of the world, humans are over-exploiting these systems due to which their productivity is hampered.

The unsustainable and excessive demand has resulted in deterioration and depletion of resources leading to the breakdown of fisheries, disappearance of forests, deterioration of croplands and turning of grasslands into barren lands. Overfishing for protein and deforestation to obtain fuel for working are some examples of these excessive demands.

A consequence of meeting these excessive demands is the extinction of many species and the increase in the land area covering deserts.

Mankind Destroys Forests

The unsustainable dependence of these systems has a drastic negative impact on the forest area. The ancient inheritance of tropical forests is now eroding at the rate of 40 to 50 million acres per year. In addition, the growing use of dung for combustion deprives the soil of an important natural fertiliser.

The World Bank estimates that a five-fold increase in the rate of forest planting is needed to cope with the expected fuelwood demand in the year 2000.

James Speth, the President of the World Resources Institute, revealed that we are losing the forests at the rate of an acre-and-a-half a second.

Article 48A of the Indian Constitution states that it is the duty of the state to make efforts to “Protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country”. Unfortunately, such laws are neither respected nor enforced in India. A report by the Parliament’s estimates

committee highlights that India is exhausting 3.7 million acres of forest lands every year. The large areas of official forest lands are virtually tree less. The actual loss of forests at present is about eight times the rate presented by the government data.

The Menace of Overpopulation

A three year study by the United Nations found that the environment is in a critical state in many of 88 countries investigated.

One of the most prominent factors for such a condition is the growth of world’s population. Mankind took than more a million years to reach the first billion in 1800. Another billion was added in 1900 and 3.7 billion was added in the twentieth century. As of 1994, the world population was at 5.7 billion with one million being added to it every four days.

In 1994, India’s population was estimated to be 920 million, pointing to the need of giving population control the top-most priority. Development can be the best contraceptive, as with increased income, education level and health, fertility falls. However, with rising population it is impossible.

The increase in population also increases the economic gap, making the rich richer and the poor poorer. The increase can’t be dealt with forceful control of population, hence leaving the only choice to be between control of population and never ending growth in of poverty.

Era of Responsibility

The new holistic view of the world towards the environment has began the era of responsibility. In this view, the concern has shifted to the survival of not only the people but also the planet. In this ecological view, the world is seen as an integrated whole and not a collection of parts.

Industries play a central role in this new era with business’s excelling in environmental performance.

The chapter (article) ends with the words of Margert Thatcher and Mr. Lester Brown stating that no one has a freehold on earth and that it is not our property. We need to keep the resources and the environment intact for the future generations.

Word Meanings

The given page numbers correspond to the pages in the prescribed NCERT textbook.

Word	Meaning
Page 43	
irrevocably	permanently
holistic	complete and comprehensive
ecological	concerned with the relation of living creatures to the environment of a place

Word	Meaning
Page 44	
metabolic	related to a chemical process in living things that changes food into energy and materials for growth
ethical	connected with beliefs and principles about what is right and wrong
stewards	caretakers
trustees	trusted people
legacy	inheritance
languish	deteriorate
in ignominious darkness	unknown
scorched	burnt
impoverished	deprived
Page 45	
synthetics	chemical compounds
unsustainable	not possible to replace

Word	Meaning
decimated	largely reduced
procure	obtain
evolution	development
patrimony	inheritance
eroding	gradually disappearing
depletion	reduction
designated	named
Page 46	
contraceptive	way to control population
beget	give birth to
coercion	use of force
transcending concern	major anxiety
Page 47	
felicitous	appropriate
tenancy	temporary

Chapter Practice

PART 1

Objective Questions

• Multiple Choice Questions

1. The movement has not looked back means that

- (a) it is still evident
- (b) it has become popular
- (c) it is still continuing as a success
- (d) it has resulted in positive and long-term changes

Ans. (c) The movement has not looked back means that the movement is still continuing to be a success.

2. What is the meaning of holistic and ecological view?

- (a) The preservation of the environment
- (b) Saving of the water resources
- (c) Savings tees
- (d) Rainwater harvest

Ans. (a) The phrase 'holistic and ecological view' means a view that focuses on the preservation and the maintenance of the environment.

3. "The Earth's vital signs reveal a patient in declining health".

In the statement above, which literary device is used to signify 'Earth'?

- (a) Hyperbole
- (b) Metaphor
- (c) Imagery
- (d) Personification

Ans. (d) Personification means to attribute human characteristics to non-human things.
By comparing Earth to a patient, the author is personifying it.

4. Select the suitable option for the given statements, based on your reading of 'The Ailing Planet'.

- (i) The Green Movement became popular amongst common man in 1972.
- (ii) The first green party was formed in New Zealand.
- (a) (i) is false (ii) is true
- (b) Both (i) and (ii) are false
- (c) (ii) is a fact but unrelated to (i)
- (d) (ii) is the precursor of (i)

Ans. (d) After the first Green party was formed in New Zealand in 1972, the Green movement gained popularity in the world.

5. Select the roles assigned to humans with respect to 'The Ailing Planet'.

- (i) Trustee
- (ii) Caretaker
- (iii) Owner
- (iv) Partnership
- (v) Borrower
- (a) (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv)
- (b) (i), (ii), (iv) and (v)
- (c) (ii), (iii), (iv) and (v)
- (d) (i), (iii), (iv) and (v)

Ans. (b) The chapter refers to humans as the 'stewards' and 'trustees' of the Earth. Later, through Mr. Lester Brown's words, they have been referred to as the 'borrowers'. And, the chapters suggests that in order to protect the environment, it and humans have to live in harmony as 'partners'.

Hence, option (b) is the correct answer.

6. What is the concept of sustainable development?

- (a) Development of the future such that the present is not effected
- (b) Development for the present with the purpose of comfort for the future
- (c) Development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations
- (d) Environmental development

Ans. (c) The concept of sustainable development suggests that natural resources should be used in such a manner that does not compromise the ability of the future generations to use those resources.

7. By calling man "the most dangerous animal in the world", the author isman for its activities.

- (a) condemning
- (b) taunting
- (c) labelling
- (d) criminalising

Ans. (c)

8. The author states that man is moving to a system based on partnership.

This indicates a system where

- (a) resources are used with care
- (b) resources are rarely used
- (c) alternative resources are used
- (d) resources are given rehabilitation time.

Ans. (a) A system based on partnership is a system wherein all the resources are used with care.

9. The first Brandt Report raised the question-“Are we to leave our successors a scorched planet of advancing deserts, impoverished landscapes and ailing environment.”

Select the option that explains it.

- (a) The report highlights the exponential increase in the negative impact of activities of development
- (b) The report points to the need to shift towards the principle of sustainable development
- (c) The report reflects that man has to be environmentally conscious
- (d) The report takes data from various countries and justifies its stance of sustainability

Ans. (b) The report and the question it asks are significant as they highlight how humankind needs to shift towards the principle of sustainable development.

10. What will the grassland turn into if systems become unsustainable?

- (a) Turn into a barren wasteland
- (b) Turn into desert
- (c) Soil quality will deteriorate
- (d) Drought lands

Ans. (b) The grasslands will turn into desert if systems become unsustainable.

11. At what rate is the world's ancient patrimony of tropical forests eroding?

- (a) At the rate of one million per year
- (b) At the rate of forty to fifty million acres a year
- (c) At the rate of 90 million per year
- (d) None of the above

Ans. (b) The world's ancient patrimony of tropical forests is eroding at the rate of forty to fifty million acres a year.

12. Classify (1) to (4) as Fact (F) or Opinion (O), based on your reading of 'The Ailing Planet'.

- 1. The Indian people do not understand the significance of the green movement.
 - 2. Article 48A puts the responsibility of preservation of environment on the government.
 - 3. The government is to be held responsible for the current state of the environment.
 - 4. Even the government data is based on estimations.
- (a) F-1, 2; O-3, 4
 - (b) F-2, 3, 4; O-1
 - (c) F-1, 4; O-2, 3
 - (d) F-2, 4; O-1, 3

Ans. (d)

13. Which of the following is TRUE for the study conducted by the United Nations?

- (a) Environment is deteriorating critically
- (b) Forest land is exponentially reducing
- (c) Natural resources are not renewing properly
- (d) Fossil Fuels are not sustainable

Ans. (a) The three-year study shows that the environment has deteriorated and that it is critical in eighty-eight countries.

14. Select the correct options with reference to the given statements on the basis of your reading of 'The Ailing Planet'.

- (i) Increasing population is one of the major reasons for the exploitation of the environment.
 - (ii) Education is considered to be the best contraceptive for overpopulation.
- (a) Only (i) is correct
 - (b) Only (ii) is correct
 - (c) Both (i) and (ii) are correct
 - (d) Neither is correct

Ans. (a) Only (i) is correct as development is considered to be the best contraceptive for overpopulation.

15. When Margaret Thatcher says, “No generation has a freehold on this earth. All we have is a life tenancy — with a full repairing lease”, what does she highlight?

- (a) The need to find alternate sources of natural resources
- (b) The need to become environment conscious
- (c) The need to understand the negative impact of man's actions
- (d) The need for the change in the relationship shared with nature

Ans. (b) By making the statement, Margaret Thatcher highlights how the society needs to become environment conscious and make efforts for its benefit.

● Extract Based MCQs

1. Read the extract given below and answer questions that follow.

“We have shifted — one hopes, irrevocably — from the mechanistic view to a holistic and ecological view of the world. It is a shift in human perceptions as revolutionary as that introduced by Copernicus who taught mankind in the sixteenth century that the earth and the other planets revolved round the sun. For the first time in human history, there is a growing worldwide consciousness that the Earth itself is a living organism — an enormous being of which we are parts. It has its own metabolic needs and vital processes which need to be respected and preserved.

The earth's vital signs reveal a patient in declining health. We have begun to realise our ethical obligations to be good stewards of the planet and responsible trustees of the legacy to future generations.”

- (i) What is meant by the 'mechanistic view' in the extract?
 - (a) A worldview of machinery
 - (b) A worldview without human beings in it
 - (c) Depleting value of mankind
 - (d) None of the above

Ans. (a) The 'mechanistic view of the world' means looking at the world as if it was a machine that needs to be recklessly used.

(ii) The phrase 'holistic and ecological view' harbors the relationship based on

- (a) Subservience (b) Partnership
- (c) Trustee (d) Owner

Ans. (b) The holistic and ecological view harbors a relation based on partnership wherein both nature and mankind are interdependent on each other.

(iii) The passage mentions that the earth has metabolic needs. It means that

- (a) it needs time to heal
- (b) it has its own processes and functions
- (c) it needs time to renew and maintain balance
- (d) it has to make sure that man gets everything

Ans. (c) Saying that the Earth has metabolic needs means that the Earth needs its own time to renew itself so that it can maintain the ecological balance.

(iv) Why does the writer exemplify Copernicus to comment on the issue?

- (a) To justify the need to save trees
- (b) Because he was a fan of Copernicus
- (c) As Copernicus fought for the cause
- (d) To contrast the change in human perspective

Ans. (d) The writer uses the impact of Copernicus' research and time to contrast it with the need to bring change in the human perspective.

(v) In what tone does the writer present their concerns?

- (a) Preaching (b) Condescending
- (c) Informative (d) Inspiring

Ans. (d) The tone is inspiring as it tends to inspire people to take action.

2. Read the extract given below to answer the questions that follow.

"In poor countries, local forests are being decimated in order to procure firewood for cooking. In some places, firewood has become so expensive that "what goes under the pot now costs more than what goes inside it". Since the tropical forest is, in the words of Dr Myers, "the powerhouse of evolution", several species of life face extinction as a result of its destruction.

It has been well said that forests precede mankind; deserts follow. The world's ancient patrimony of tropical forests is now eroding at the rate of forty to fifty million acres a year, and the growing use of dung for burning deprives the soil of an important natural fertiliser. The World Bank estimates that a five-fold increase in the rate of forest planting is needed to cope with the expected fuelwood demand in the year 2000."

(i) From the above lines, what relation can be made in the statements below?

- I. The cost of what is being cooked is much lower than what is being used for cooking that.
- II. Firewood is so expensive that one cannot afford it anymore, the resources for cooking have become far more expensive than the ingredients

- (a) I is true but II is not
- (b) II is the explanation of I
- (c) There is no relation between the statements
- (d) II is true but I is not

Ans. (b) The connection between the two statements is that while statement I issues the problem, statement II explains and adds more to the given information.

(ii) "What goes under the pot costs more than what goes inside the pot" indicates.

- (a) Increasing demand of the fuel
- (b) Increase in inflation
- (c) Increasing ecological costs
- (d) Increasing uses of wood

Ans. (a) The given lines indicate how the natural resource of fuel wood is so in demand that its prices are soaring sky high.

(iii) The reference of the growing use of dung is to highlight the

- (a) depleting forest land
- (b) Conversion of grasslands into wastelands
- (c) Over dependence on alternate fuels
- (d) All of the above

Ans. (d)

(iv) What has been the result of the tropical forests being "the powerhouse of evolution"?

- (a) They promoted technical tools
- (b) They caused eradication of livelihoods of species
- (c) They improved the search for fodder
- (d) All of the above

Ans. (b) The result of tropical forests' exploitation by humans has led to evolution, thus becoming the powerhouse for the same, but it has also led to eradication of livelihoods of many species and their extinction.

(v) Select the correct meaning of 'forests precede mankind'.

- (a) Forests provide everything to the mankind
- (b) Forests have taught mankind how to grow and build
- (c) Forests were in existence on this planet much before the coming of man
- (d) None of the above

Ans. (c) The correct meaning of the phrase is that forests were in existence on this planet much before the coming of man.

PART 2

Subjective Questions

• Short Answer Type Questions

- 1 What is the significance of Green Movement in the modern world?

Ans. The Green Movement has brought a great awareness among people. It has taught us that we are just partners on the earth sharing this planet with other living organisms.

Having learnt this, human beings worldwide have reduced the large amount of destruction being caused on the Earth. People have realised that the earth's existence has been threatened and have begun to do whatever is possible.

2. What shift in human perception has been seen as a result of the Green Movement?

Ans. Human perception has gone through a revolutionary shift as a result of the Green Movement replacing the mechanistic view of the Earth with a more holistic and ecological view of the world.

For the first time in human history, there is a growing worldwide consciousness that Earth itself is a living organism, an enormous being of which we are parts. It has its own metabolic needs and vital processes which need to be respected and preserved.

3. Why is the Earth referred to as 'the ailing planet'?

Ans. Due to the insensitive exploitation of Earth's resources by humans for their survival and development, Earth has lost almost all its vital resources. With drying rivers, depleted and polluted environment and deteriorated forests and greenery, Earth is having a difficult time surviving and thus, it is referred to as 'the ailing planet'.

4. What does the notice 'The world's most dangerous animal' at a cage in the zoo at Lusaka, Zambia, signify?

(NCERT)

Ans. The notice signifies that man is responsible for the depletion of resources and deterioration of the environment on Earth. This is so serious that even man's survival is threatened.

5. What question did the First Brandt Report raise?

Ans. One of the early international commissions which dealt with the question of ecology and environment was the Brandt Commission. The First Brandt Report raised the question, "Are we to leave our successors a scorched planet of advancing deserts, impoverished landscapes and ailing environment?"

6. How are Earth's principal biological systems important?

Ans. Mr. Lester R. Brown recognises four principal biological systems of Earth, namely 'fisheries', 'forests', 'grasslands' and 'croplands'.

They form the foundation of the global economic system. They fulfil our entire needs of food, besides providing virtually all the raw materials for industry except minerals

and petroleum derived synthetics. Hence, they are extremely important.

7. What is the cause of the collapse of fisheries?

Ans. Fisheries have collapsed due to over-fishing. Fish is an important source of protein which is essential for growth. With the spread of education, people all over the world have become conscious about consuming proteins. This has led to fishermen trying to meet the demand for fish by over-fishing, leading to the collapse of fisheries.

8. Why and how are our grasslands being converted into barren wastelands, and croplands deteriorating?

Ans. One of the greatest reason of the deterioration of these grasslands and croplands is the growth of population. Population has been increasing drastically. As a result, the pressure on land is increasing.

Over-grazing of animals has caused havoc to our grasslands. Due to this, grasslands are becoming barren wastelands. In the same way, the pressure of population on croplands is affecting their productivity. More mouths mean more food and hence, more pressure on croplands.

9. Why are tropical forests called 'the powerhouse of evolution'?

Ans. Tropical forests are called 'the powerhouse of evolution' because it is in the heart of tropical forests where newer plants and animals evolve to more adaptable forms. If they are drastically reduced, as at present, it will affect evolution as a whole and many species of plants and animals will be rendered extinct in this process.

10. What do you understand by the statement, "Forests precede mankind; deserts follow?"

Ans. Forests are one of the principal biological systems of Earth. They form the foundation of the global economic system. It is true that if forests disappear, deserts will replace them. Forests were in existence much before the coming of man on this planet. Local forests are disappearing to provide firewood and timber. The world is losing 40 to 50 million acres of forests a year. If this continues, nothing will be left except deserts and wastelands.

11. Explain the unusually alarming statistics about the population that the author mentions.

Ans. According to the author, the increase in human population over the years is alarming. The first billionth was reached in a million years, in 1800, followed by the second billionth reached in just a century, in 1900.

It is even more frightening that in just 94 more years, another 3.7 billion was added, making the world population 5.7 billion.

This exponential growth in human population is a threat to the planet.

12. How can the growth of population be checked or controlled?

Ans. The growth of population can be checked by spreading education and awareness among the masses. The people, especially the ones below the poverty line, think that if they have more children they will have more earning members,

which is not true. In order to stop the people from thinking in this manner, development by means of education is the only solution. This will lead to a better life among the masses and will indirectly contribute towards curbing the population explosion.

- 13.** What do you understand by this statement of Margaret Thatcher, “No generation has a freehold on this earth. All we have is a life tenancy—with a full repairing lease”?

Ans. We understand from her statement that man has been the victim of many false illusions. In his view, he is the lord of this world. This attitude man has caused untold havoc and destruction. He has always indulged himself in plundering natural resources. However, man should remember that he has to hand over this planet to the coming generations. He should not forget that he is only a trustee and not the master. It is his foremost duty to leave this earth in good health and shape for future generations.

- 14.** What did Mr Lester R Brown mean when he said “We have not inherited this Earth from our forefathers; we have borrowed it from our children”?

Ans. Mr Lester R Brown believes that the present generation of people has no right to think that the Earth is their property. In fact, everyone should believe that they are responsible to leave Earth for future generations in the same condition as they found it. He further says that human beings have no right to misuse Earth because we are accountable to future generations.

- 15.** Justify the title of the article by Nani Palkhivala.

Ans. The title of the article by Nani Palkhivala, ‘The Ailing Planet: The Green Movement’s Role’, is totally justified and appropriate. The Earth’s vital signs are that of a patient in declining health. We have overexploited its resources. But the Green Movement has changed our thinking. We have started to understand that earth is also a living organism and we have to respect its needs.

• Long Answer Type Questions

- 1.** In spite of knowing the deplorable condition of the environment, human beings only make a show of doing something about it. Elaborate.

Ans. The issue of indiscriminate exploitation of nature has become an essential feature of human existence. Although sustainable development of resources is a goal for most nations, the reality is hardly so.

This uncaring behaviour is manifested in practices such as deforestation, destruction of wetlands, excessive mining for oil and mineral supplies, over-fishing and so on. The root causes for such practices are overpopulation, inefficiency in resource utilisation, over-consumption, poverty and ineffective structures such as human institutions, regulatory bodies and attitudes.

Moreover, the funds meant to help in conservation of critically endangered species are being siphoned off for other causes and the concerned authorities are not taking this matter seriously.

- 2.** “Laws are never respected nor enforced in India.” Explain. (NCERT)

Ans. It is a very sad state of affairs that in India laws are neither respected nor enforced. There is a very well written Constitution of India that covers all the aspects of the running of the country. New laws are also made and reforms take place. But generally, Indians can be seen exploiting these laws in order to get benefits from them.

There is a general apathy towards the system of law. There could be a lot of reasons behind this. Corruption is one of them. We, in India, know that everyone and everything can be bought for a price. The second reason could be that, in our country, the course of justice takes a long time.

We believe in the words that, ‘Justice delayed is justice denied.’ So, there is a possibility that people take law in their own hands and try to meet their demands according to what they want. What needs to be done is to make people more aware about right and wrong.

People should respect laws rather than break them. Corrupt officials should be punished strictly and justice should be delivered quickly. Only after some serious measures have been taken can the situation be improved.

- 3.** “Are we to leave our successors a scorched planet of advancing deserts, impoverished landscapes and an ailing environment?” Explain. (NCERT)

Ans. The ever-rising inflation, the high cost of living, paucity of drinking water and frequent power cuts are some of the problems we face every day. We fall sick with all kinds of new ailments. These are the assets we have inherited from our ancestors. But the question is, if we are suffering, should we not think of finding solutions to these problems and give a better world to our successors.

We certainly have to take corrective measures to ensure that we do not leave our successors a planet that has been exhausted of landscapes and has a suffering environment and barren lands. We should not make unreasonable claims on the planet’s biological systems.

Over-fishing should be avoided and forests should be preserved. New plants should be planted. We should try to avoid using cow dung for burning, so as not to deprive soil of its natural fertiliser.

If utmost care is not taken now, then the future of all of mankind would become endangered. It is high time that we keep our selfish motives in check and try to build a healthy future.

- 4.** “We have not inherited this Earth from our forefathers; we have borrowed it from our children.” Explain. (NCERT)

Ans. Man suffers from many misconceptions. He considers himself to be the lord of this world. Perhaps he doesn’t know that his actions are leading to the degradation and destruction of this Earth. He thinks that he has a freehold on this Earth.

The hungry world has been ruined by over fishing. Forests are disappearing at the rate of an acre and a half every second. Grasslands and croplands are being converted into wastelands and deserts. Man’s greed and claims have made this earth a scorched planet of advancing deserts and an ailing environment.

Man should remember that he has to hand over this planet to the coming generations. He is only the trustee and not the master. It is the duty of every living being to leave this Earth in good health and shape. According to Margaret Thatcher, we have only a life tenancy and not the ownership. At any cost, we have to maintain sustainable development in order to meet our present needs without harming the interests and needs of the future generations.

5. “The problems of overpopulation directly affect our everyday life.” Explain. (NCERT)

Ans. There is no doubt that the growth of world population is one of the strongest factors distorting the future of human society. World population is increasing at a rapid speed. This is a very alarming situation. Every day, we face the brunt of this menace. There is not a single utility location where there are not long queues, be it a hospital, ration shops or educational institutes.

Overpopulation makes the poor still poorer. More children only means more people without work and more mouths to feed. There are not enough houses for everyone, so we find slums everywhere.

In government hospitals, where the treatment is available at a reduced cost, there are not enough beds for the patients. Every day, there are new colleges and schools opening, but still the rate of illiteracy is not reducing.

Moreover, high population affects the environment adversely. Trees are cut to make new settlements. As a result, forests recede. More food is needed to support an increasing population. A protein hungry world creates a perpetual pressure on fisheries and croplands. Ultimately, it also adds to impaired productivity.

• Extract Based Questions

1. Read the extract to attempt the questions that follow.

“In the zoo at Lusaka, Zambia, there is a cage where the notice reads, ‘The world’s most dangerous animal’. Inside the cage there is no animal but a mirror where you see yourself. Thanks to the efforts of a number of agencies in different countries, a new awareness has now dawned upon the most dangerous animal in the world. He has realised the wisdom of shifting from a system based on domination to one based on partnership.

Scientists have catalogued about 1.4 million living species with which mankind shares the earth. Estimates vary widely as regards the still-uncatalogued living species — biologists reckon that about three to a hundred million other living species still languish unnamed in ignominious darkness.”

- Why is man referred to as ‘the most dangerous animal’?
- Do you agree with the author’s opinion?
- What is the purpose of placing a mirror inside the cage?

- The author says that man has realised the wisdom of shifting to a new system. What does it mean?
- What is the significance of the lines ‘biologists reckon that about three to a hundred million other living species still languish unnamed in ignominious darkness.’?

Ans. (i) Man is referred to as ‘the most dangerous animal’ because he is using up the resources at an exponential rate. He is also killing animals for his own benefit without any consideration of the planet.

(ii) Yes, I agree with the author’s opinion that man is the most dangerous animal on earth for using the natural resources recklessly.

(iii) The placing of a mirror inside the cage serves to remind man of his own actions so that he can shift to a more sustainable system.

(iv) The fact that man has realised the wisdom of shifting to a new system means that man has seen the consequence of his actions. The Earth and its resources are depleting which can affect the presence of mankind itself.

(v) The given lines show how some species which are still undiscovered are becoming extinct.

2. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

“In addition to supplying our food, these four systems provide virtually all the raw materials for industry except minerals and petroleum-derived synthetics. In large areas of the world, human claims on these systems are reaching an unsustainable level, a point where their productivity is being impaired. When this happens, fisheries collapse, forests disappear, grasslands are converted into barren wastelands, and croplands deteriorate. In a protein-conscious and protein hungry world, over-fishing is common every day.”

- What are ‘these four systems’?
- Why are these systems important?
- How is the productivity of these systems impaired?
- What is the impact of mankind on these systems?
- Whom does the author blame for the collapse of fisheries?

Ans. (i) These four systems are — fisheries, forests, grasslands, and croplands.

(ii) These systems are important as they form the foundation of living. They provide us with raw material for food, shelter, etc.

(iii) The productivity of these systems gets impaired when mankind overexploits these systems without giving them a chance to renew properly.

(iv) Because of the overexploitation of these systems by mankind, fisheries are depleting, forests and grasslands are becoming wastelands and croplands are deteriorated.

(v) The author blames the protein hungry or specifically non-vegetarian people for the collapse of fisheries.

3. Read the extract given below and answer questions that follow.

“But what causes endless anguish is the fact that laws are never respected nor enforced in India. (For instance, the Constitution says that casteism, untouchability and bonded labour shall be abolished, but they flourish shamelessly even after forty-four years of the operation of the Constitution.) A recent report of our Parliament’s Estimates Committee has highlighted the near catastrophic depletion of India’s forests over the last four decades. India, according to reliable data, is losing its forests at the rate of 3.7 million acres a year. Large areas, officially designated as forest land, “are already virtually treeless”. The actual loss of forests is estimated to be about eight times the rate indicated by government statistics.”

- (i) Which law does the author mention in the given extract?
- (ii) What is the cause of anguish for the author?
- (iii) Why has the author used the example of caste based laws?

- (iv) Explain ‘virtually treeless’.
- (v) “The actual loss of forests is estimated to be about eight times the rate indicated by government statistics.” Comment.

- Ans.**
- (i) The author mentions Article 48A in the given extract. This law states that the State is responsible for the protection and the improvement of the environment and for safeguarding the forests and wildlife of the country.
 - (ii) The author feels anguished because he knows that no matter how many laws are enacted by the Government for environment, these laws will never be efficiently enacted and enforced.
 - (iii) The author has deliberately used the example of caste-based laws to make man realise that their actions are shameful and worthy of punishment. At the same time, the author also feels that because of lack of action on the part of the government, man will go unpunished.
 - (iv) The phrase ‘virtually tree less’ has been used to refer to the area which has been officially designated as forest area. However, contrary to its categorisation, it does not have any trees at all.
 - (v) The given line highlights that all the statistical data regarding the loss of forest land is just an estimation. The real loss is much greater than we could imagine.