An Empirical Study on Environmental Issues in India

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Abstract

“Nature provides a free lunch, but only if we control our appetites.”

—William Ruckelshaus

The word “Environment” is most commonly used to describe "natural" environment and means the sum of all living and non-living things that surround an organism, or group of organisms. Environment includes all elements, factors, and conditions that have some impact on growth and development of certain organism.

The environmental issues in India become more serious every day and she is turning into a bit of a mess on this front but with a serious lack of education and over 1 Billion people, a huge amount of which are in dire poverty, it's hardly surprising. The recent boom in its industries, little or no environmental education, infrastructure nearly at bursting point not to mention the huge deforestation that's going on. In fact, there is no shortage at all of government legislation protecting the environment but unfortunately it is never enforced due to flagrant abuse of power, corruption and lack of resources. One of the critical ecological problems is the global warming that caused by large emissions of carbon dioxide in atmosphere by cars, airplanes, fabrics all over the world.

Keywords: Environment, lack of education, population, poverty, industries, deforestation, government legislation, corruption, global warming, pollution.

1. The Major Environmental Issues in India
The rapid growing population and economic development is leading to a number of environmental issues in India. It is estimated that the country’s population will increase
to about 1.26 billion by the year 2016. Major Environmental issues are Forest and Agricultural land degradation. Resource depletion (water, mineral, forest, sand, rocks etc.) Environmental degradation. Public Health. Loss of Biodiversity. Livelihood Security for the Poor. Population The four basic demographic factors of births, deaths, migration and immigration produce changes in population size, composition, distribution and these changes raise a number of important questions of cause and effect. Population growth and economic development are contributing to many serious environmental calamities in India. These include heavy pressure on land land degradation, forests, habitat destruction and loss of biodiversity. Changing consumption pattern has led to rising demand for energy. The final outcomes of this are air pollution, global warming, climate change, water scarcity and water pollution.

2. Forest and agricultural land degradation
Forest and agricultural land degradation An estimated 60% of cultivated land suffers from soil erosion, water logging, and salinity. It is also estimated that between 4.7 and 12 billion tons of topsoil are lost annually from soil erosion. From 1947 to 2002, average annual per capita water availability declined by almost 70% to 1,822 cubic meters, Overexploitation of groundwater is problematic in the states of Haryana, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh. The Indian Agricultural Research Institute has estimated that a 3 °C rise in temperature will result in a 15 to 20% loss in annual wheat yields. These are substantial problems for a nation with such a large population depending on the productivity of primary resources and whose economic growth relies heavily on industrial growth. Forest area covers 18.34% of India’s geographic area (637000 km²). Nearly half of the country’s forest cover is found in the state of Madhya Pradesh (20.7%) and the seven states of the northeast (25.7%); the latter is experiencing net forest loss Forest cover is declining because of harvesting for fuel wood and the expansion of agricultural land. These trends, combined with increasing industrial and motor vehicle pollution output, have led to atmospheric temperature increases, shifting precipitation patterns.

3. Pollution
3.1 Air pollution
Indian cities are polluted by vehicles and industry emissions. Road dust due to vehicles also contributing up to 33% of air Pollution In cities like Bangalore around 50% of children suffer from asthma One of the biggest causes of air pollution in India is from the Transport system. It also appeared that the excessive pollution was having an adverse effect on the Taj Mahal. After a court ruling all transport in the area was shut down shortly followed by the closure of all industrial factories in the area. The air pollution in the big cities is rising to such an extent that it is now 2.3 higher than the amount recommended by WHO (world health organization). [ On the positive side, the government appears to have noticed this massive problem and the associated health
risks for its people and is slowly but surely taking steps. The first of which was in 2001 when it ruled that its entire public transport system, excluding the trains, be converted from diesel to compressed gas (CPG).

3.2 Water pollution
Water pollution Out of India's 3,119 towns and cities, just 209 have partial treatment facilities, and only 8 have full wastewater treatment facilities. 114 cities dump untreated sewage and partially cremated bodies directly into the Ganges River. Downstream, the untreated water is used for drinking, bathing, and washing. This situation is typical of many rivers in India as well as other developing countries.

3.3 Noise pollution
Noise pollution The Supreme Court of India gave a significant verdict on noise pollution in 2005. Unnecessary honking of vehicles makes for a high decibel level of noise in cities. The use of loudspeakers for political purposes and by temples and mosques make for noise pollution in residential areas. Recently Government of India has set up norms of permissible noise levels in urban and rural areas. How they will be monitored and implemented is still not sure.

3.4 Land pollution
Land pollution Land pollution in India is due to pesticides and fertilizers as well as corrosion. In March 2009, the issue of Uranium poisoning in Punjab came into light, caused by fly ash ponds of thermal power stations, which reportedly lead to severe birth defects in children in the Faridkot and Bhatinda districts of Punjab. Although the British started deforestation in India, the pressures to modernize since the partition of 1947 have only increased the rates of deforestation, which causes soil erosion which leads to Land Pollution.

3.5 Biodiversity conservation in India:
Biodiversity conservation in India lying within the Indomalaya ecozone, hosts significant biodiversity. It is home to 7.6% of all mammalian, 12.6% of avian, 6.2% of reptilian, and 6.0% of flowering plant species. In recent decades, human encroachment has posed a threat to India's wildlife. In response, the system of national parks and protected areas, first established in 1935, was substantially Expanded. In 1972, India enacted the Wildlife Protection Act and Project Tiger to safeguard crucial habitat; further federal protections were promulgated in the 1980s. Along with over 500 wildlife sanctuaries, India now hosts 14 biosphere reserves, four of which are part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. 25 wetlands are registered under the Ramsar Convention.
4. Fundamental Duties of the citizens of India with respect to the environment
Fundamental Duties of the citizens of India with respect to the environment

Clause (g) of Article 51 A 2 (g)1 Clause (g) provides that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India - TO PROTECT AND IMPROVE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT INCLUDING FORESTS, LAKES, RIVERS AND WILD LIFE, AND TO HAVE COMPASSION FOR LIVING CREATURES.

Clause 2(g)4 Provides that- Earth is the common heritage of man and animals. We have no right to annihilate or drive away from their territory or natural habitat the wild denizens. Ancient Indian thought talks of Sarvesham Shantir bhavatu (peace unto all living beings and entire environment) or Ahimsa paramodharma. Ahimsa paramo tapah (non-violence is the greatest duty and the greatest penance

Clause 2(g)5 Provides that - The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, is an important step in that direction. The range of its provisions and the far-reaching measures that can be undertaken through statutory rules and orders that can be issued under the Act, show that the duty to protect and improve the natural environment has been spelt out quite elaborately in our law.

5. Environmental Protection Acts:
Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 Objective To provide the protection and improvement of environment. To make rules to regulate environmental pollution; To notify standards and maximum limits of pollutants of air, water, and soil for various areas and purposes; Prohibition and restriction on the handling of hazardous substances, and location of industries or with fine which may extend Whoever Person found to be the cause of pollution, may be liable for punishment for a term which may extend to five years to one lakh rupees or both (Sec 15, 16, 17) If not comply fine of Rs. 5000 per day extra, still if not comply for more than one year, then imprisonment may extend up to 7 years. PENALITY.

6. Forest and Wildlife Protection Act
7. The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act

8. The Bhopal Gas Tragedy
The Bhopal Gas Tragedy The Bhopal disaster is the world's worst industrial catastrophe. It occurred on the night of December 2–3, 1984 at the Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) pesticide plant in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. A leak of methyl isocyanate gas and other chemicals from the plant resulted in the exposure of hundreds of thousands of people. A government affidavit in 2006 stated the leak caused 558,125 injuries including 38,478 temporary partial and approximately 3,900 severely and permanently disabling injuries and the estimated death was 15,000

Environmental rehabilitation after Bhopal Gas Tragedy. When the factory was closed in 1985 – 1986, pipes, drums and tanks were cleaned and sold. The area around the plant was used as a dumping area for hazardous chemicals. Reported polluting compounds include naphthol, naphthalene, Sevin , chromium, lead, hexachlorethylene, hexachlorobutadiene. In order to provide safe drinking water to the population around the UCC factory, there is a scheme for improvement of water supply. [34] In December 2008, the Madhya Pradesh High Court decided that the toxic waste should be incinerated at Ankleshwar in Gujarat

Lavasa– A hill city or a controversial city? Lavasa City. Lavasa is India's first hill city since Independence. The First controversial issue is about the environmental impact. State government has granted clearance to this project which will have adverse impact on the biodiversity and which is violation of environmental laws. If the water from Varasgaon Dam is diverted to Lavasa, it will result in problems in water supply to Pune city. On January 19, 2011, the Indian ministry of environment and forest ruled Lavasa hill-city as illegal, because of environmental issues. It is very close to Pune and Mumbai. it is 50 km away from Pune and 180 km away from Mumbai

Second Issue involved here is – Clearances which the Lavasa Corporation got during the period 2002-2004 because of the shares held by daughter, son-in-law and close associates of Sharad Pawar. The Lavasa project issue is a clear example of dirty politics. It clearly shows that some politicians have no concern for the environment, people and country; they are only concerned about the profit or money.