



INDIAN SCHOOL MUSCAT
SENIOR SECTION
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
CLASS XI



THE AILING PLANET: THE GREEN MOVEMENT'S ROLE
NANI PALKHIVALA

The chapter comments on the deteriorating condition of our planet. It speaks of the problems faced by our planet, reasons for its poor condition and the changing view of the world for the planet.

The Green Movement

The author begins by commenting on the great attention received by the Green Movement that began some 25 years ago. The world's first nationwide Green party was founded in New Zealand in the year 1972 and the movement has been a great success since then.

A change in the human perception

A revolutionary change has come in the perception of the human beings bringing in a "holistic and ecological" view of the world. There has been a shift from the understanding developed by Copernicus to the people's belief that the earth is a living organism whose needs must be respected and preserved by us. According to the writer, our earth is like a "patient in declining health". Thus, we have to realise our ethical responsibility of guarding the planet.

Sustainable Development

The World Commission on Environment and Development propagated the concept of "sustainable development" in 1987. Sustainable development calls for a well-balanced development so as to meet the demands of the present and not to deprive our future generations from the natural world of resources.

Man and the other living-species

Man has been considered as the most dangerous being on the planet. However, due to the efforts of a number of agencies all over the world, man is learning to live in harmony with the other living species on the planet. Man's existence is shifting from the system of domination to that of partnership.

The depletion of the principal biological systems

There are still many millions of living species that have not been catalogued. The author mentions the ecological concern pointed out by Mr. Lester R. Brown in his book "The Golden Economic Prospect". Mr. Brown points out four principal biological systems- fisheries, forests, grasslands and croplands. These form the foundation of the global economic system as they supply food and provide raw materials for industries except minerals and petroleum-derived synthetics.

The demand of the human beings on these systems is increasing to such an 'unsustainable' extent that the productivity of these systems is being hampered. The excessive demand result 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.

Deforestation

The forests are being destroyed in large proportions to obtain firewood in poor countries. Depletion of tropical forests has led to the extinction of several species. In fact, the tropical forests or "the powerhouse of evolution" are eroding at the rate of forty to fifty million acres per year. Besides, the increasing use of dung for burning deprives the soil of important natural fertilisers.

According to our Parliament's Estimates Committee, a near "catastrophic depletion" has been marked in the number of the forests of India over the last four decades. Ironically, article 48A of the Indian Constitution states that the state shall "protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife of the

country”. However, India is losing its forests at the rate of 3.7 million acres a year. The condition of the environment is ‘critical’ as per a study conducted by the United Nations.

The problem of over-population

One of the major factors adding to the deforming future of the human society is the fast-growing world population. The present world population is estimated at 5.7 billion. With this ever-increasing population, development seems a far-fetched dream.

As per the author, the best contraceptive to control the population is development. Voluntary family planning with an element of coercion is the only alternative. Rise in income, spread of education and improved health would lead to fall in fertility. Population and poverty are directly proportional to each other. Thus, control of the population should be our top-most priority.

“Era of Responsibility”

The author now re-mentions the “holistic view” of the basis of our existence. He points that it is an “Era of Responsibility” that calls for “seeing the world as an integrated whole rather than a dissociated collection of parts”. Industry plays an important role in this responsibility. Excellence in environmental performance is required for the manufacturers to continue their existence. Our earth belongs as much to the future generation as much to us. We should soon realize our duty towards our planet and should not treat it solely as our property.

The chapter concludes with the beautiful lines of Mr. Lester Brown, “We have not inherited this earth from our forefathers; we have borrowed it from our children.”

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words.

1. Why is the earth compared to a patient?
2. What does the notice 'The world's most dangerous animal' at a cage in the zoo at Lusaka, Zambia, signify?
3. What is the holistic and ecological view of the world?
4. What do you mean by sustainable development?
5. What is the catastrophic depletion according to the author?
6. How do fisheries, forests, grasslands and croplands form the foundation of global economic system?
7. How is human population explosion the biggest threat to the existence of the ailing earth?
8. Why is our age the Era of responsibility?
9. What is the view of Mr. Edgar S. Woolard, the Chairman of the Du Pont?
10. Margaret Thatcher says, “No generation has a freehold on this earth. All we have is a life tenancy – with full repairing lease.” What does it mean?

Answer the following questions in 100-120 words:

1. Are we to leave our successors a scorched planet of advancing deserts, impoverished landscapes and an ailing environment? Explain.
‘The Ailing Planet: The Green Movement’s Role’ by NaniPalkhivala is an article which appeared in “The Indian Express” on 24th November, 1994. It focuses on the deteriorating condition of the earth because of man’s growing lust to exploit all the resources.
With unchecked increase in global population, the four main biological systems- fisheries, forests, grasslands and croplands- are under severe pressure. Over fishing is common. Forests are being destroyed for firewood as also for new houses. Thousands of species are facing extinction. Forestlands are turning into deserts. The global temperature is on the rise. It is rightly said that forests ensure man’s survival whereas desert follows the annihilation of life. If we do not mend our ways, we are sure to leave for our future generations a seared planet with growing deserts, poor croplands and environment in unhealthy condition. It would be plain injustice to those who would have to suffer because of our callousness and greed.
2. 'We have not inherited this earth from our forefathers; we have borrowed it from our children'. Explain.