ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

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Objectives:

To foster a comprehensive understanding of environmental concepts, natural resources, ecosystems, biodiversity, and pollution, and to equip learners with the knowledge and skills necessary for sustainable management, conservation, and environmental protection.

Unit I - Multidisciplinary Nature of Environmental Studies:

Definition, Scope and Importance - Need for Public Awareness - Environmental Ethics - Issues and Possible Solutions -Environment Protection Act.

Unit II - Natural Resources:

Forest Resources: Use and Over-Exploitation, Deforestation, Timber Extraction - Water Resources: Use and Over-Utilization of Surface and Ground Water, Floods, Drought, Dams-Benefits and Problems - Food Resources: World Food Problems, Changes Caused by Agriculture and Overgrazing, Effects of Modern Agriculture - Energy Resources: Renewable and Non-Renewable Energy Sources, Use of Alternate Energy Sources - Land Resources: Land as a Resource, Land Degradation, Soil Erosion and Desertification.

Unit III - Ecosystems:

Concept of an Ecosystem - Structure and Function of an Ecosystem-Energy Flow in the Ecosystem - Food Chains, Food Webs and Ecological Pyramids - Characteristic Features, Structure and Function of - Forest Ecosystem - Grassland Ecosystem

Unit IV - Biodiversity and its Conservation:

Introduction – Definition: Genetic, Species and Ecosystem Diversity - Biogeographical Classification of India, India as a Mega-Diversity Nation - Value of Biodiversity: Consumptive Use, Productive Use, Social, Ethical, Aesthetic Values - Hot-Sports of Biodiversity - Threats to Biodiversity: Habitat Loss, Poaching of Wildlife, Man-Wildlife Conflicts - Conservation of Biodiversity: In-Situ and Ex-Situ Conservation of Biodiversity.

Unit V - Environmental Pollution:

Definition, Cause, Effects and Control Measures of - Air Pollution - Water Pollution - Soil Pollution - Noise Pollution - Thermal Pollution - Nuclear Hazards - Solid Waste Management: Causes, Effects and Control Measures of Urban and Industrial Wastes - Disaster Management: Floods, Earthquake, Cyclone and Landslides.

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References:

1. Agarwal, S. K. (2008). *Fundamentals of ecology*. Aph Publishing.
2. Low, N. (Ed.). (1999). *Global ethics and environment* (p. 320). London: Routledge.

Course Outcomes: After completion of the course, learners will be able to:

CO1: Apply principles of environmental ethics to address environmental issues and propose sustainable solutions.

CO2: Evaluate the use, management, and conservation of resources to promote sustainability.

CO3: Compare and contrast different ecosystems and assess their ecological significance.

CO4: Assess the value, threats, and conservation strategies of biodiversity.

CO5: Identify various types of environmental pollution, their causes and effects, and propose measures for pollution control, waste management, and disaster mitigation.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

UNIT	LESSON	TITLE	PAGE NO.
I	1	The Multidisciplinary Nature of Environmental Studies	1
II	1	Natural Resources	15
III	1	Ecosystems	53
IV	1	Biodiversity and its Conservation	81
V	1	Environmental Pollution	111

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UNIT 1:

The Multidisciplinary Nature of Environmental Studies

1.1 DEFINITION, SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE 3

1.1.1 Definition 3

1.1.2 Scope 3

1.1.3 Importance 5

1.2 NEED FOR PUBLIC AWARENESS 8

1.2.1 Institutions in Environment 9

1.2.2 People in Environment 12

This course on the environment is unlike any other. It is not only a collection of facts or information about the environment. It is about the way we all should live. It is expected to give you information about the environment that will lead to a concern for your own environment. When you develop this concern, you will begin to act at your own level to protect the environment we all live in. This is the objective of the course and the syllabus is a framework on which we must all realign our lives.

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This textbook deals with major environmental concerns that have been identified as important areas where background information is essential for a better understanding of our environment. It stresses on a balanced view of issues that affect our daily lives. These issues are related to the conflict between existing 'development' strategies and the need for 'environmental conservation'. Unlike most other textbooks, it not only makes the reader better informed on these concerns, but is expected to lead him or her towards positive action to improve the environment.

There are three reasons for studying the state of the environment. Firstly is the need for information that clarifies modern environmental concepts such as the need to conserve biodiversity, the need to lead more sustainable lifestyles and the need to use resources more equitably. Secondly, there is a need to change the way in which we view our own environment by a practical approach based on observation and self learning. Thirdly there is the need to create a concern for our environment that will trigger pro-environmental action, including activities we can do in our daily life to protect it.

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1.1 DEFINITION, SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE

1.1.1 Definition

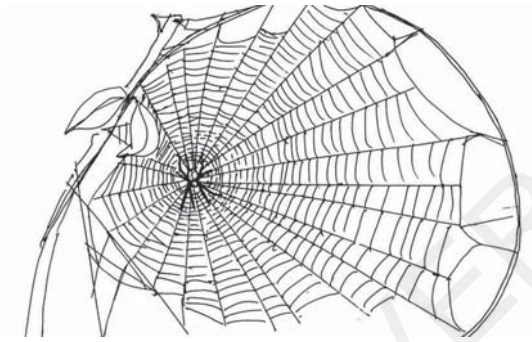
Environmental studies deals with every issue that affects an organism. It is essentially a multidisciplinary approach that brings about an appreciation of our natural world and human impacts on its integrity. It is an applied science as its seeks practical answers to making human civilization sustainable on the earth's finite resources.

Its components include biology, geology, chemistry, physics, engineering, sociology, health, anthropology, economics, statistics, computers and philosophy.

1.1.2 Scope

As we look around at the area in which we live, we see that our surroundings were originally a natural landscape such as a forest, a river, a mountain, a desert, or a combination of these elements. Most of us live in landscapes that have been heavily modified by human beings, in villages, towns or cities. But even those of us who live in cities get our food supply from surrounding villages and these in turn are dependent on natural landscapes such as forests, grasslands, rivers, seashores, for resources such as water for agriculture, fuel wood, fodder, and fish. Thus our daily lives are linked with our surroundings and inevitably affects them. We use water to drink and for other day-to-day activities. We breathe air, we use resources from which food is made and we depend on the community of living plants and animals which form a web of life, of which we are also a part. Everything around us forms our environment and our lives depend on keeping its vital systems as intact as possible.

Our dependence on nature is so great that we cannot continue to live without protecting the



earth's environmental resources. Thus most traditions refer to our environment as 'Mother Nature' and most traditional societies have learned that respecting nature is vital for their livelihoods. This has led to many cultural practices that helped traditional societies protect and preserve their natural resources. Respect for nature and all living creatures is not new to India. All our traditions are based on these values. Emperor Ashoka's edict proclaimed that all forms of life are important for our well being in Fourth Century BC.

Over the past 200 years however, modern societies began to believe that easy answers to the question of producing more resources could be provided by means of technological innovations. For example, though growing more food by using fertilizers and pesticides, developing better strains of domestic animals and crops, irrigating farmland through mega dams and developing industry, led to rapid economic growth, the ill effects of this type of development, led to environmental degradation.

The industrial development and intensive agriculture that provides the goods for our increasingly consumer oriented society uses up large amounts of natural resources such as water, minerals, petroleum products, wood, etc. Non-renewable resources, such as minerals and oil are those which will be exhausted in the future if we continue to extract these without a thought for subsequent generations. Renew-

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able resources, such as timber and water, are those which can be used but can be regenerated by natural processes such as regrowth or rainfall. But these too will be depleted if we continue to use them faster than nature can replace them. For example, if the removal of timber and firewood from a forest is faster than the regrowth and regeneration of trees, it cannot replenish the supply. And loss of forest cover not only depletes the forest of its resources, such as timber and other non-wood products, but affect our water resources because an intact natural forest acts like a sponge which holds water and releases it slowly. Deforestation leads to floods in the monsoon and dry rivers once the rains are over.

Such multiple effects on the environment resulting from routine human activities must be appreciated by each one of us, if it is to provide us with the resources we need in the long-term.

Our natural resources can be compared with money in a bank. If we use it rapidly, the capital will be reduced to zero. On the other hand, if we use only the interest, it can sustain us over the longer term. This is called sustainable utilisation or development.

Activity 1:

Take any article that you use in daily life – a bucket full of water, or an item of food, a table, or a book. Trace its components journey backwards from your home to their origins as natural resources in our environment. How many of these components are renewable resources and how many non-renewable?

Understanding and making ourselves more aware of our environmental assets and problems is not enough. We, each one of us, must become increasingly concerned about our envi-

ronment and change the way in which we use every resource. Unsustainable utilization can result from overuse of resources, because of population increase, and because many of us are using more resources than we really need. Most of us indulge in wasteful behaviour patterns without ever thinking about their environmental impacts. Thus, for all our actions to be environmentally positive we need to look from a new perspective at how we use resources. For every resource we use we must ask ourselves the following questions:

- What is the rarity of the resource and where does it originate?
- Who uses it most intensively and how?
- How is it being overused or misused?
- Who is responsible for its improper use – the resource collector, the middleman, the end user?
- How can we help to conserve it and prevent its unsustainable use?

Activity 2:

Try to answer the questions above for one of the components in the article you chose in Activity 1. Then answer the following questions:

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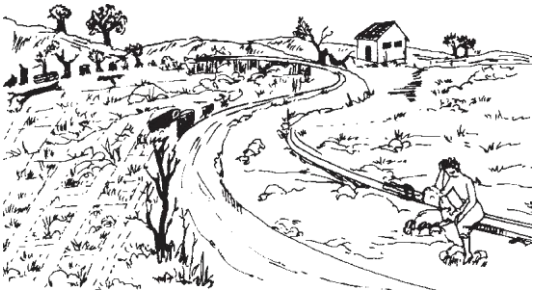


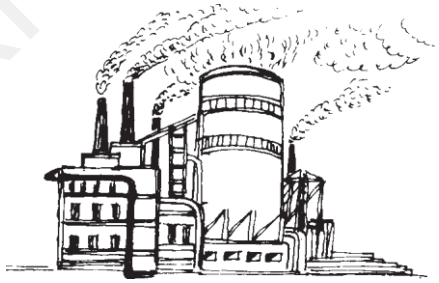
- Are you using that resource unsustainably?
- In what ways could you reduce, reuse and recycle that resource?
- Is there an unequal distribution of this resource so that you are more fortunate than many others who have less access to it?

Once we begin to ask these questions of ourselves, we will begin to live lifestyles that are more sustainable and will support our environment.

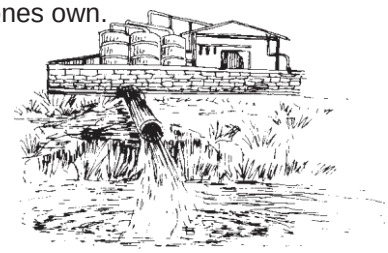
1.1.3 Importance

Environment is not a single subject. It is an integration of several subjects that include both Science and Social Studies. To understand all the different aspects of our environment we need to understand biology, chemistry, physics, geography, resource management, economics and population issues. Thus the scope of environmental studies is extremely wide and covers some aspects of nearly every major discipline.

We live in a world in which natural resources are limited. Water, air, soil, minerals, oil, the products we get from forests, grasslands, oceans and from agriculture and livestock, are all a part of our life support systems. Without them, life itself would be impossible. As we keep increasing in numbers and the quantity of resources each of us uses also increases, the earth's resource base must inevitably shrink. The earth cannot be expected to sustain this expanding level of utilization of resources. Added to this is misuse of resources. We waste or pollute large amounts of nature's clean water; we create more and more material like plastic that we discard after a single use; and we waste colossal amounts of food, which is discarded as garbage. Manufacturing processes create solid waste byproducts that are discarded, as well as chemicals that flow out as liquid waste and pollute water, and gases that pollute the air. Increasing amounts of waste cannot be managed by natural processes. These accumulate in our environment, leading to a variety of diseases and other adverse environmental impacts now seriously affecting all our lives. Air pollution leads to respiratory diseases, water pollution to gastro-intestinal diseases, and many pollutants are known to cause cancer.



Improving this situation will only happen if each of us begins to take actions in our daily lives that will help preserve our environmental resources. We cannot expect Governments alone to manage the safeguarding of the environment, nor can we expect other people to prevent environmental damage. We need to do it ourselves. It is a responsibility that each of us must take on as ones own.



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Activity 3:

- Think of all the things that you do in a day. List these activities and identify the main resources used during these activities. What can you do to prevent waste, reuse articles that you normally throw away, what recycled materials can you use?

- Think of the various energy sources you use everyday. How could you reduce their use?

Activity 4: Exercises in self learning about the environment

Attempt to assess the level of damage to the environment due to your actions that have occurred during your last working day, the last week, the last year. Then estimate the damage you are likely to do in your lifetime if you continue in your present ways.

Use the following examples for the above exercise:

Example - Plastic: Plastic bags, plastic ball pens

Think about all the articles you use daily that are made from plastic. Plastic plays an important part in our modern lives.

Make a list of the plastic articles you usually use.

How can you reduce the amount of plastic you use?

What effects does plastic have on our environment?

Where did the plastic come from/ how is it made?

What happens to it when you throw it away/ where does it go?

Example - Fossil fuels:

How much do you use? Can you reduce your consumption?

What effect does it have on the air we breathe?

When we leave a motorbike or car running during a traffic stop, we do not usually remember that the fuel we are wasting is a part of a non-renewable resource that the earth cannot reform. Once all the fossil fuels are burnt off, it will mean the end of oil as a source of energy. Only if each of us contributes our part in conserving fossil based energy can we make it last longer on earth.

Example - Water:

How much do you really need to use, as against how much you waste when you:

(a) Brush your teeth? (b) Have a bath? (c) Wash clothes? (d) Wash the scooter or car?

Where did the water come from? What is its actual source? How has it reached you?

Where will the waste water go?

Do you feel you should change the way you use water? How can you change this so that it is more sustainable?

Example - Food:

Where has it come from? How is it grown? What chemicals are used in its production? How does it reach you?

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How is it cooked?

How much is wasted? How is the waste disposed off?

Example - Paper:

What is it made from?

Where does it come from and what happens during manufacture?

How much do you use and how much do you waste? How can you prevent it from being wasted?

Example - Electrical Energy:

How much do you use everyday? Where does it come from?

How do you waste it? How can you conserve energy?

Productive value of nature: As scientists make new advances in fields such as biotechnology we begin to understand that the world's species contain an incredible and uncountable number of complex chemicals. These are the raw materials that are used for developing new medicines and industrial products and are a storehouse from which to develop thousands of new products in the future. The flowering plants and insects that form the most species-rich groups of living organisms are thus vital for the future development of man. If we degrade their habitat these species will become extinct. If one sees being sold or used, a product that comes from an illegally killed wild species, if we do not inform the authorities, we become party to its extinction. Once they are lost, man cannot bring them back. When we permit the destruction of a forest, wetland or other natural area and do not protest about it, future generations are being denied the use of these valuable resources and will blame us for these rash and negligent actions towards the environment.

Thus the urgent need to protect all living species is a concept that we need to understand and act upon. While individually, we perhaps cannot directly prevent the extinction of a species, creating a strong public opinion to protect the National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries in which wild species live is an importance aspect of sustainable living. There is a close link between agriculture and the forest, which illustrates its productive value. For crops to be successful, the flowers of fruit trees and vegetables must be pollinated by insects, bats and birds. Their life cycles however frequently require intact forests.

Aesthetic/Recreational value of nature: The aesthetic and recreational values that nature possesses enlivens our existence on earth. This is created by developing National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries in relatively undisturbed areas. A true wilderness experience has not only recreational value but is an incredible learning experience. It brings about an understanding of the oneness of nature and the fact that we are entirely dependent upon the intricate functioning of ecosystems.

The beauty of nature encompasses every aspect of the living and non-living part of our earth. One can appreciate the magnificence of a mountain, the power of the sea, the beauty of a forest, and the vast expanse of the desert. It is these natural vistas and their incredible diversity of plant and animal life that has led to the development of several philosophies of life. It has also inspired artists to develop visual arts and writers and poets to create their works that vitalize our lives.

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A wilderness experience has exceptional recreational value. This has been described as nature tourism, or wildlife tourism, and is also one aspect of adventure tourism. These recreational facilities not only provide a pleasurable experience but are intended to create a deep respect and love for nature. They are also key tools in educating people about the fragility of the environment and the need for sustainable lifestyles.

In an urban setting, green spaces and gardens are vital to the pschycological and physical health of city dwellers. It provides not only an aesthetic and visual appeal but the ability to ensure that each individual is able to access a certain amount of peace and tranquility. Thus urban environmental planners must ensure that these facilities are created in growing urban complexes. Another important conservation education facility in urban settings includes the need to set up well designed and properly managed zoological parks and aquariums. These have got great value in sensitizing school students to wildlife. Many young people who frequented zoos as young children grow up to love wildlife and become conservationists.

In the absence of access to a Protected Area, a botanical garden or a zoo, one concept that can be developed is to create small nature awareness areas with interpretation facilities at district and taluka levels. These areas can be developed to mimic natural ecosystems even though they could be relatively small in size. Such nature trails are invaluable assets for creating conservation education and awareness. They can be developed in a small woodlot, a patch of grassland, a pond ecosystem, or be situated along an undisturbed river or coastal area. This would bring home to the visitor the importance of protecting our dwindling wilderness areas.

The option values of nature: While we utilise several goods and services of nature and enjoy its benefits, we must recognize that every activity that we do in our daily lives has an adverse impact on nature's integrity. Thus if we use up all our resources, kill off and let species of plants and animals become extinct on earth, pollute our air and water, degrade land, and create enormous quantities of waste, we as a generation will leave nothing for future generations. Our present generation has developed its economies and lifestyles on unsustainable patterns of life. however, nature provides us with various options on how we utilize its goods and services. This is its option value. We can use up goods and services greedily and destroy its integrity and long term values, or we can use its resources sustainably and reduce our impacts on the environment. The option value allows us to use its resources sustainably and preserve its goods and services for the future.

1.2 NEED FOR PUBLIC AWARENESS

As the earth's natural resources are dwindling and our environment is being increasingly degraded by human activities, it is evident that something needs to be done. We often feel that managing all this is something that the Government should do. But if we go on endangering our environment, there is no

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way in which the Government can perform all these clean-up functions. It is the prevention of environment degradation in which we must all take part that must become a part of all our lives. Just as for any disease, prevention is better than cure. To prevent ill-effects on our environment by our actions, is economically more viable than cleaning up the environment once it is damaged. Individually we can play a major role in environment management. We can reduce wasting natural resources and we can act as watchdogs that inform the Government about sources that lead to pollution and degradation of our environment.

This can only be made possible through mass public awareness. Mass media such as newspapers, radio, television, strongly influence public opinion. However, someone has to bring this about. If each of us feels strongly about the environment, the press and media will add to our efforts. Politicians in a democracy always respond positively to a strong publicly supported movement. Thus if you join an NGO that supports conservation, politicians will make green policies. We are living on spaceship earth with a limited supply of resources. Each of us is responsible for spreading this message to as many people as possible.

Suggested further activities for concerned students:

- Join a group to study nature, such as WWF-I or BNHS, or another environmental group.
- Begin reading newspaper articles and periodicals such as 'Down to Earth', WWF-I newsletter, BNHS Hornbill, Sanctuary magazine, etc. that will tell you more about our environment. There are also several environmental websites.
- Lobby for conserving resources by taking up the cause of environmental issues during discussions with friends and relatives. Practice and promote issues such as saving paper, saving water, reducing use of plastics, practicing the 3Rs principle of reduce, reuse, recycle, and proper waste disposal.
- Join local movements that support activities such as saving trees in your area, go on nature treks, recycle waste, buy environmentally friendly products.
- Practice and promote good civic sense such as no spitting or tobacco chewing, no throwing garbage on the road, no smoking in public places, no urinating or defecating in public places.
- Take part in events organised on World Environment Day, Wildlife Week, etc.
- Visit a National Park or Sanctuary, or spend time in whatever nature you have near your home.

1.2.1 Institutions in Environment

There have been several Government and Non-government organizations that have led to environmental protection in our country. They have led to a growing interest in environmental protection and conservation of nature and natural resources. The traditional conservation practices that were part of ancient India's culture have however gradually disappeared. Public awareness is thus a critical need to further environmental protection. Among the large number of institutions that deal with environmental protection and conservation, a few well-known organizations include government organisations such as the BSI and ZSI, and NGOs such as BNHS, WWF-I, etc.

Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Mumbai: the BNHS began as a small society of six members in 1883. It grew from a group of

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shikaris and people from all walks of life into a major research organisation that substantially influenced conservation policy in the country. The influence on wildlife policy building, research, popular publications and peoples action have been unique features of the multi-faceted society. Undoubtedly its major contribution has been in the field of wildlife research. It is India's oldest conservation research based NGO and one that has acted at the forefront of the battle for species and ecosystems. The BNHS publishes a popular magazine called Hornbill and also an internationally well-known Journal on Natural History. Its other publications include the Salim Ali Handbook on birds, JC Daniel's book of Indian Reptiles, SH Prater's book of Indian Mammals and PV Bole's book of Indian Trees. One of its greatest scientists was Dr. Salim Ali whose ornithological work on the birds of the Indian subcontinent is world famous. The BNHS has over the years helped Government to frame wildlife related laws and has taken up battles such as the 'Save the Silent Valley' campaign.

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-I), New Delhi: The WWF-I was initiated in 1969 in Mumbai after which the headquarters were shifted to Delhi with several branch offices all over India. The early years focused attention on wildlife education and awareness. It runs several programs including the Nature Clubs of India program for school children and works as a think tank and lobby force for environment and development issues.

Center for Science and Environment (CSE), New Delhi: Activities of this Center include organising campaigns, holding workshops and conferences, and producing environment related publications. It published a major document on the 'State of India's Environment', the first of its kind to be produced as a Citizen's Report on the Environment. The CSE also publishes a popular magazine, 'Down to Earth', which is a Science and Environment fortnightly. It is involved in the publication of material in the form of books, posters, video films and also conducts workshops and seminars on biodiversity related issues.

CPR Environmental Education Centre, Madras: The CPR EEC was set up in 1988. It conducts a variety of programs to spread environmental awareness and creates an interest in conservation among the general public. It focussed attention on NGOs, teachers, women, youth and children to generally promote conservation of nature and natural resources. Its programs include components on wildlife and biodiversity issues. CPR EEC also produces a large number of publications.

Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Ahmedabad: The Centre for Environment Education, Ahmedabad was initiated in 1989. It has a wide range of programs on the environment and produces a variety of educational material. CEE's Training in Environment Education {TEE} program has trained many environment educators.

Bharati Vidyapeeth Institute of Environment Education and Research (BVIEER), Pune: This is part of the Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University. The Institute has a PhD, a Masters and Bachelors program in Environmental Sciences. It also offers an innovative Diploma in Environment Education for in-service teachers. It implements a large outreach programme that has covered over 135 schools in which it trains teachers and conducts fortnightly Environment Education Programs. Biodiversity Conservation is a major focus of its research initiatives. It develops low cost Interpretation Centres for Natural and Architectural sites that are highly locale specific as well as a large amount of innovative environment educational

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material for a variety of target groups. Its unique feature is that it conducts environment education from primary school level to the postgraduate level. The BVIEER has produced several EE aids. It has developed a teacher's handbook linked to school curriculum, a textbook for UGC for its undergraduate course on environment. Its Director has developed a CD ROM on India's biodiversity published by Mapin Publishers, Ahmedabad.

Uttarkhand Seva Nidhi (UKSN), Almora: The Organisation is a Nodal Agency which supports NGOs in need of funds for their environment related activities. Its major program is organising and training school teachers to use its locale specific Environment Education Workbook Program. The main targets are linked with sustainable resource use at the village level through training school children. Its environment education program covers about 500 schools.

Kalpavriksh, Pune: This NGO, initially Delhi based, is now working from Pune and is active in several other parts of India. Kalpavriksh works on a variety of fronts: education and awareness; investigation and research; direct action and lobbying; and litigation with regard to environment and development issues. Its activities include talks and audio-visuals in schools and colleges, nature walks and outstation camps, organising student participation in ongoing campaigns including street demonstrations, pushing for consumer awareness regarding organic food, press statements, handling green alerts, and meetings with the city's administrators. It is involved with the preparation of site-specific, environmental manuals for schoolteachers. Kalpavriksh was responsible for developing India's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan in 2003.

Salim Ali Center for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), Coimbatore: This institution was Dr. Salim Ali's dream that became a reality only after his demise. He wished to support a group of committed conservation scientists on a permanent basis. Initially conceived as being a wing of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) it later evolved as an independent organisation based at Coimbatore in 1990. It has instituted a variety of field programs that have added to the country's information on our threatened biodiversity.

Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun: This Institution was established in 1982, as a major training establishment for Forest Officials and Research in Wildlife Management. Its most significant publication has been 'Planning A Wildlife Protected Area Network for India' (Rodgers and Panwar, 1988). The organisation has over the years added an enormous amount of information on India's biological wealth. It has trained a large number of Forest Department Officials and Staff as Wildlife Managers. Its M.Sc. Program has trained excellent wildlife scientists. It also has an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) cell. It trains personnel in ecodevelopment, wildlife biology, habitat management and Nature interpretation.

Botanical Survey of India (BSI): The Botanical Survey of India (BSI) was established in 1890 at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Calcutta. However it closed down for several years after 1939 and was reopened in 1954. In 1952 plans were made to reorganise the BSI and formulate its objectives. By 1955 the BSI had its headquarters in Calcutta with Circle Offices at Coimbatore, Shillong, Pune and Dehra Dun. Between 1962 and 1979, offices were established in Allahbad, Jodhpur, Port Blair, Itanagar and Gangtok. The BSI currently has nine regional centres. It carries out surveys of plant resources in different regions.

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Zoological Survey of India (ZSI): The ZSI was established in1916. Its mandate was to do a systematic survey of fauna in India. It has over the years collected 'type specimens' on the bases of which our animal life has been studied over the years. Its origins were collections based at the Indian Museum at Calcutta, which was established in 1875. Older collections of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, which were made between 1814 and 1875, as well as those of the Indian Museum made between 1875 and 1916 were then transferred to the ZSI. Today it has over a million specimens! This makes it one of the largest collections in Asia. It has done an enormous amount of work on taxonomy and ecology. It currently operates from 16 regional centers.

1.2.2 People in Environment

There are several internationally known environmental thinkers. Among those who have made landmarks, the names that are usually mentioned are Charles Darwin, Ralph Emerson, Henry Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopald, Rachel Carson and EO Wilson. Each of these thinkers looked at the environment from a completely different perspective. Charles Darwin wrote the 'Origin of Species', which brought to light the close relationship between habitats and species. It brought about a new thinking of man's relationship with other species that was based on evolution. Alfred Wallace came to the same conclusions during his work. Ralph Emerson spoke of the dangers of commerce to our environment way back in the 1840s. Henry Thoreau in the 1860s wrote that the wilderness should be preserved after he lived in the wild for a year. He felt that most people did not care for nature and would sell it off for a small sum of money. John Muir is remembered as having saved the great ancient sequoia trees in California'a forests. In the 1890s he formed the Sierra club, which is a major conservation NGO in the USA. Aldo Leopald was a forest official in the US in the 1920s. He designed the early policies on wilderness conservation and wildlife management. In the 1960s Rachel Carson published several articles that caused immediate worldwide concern on the effects of pesticides on nature and mankind. She wrote a well-known book called 'Silent Spring' which eventually led to a change in Government policy and public awareness. EO Wilson is an entomologist who envisioned that biological diversity was a key to human survival on earth. He wrote 'Diversity of Life' in 1993, which was awarded a prize for the best book published on environmental issues. His writings brought home to the world the risks to mankind due to man made disturbances in natural ecosystems that are leading to the rapid extinction of species at the global level.

There have been a number of individuals who have been instrumental in shaping the environmental history in our country. Some of the well-known names in the last century include environmentalists, scientists, administrators, legal experts, educationists and journalists. Salim Ali's name is synonymous with ornithology in India and with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). He also wrote several great books including the famous 'Book of Indian Birds'. His autobiography, 'Fall of a Sparrow' should be read by every nature enthusiast. He was our country's leading conservation scientist and influenced environmental policies in our country for over 50 years. Indira Gandhi as PM has played a highly significant role in the preservation of India's wildlife. It was during her period as PM, that the network of PAs grew from 65 to 298! The Wildlife Protection Act was formulated during the period when she was PM and the Indian Board for Wildlife was extremely active as she personally chaired all its meetings. India gained a name for itself by being a major player in CITES and other International Environmental Treaties and Accords during her tenure. BNHS frequently used her good will to get conservation action initiated by the Government.

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S P Godrej was one of India's greatest supporters of wildlife conservation and nature awareness programs. Between 1975 and 1999, SP Godrej received 10 awards for his conservation activities. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1999. His friendship with people in power combined with his deep commitment for conservation led to his playing a major advocacy role for wildlife in India. M S Swaminathan is one of India's foremost agricultural scientists and has also been concerned with various aspects of biodiversity conservation both of cultivars and wild biodiversity. He has founded the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation in Chennai, which does work on the conservation of biological diversity. Madhav Gadgil is a well-known ecologist in India. His interests range from broad ecological issues such as developing Community Biodiversity Registers and conserving sacred groves to studies on the behaviour of mammals, birds and insects. He has written several articles, published papers in journals and is the author of 6 books. M C Mehta is undoubtedly India's most famous environmental lawyer. Since 1984, he has filed several Public Interest Litigations for supporting the cause of environmental conservation. His most famous and long drawn battles supported by the Supreme Court include protecting the Taj Mahal, cleaning up the Ganges River, banning intensive shrimp farming on the coast, initiating Government to implement environmental education in schools and colleges, and a variety of other conservation issues. Anil Agarwal was a journalist who wrote the first report on the 'State of India's Environment' in 1982. He founded the Center for Science and Environment which is an active NGO that supports various environmental issues. Medha Patkar is known as one of India's champions who has supported the cause of downtrodden tribal people whose environment is being affected by the dams on the Narmada river. Sunderlal Bahugna's Chipko Movement has become an internationally well-known example of a highly successful conservation action program through the efforts of local people for guarding their forest resources. His fight to prevent the construction of the Tehri Dam in a fragile earthquake prone setting is a battle that he continues to wage. The Garhwal Hills will always remember his dedication to the cause for which he has walked over 20 thousand kilometers.

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UNIT 2:
Natural Resources

2.1 INTRODUCTION 16

2.2 RENEWABLE AND NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES 20

2.2.1 Natural resources and associated problems 20

2.2.2 Non-renewable resources 22

2.2.3 Renewable resources 22

a. Forest Resources: Use and over-exploitation, deforestation, case studies. Timber extraction, mining, dams and their effects on forests and tribal people 23

b. Water Resources: Use and over-utilisation of surface and ground water, floods, drought, conflicts over water, dams – benefits and problems. 26

c. Mineral Resources: Use and exploitation, environmental effects of extracting and using mineral resources, case studies. 30

d. Food Resources: World food problems, Changes in landuse by agriculture and grazing, Effects of modern agriculture, Fertilizer/ pesticide problems, Water logging and salinity 32

e. Energy Resources: Increasing energy needs, Renewable/ non renewable, Use of Alternate energy sources, Case studies 35

f. Land resources: Land as a resource, land degradation, man-induced land-slides, soil erosion and desertification. 48

2.3 ROLE OF AN INDIVIDUAL IN CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES 50

2.4 EQUITABLE USE OF RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES 51

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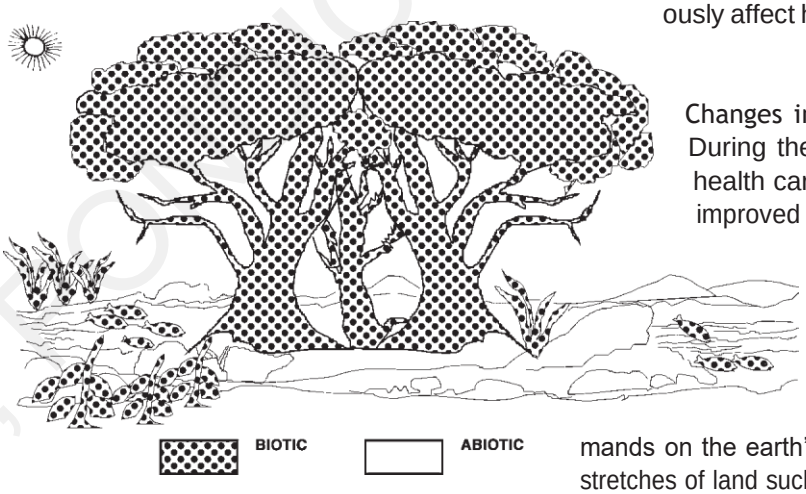
2.1 INTRODUCTION

Our environment provides us with a variety of goods and services necessary for our day to day lives. These natural resources include, air, water, soil, minerals, along with the climate and solar energy, which form the non-living or 'abiotic' part of nature. The 'biotic' or living parts of nature consists of plants and animals, including microbes. Plants and animals can only survive as communities of different organisms, all closely linked to each in their own habitat, and requiring specific abiotic conditions. Thus, forests, grasslands, deserts, mountains, rivers, lakes and the marine environment all form habitats for specialised communities of plants and animals to live in. Interactions between the abiotic aspects of nature and specific living organisms together form ecosystems of various types. Many of these living organisms are used as our food resources. Others are linked to our food less directly, such as pollinators and dispersers of plants, soil animals like worms, which recycle nutrients for plant growth, and fungi and termites that break up dead plant material so that micro-organisms can act on the detritus to reform soil nutrients.



History of our global environment: About ten thousand years ago, when mankind changed from a hunter-gatherer, living in wilderness areas such as forests and grasslands, into an agriculturalist and pastoralist, we began to change the environment to suit our own requirements. As our ability to grow food and use domestic animals grew, these 'natural' ecosystems were developed into agricultural land. Most traditional agriculturists depended extensively on rain, streams and rivers for water. Later they began to use wells to tap underground water sources and to impound water and created irrigated land by building dams. Recently we began to use fertilizers and pesticides to further boost the production of food from the same amount of land. However we now realize that all this has led to several undesirable changes in our environment. Mankind has been overusing and depleting natural resources. The over-intensive use of land has been found to exhaust the capability of the ecosystem to support the growing demands of more and more people, all requiring more intensive use of resources. Industrial growth, urbanisation, population growth and the enormous increase in the use of consumer goods, have all put further stresses on the environment. They create great quantities of solid waste. Pollution of air, water and soil have begun to seriously affect human health.

Changes in land and resource use: During the last 100 years, a better health care delivery system and an improved nutritional status has led to rapid population growth, especially in the developing countries. This phenomenal rise in human numbers has, in the recent past, placed great demands on the earth's natural resources. Large stretches of land such as forests, grasslands and wetlands have been converted into intensive agriculture. Land has been taken for industry and

the urban sectors. These changes have brought about dramatic alterations in land-use patterns and rapid disappearance of valuable natural ecosystems. The need for more water, more food, more energy, more consumer goods, is not only the result of a greater population, but also the result of over-utilization of resources by people from the more affluent societies, and the affluent sections of our own.

Industrial development is aimed at meeting growing demands for all consumer items. However, these consumer goods also generate waste in ever larger quantities. The growth of industrial complexes has led to a shift of people from their traditional, sustainable, rural way of life to urban centers that developed around industry. During the last few decades, several small urban centers have become large cities, some have even become giant mega-cities. This has increased the disparity between what the surrounding land can produce and what the large number of increasingly consumer-oriented people in these areas of high population density consume. Urban centers cannot exist without resources such as water from rivers and lakes, food from agricultural areas, domestic animals from pasture lands and timber, fuel wood, construction material and other resources from forests. Rural agricultural systems are dependent on forests, wetlands, grasslands, rivers and lakes. The result is a movement of natural resources from the wilderness ecosystems and agricultural sector to the urban user. The magnitude of the shift of resources has been increasing in parallel with the growth of industry and urbanisation, and has changed natural landscapes all over the world. In many cases, this has led to the rapid development of the urban economy, but to a far slower economic development for rural people and serious impoverishment of the lives of wilderness dwellers. The result is a serious inequality in the distribution of resources among human beings, which is both unfair and unsustainable.

Earth's Resources and Man: The resources on which mankind is dependent are provided by various sources or 'spheres'.

1) Atmosphere

- Oxygen for human respiration (metabolic requirements).
- Oxygen for wild fauna in natural ecosystems and domestic animals used by man as food.
- Oxygen as a part of carbon dioxide, used for the growth of plants (in turn are used by man).

The atmosphere forms a protective shell over the earth. The lowest layer, the troposphere, the only part warm enough for us to survive in, is only 12 kilometers thick. The stratosphere is 50 kilometers thick and contains a layer of sulphates which is important for the formation of rain. It also contains a layer of ozone, which absorbs ultra-violet light known to cause cancer and without which, no life could exist on earth. The atmosphere is not uniformly warmed by the sun. This leads to air flows and variations in climate, temperature and rainfall in different parts of the earth. It is a complex dynamic system. If its nature is disrupted it affects all mankind. Most air pollutants have both global and regional effects.

Living creatures cannot survive without air even for a span of a few minutes. To continue to support life, air must be kept clean. Major pollutants of air are created by industrial units that release various gases such as carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and toxic fumes into the air. Air is also polluted by burning fossil fuels. The buildup of carbon dioxide which is known as 'greenhouse effect' in the atmosphere is leading to current global warming. The growing number of scooters, motorcycles, cars, buses and trucks which run on fossil fuel (petrol and diesel) is a major cause of air pollution in cities and along highways.

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Air pollution leads to acute and chronic respiratory diseases such as various lung infections, asthma and even cancer.

2) Hydrosphere

- Clean water for drinking (a metabolic requirement for living processes).
- Water for washing and cooking.
- Water used in agriculture and industry.
- Food resources from the sea, including fish, crustacea, sea weed, etc.
- Food from fresh water sources, including fish, crustacea and aquatic plants.
- Water flowing down from mountain ranges harnessed to generate electricity in hydroelectric projects.

The hydrosphere covers three quarters of the earth's surface. A major part of the hydrosphere is the marine ecosystem in the ocean, while only a small part occurs in fresh water. Fresh water in rivers, lakes and glaciers, is perpetually being renewed by a process of evaporation and rainfall. Some of this fresh water lies in underground aquifers. Human activities such as deforestation create serious changes in the hydrosphere. Once land is denuded of vegetation, the rain erodes the soil which is washed into the sea.

Chemicals from industry and sewage find their way into rivers and into the sea. Water pollution thus threatens the health of communities as all our lives depend on the availability of clean water. This once plentiful resource is now becoming rare and expensive due to pollution.

3) Lithosphere

- Soil, the basis for agriculture to provide us with food.
- Stone, sand and gravel, used for construction.
- Micronutrients in soil, essential for plant growth.
- Microscopic flora, small soil fauna and fungi in soil, important living organisms of the lithosphere, which break down plant litter as well as animal wastes to provide nutrients for plants.
- A large number of minerals on which our industries are based.
- Oil, coal and gas, extracted from underground sources. It provides power for vehicles, agricultural machinery, industry, and for our homes.

The lithosphere began as a hot ball of matter which formed the earth about 4.6 billion years ago. About 3.2 billion years ago, the earth cooled down considerably and a very special event took place - life began on our planet. The crust of the earth is 6 or 7 kilometers thick and lies under the continents. Of the 92 elements in the lithosphere only eight are common constituents of crustal rocks. Of these constituents, 47% is oxygen, 28% is silicon, 8% is aluminium, 5% is iron, while sodium, magnesium, potassium and calcium constitute 4% each. Together, these elements form about 200 common mineral compounds. Rocks, when broken down, form soil on which man is dependent for his agriculture. Their minerals are also the raw material used in various industries.

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4) Biosphere

- Food, from crops and domestic animals, providing human metabolic requirements.
- Food, for all forms of life which live as interdependent species in a community and form food chains in nature on which man is dependent.
- Energy needs: Biomass fuel wood collected from forests and plantations, along with other forms of organic matter, used as a source of energy.
- Timber and other construction materials.

This is the relatively thin layer on the earth in which life can exist. Within it the air, water, rocks and soil and the living creatures, form structural and functional ecological units, which together can be considered as one giant global living system, that of our Earth itself. Within this framework, those characterised by broadly similar geography and climate, as well as communities of plant and animal life can be divided for convenience into different biogeographical realms. These occur on different continents. Within these, smaller biogeographical units can be identified on the basis of structural differences and functional aspects into distinctive recognizable ecosystems, which give a distinctive character to a landscape or waterscape. Their easily visible and identifiable characteristics can be described at different scales such as those of a country, a state, a district or even an individual valley, hill range, river or lake.

The simplest of these ecosystems to understand is a pond. It can be used as a model to understand the nature of any other ecosystem and to appreciate the changes over time that are seen in any ecosystem. The structural features of a pond include its size, depth and the quality of its water. The periphery, the shallow part and the deep part of the pond, each provide specific conditions for different plant and animal communities. Functionally, a variety of cycles such as the amount of water within the pond at different times of the year, the quantity of nutrients flowing into the pond from the surrounding terrestrial ecosystem, all affect the 'nature' of the pond.

Natural cycles between the spheres: All four spheres are closely inter-linked systems and are dependent on the integrity of each other. Disturbing one of these spheres in our environment affects all the others.

The linkages between them are mainly in the form of cycles. For instance, the atmosphere, hydrosphere and lithosphere are all connected through the hydrological cycle. Water evaporated from the hydrosphere (the seas and freshwater ecosystems), forms clouds in the atmosphere. This becomes rain, which provides moisture for the lithosphere, on which life depends. The rain also acts on rocks as an agent of erosion and over millions of years has created soil, on which plant life grows. Atmospheric movements in the form of wind, break down rocks into soil. The most sensitive and complex linkages are those between the atmosphere, the hydrosphere and the lithosphere on the one hand, with the millions of living organisms in the biosphere on the other. All living organisms which exist on earth live only in the relatively thin layer of the lithosphere and hydrosphere that is present on the surface of land and in the water. The biosphere which they form has countless associations with different parts of the three other 'spheres'.

It is therefore essential to understand the interrelationships of the separate entities soil, water, air and living organisms, and to appreciate the value of preserving intact ecosystems as a whole.

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Activity 1:

Observe a nearby pond in different seasons and document the seasonal changes in it. One can also observe changes in a river or the seasonal changes in a forest or grassland.

Activity 2:

Take a simple object in daily use and track its components back to each of its spheres.

Eg: this textbook: paper from wood – biosphere

Water for pulping – hydrosphere

Bleach to whiten paper – a mineral from lithosphere

2.2 RENEWABLE AND NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES

Ecosystems act as resource producers and processors. Solar energy is the main driving force of ecological systems, providing energy for the growth of plants in forests, grasslands and aquatic ecosystems. A forest recycles its plant material slowly by continuously returning its dead material, leaves, branches, etc. to the soil. Grasslands recycle material much faster than forests as the grass dries up after the rains are over every year. All the aquatic ecosystems are also solar energy dependent and have cycles of growth when plant life spreads and aquatic animals breed. The sun also drives the water cycle.

Our food comes from both natural and agricultural ecosystems. Traditional agricultural ecosystems that depended on rainfall have been modified in recent times to produce more and more food by the addition of extra chemicals and water from irrigation systems but are still dependent on solar energy for the growth of crops. Moreover modern agriculture creates a variety of environmental problems, which ultimately lead to the formation of unproductive land. These include irrigation, which leads to the development of saline soil, and the use of artificial fertilizers eventually ruin soil quality, and pesticides, which are a health hazard for humans as well as destroying components vital to the long-term health of agricultural ecosystems.

To manufacture consumer products, industry requires raw materials from nature, including water, minerals and power. During the manufacturing process, the gases, chemicals and waste products pollute our environment, unless the industry is carefully managed to clean up this mess.

2.2.1 Natural resources and associated problems

The unequal consumption of natural resources: A major part of natural resources are today consumed in the technologically advanced or 'developed' world, usually termed 'the North'. The 'developing nations' of 'the South', including India and China, also over use many resources because of their greater human population. However, the consumption of resources per capita (per individual) of the developed countries is up to 50 times greater than in most developing countries. Advanced countries produce over 75% of global industrial waste and greenhouse gases.

Energy from fossil fuels is consumed in relatively much greater quantities in developed countries. Their per capita consumption of food too is much greater as well as their waste of enormous quantities of food and other products, such as packaging material, used in the food industry. The USA for example with just 4% of

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the world's population consumes about 25% of the world's resources.

Producing animal food for human consumption requires more land than growing crops. Thus countries that are highly dependent on non-vegetarian diets need much larger areas for pastureland than those where the people are mainly vegetarian.

Planning Landuse: Land itself is a major resource, needed for food production, animal husbandry, industry, and for our growing human settlements. These forms of intensive landuse are frequently extended at the cost of 'wild lands', our remaining forests, grasslands, wetlands and deserts. Thus it is essential to evolve a rational land-use policy that examines how much land must be made available for different purposes and where it must be situated. For instance, there are usually alternate sites at which industrial complexes or dams can be built, but a natural wilderness cannot be recreated artificially. Scientists today believe that at least 10 percent of land and water bodies of each ecosystem must be kept as wilderness for the long-term needs of protecting nature and natural resources.

Land as a resource is now under serious pressure due to an increasing 'land hunger' - to produce sufficient quantities of food for an exploding human population. It is also affected by degradation due to misuse. Land and water resources are polluted by industrial waste and rural and urban sewage. They are increasingly being diverted for short-term economic gains to agriculture and industry. Natural wetlands of great value are being drained for agriculture and other purposes. Semi-arid land is being irrigated and overused.

The most damaging change in landuse is demonstrated by the rapidity with which forests have vanished during recent times, both in India and in the rest of the world. Forests provide us with a variety of services. These include processes such as maintaining oxygen levels in the atmosphere, removal of carbon dioxide, control over water regimes, and slowing down erosion and also produce products such as food, fuel, timber, fodder, medicinal plants, etc. In the long term, the loss of these is far greater than the short-term gains produced by converting forested lands to other uses.

Natural Resources

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The need for sustainable lifestyles: The quality of human life and the quality of ecosystems on earth are indicators of the sustainable use of resources. There are clear indicators of sustainable lifestyles in human life.

- Increased longevity
- An increase in knowledge
- An enhancement of income.

These three together are known as the 'Human development index'.

The quality of the ecosystems have indicators that are more difficult to assess.

- A stabilized population.
- The long term conservation of biodiversity.
- The careful long-term use of natural resources.
- The prevention of degradation and pollution of the environment.

2.2.2 Non-renewable resources

These are minerals that have been formed in the lithosphere over millions of years and constitute a closed system. These non-renewable resources, once used, remain on earth in a different form and, unless recycled, become waste material.

Non-renewable resources include fossil fuels such as oil and coal, which if extracted at the present rate, will soon be totally used up. The end products of fossil fuels are in the form of heat and mechanical energy and chemical compounds, which cannot be reconstituted as a resource.

2.2.3 Renewable resources

Though water and biological living resources are considered renewable. They are in fact renewable only within certain limits. They are linked to natural cycles such as the water cycle.

- Fresh water (even after being used) is evaporated by the sun's energy, forms water vapour and is reformed in clouds and falls to earth as rain. However, water sources can be overused or wasted to such an extent that they locally run dry. Water sources can be so heavily polluted by sewage and toxic substances that it becomes impossible to use the water.
- Forests, once destroyed take thousands of years to regrow into fully developed natural ecosystems with their full complement of species. Forests thus can be said to behave like non-renewable resources if overused.
- Fish are today being over-harvested until the catch has become a fraction of the original resource and the fish are incapable of breeding successfully to replenish the population.
- The output of agricultural land if mismanaged drops drastically.
- When the population of a species of plant or animal is reduced by human activities, until it cannot reproduce fast enough to maintain a viable number, the species becomes extinct.
- Many species are probably becoming extinct without us even knowing, and other linked species are affected by their loss.

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The Dodo of Madagascar and the Cheetah in India are well known examples of extinct species. What is however not generally recognized is that thousands of extinctions of small plants and animals are occurring every year due to loss of their habitat. Over harvesting and poaching threaten the existence of many others.

Activity 3: Utilisation of resources

The use of a resource begins with its collection, its processing into a useable product, and transport through a delivery system, to the consumer who uses it. It also involves disposal of the waste products produced at each step. Each step in resource use can affect the environment for better or worse. The control of these steps is known as environmental management.

Think of a resource you use and track it through these steps.

Eg. The cotton in the clothes you are wearing. At each step note:

- What other resources are needed at this step to move the resource you chose to the next?
- What waste products are generated at that step?
- How are they likely to be disposed off?
- What pollutants are generated in the process?

a) Forest Resources

Use and overexploitation: Scientists estimate that India should ideally have 33 percent of its land under forests. Today we have only about 12 percent. Thus we need not only to protect existing forests but also to increase our forest cover.

People who live in or near forests know the value of forest resources first hand because their lives and livelihoods depend directly on these resources. However, the rest of us also derive great benefits from the forests which we are rarely aware of. The water we use depends on the existence of forests on the watersheds around river valleys. Our homes, furniture and paper are made from wood from the forest. We use many medicines that are based on forest produce. And we depend on the oxygen that plants give out and the removal of carbon dioxide we breathe out from the air.

Forests once extended over large tracts of our country. People have used forests in our country for thousands of years. As agriculture spread the forests were left in patches which were controlled mostly by tribal people. They hunted animals and gathered plants and lived entirely on forest resources. Deforestation became a major concern in British times when a large amount of timber was extracted for building their ships. This led the British to develop scientific forestry in India. They however alienated local people by creating Reserved and Protected Forests which curtailed access to the resources. This led to a loss of stake in the conservation of the forests which led to a gradual degradation and fragmentation of forests across the length and breadth of the country.

Another period of overutilisation and forest degradation occurred in the early period following independence as people felt that now that the British had gone they had a right to using our forests in any way we pleased. The following

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FOREST FUNCTIONS

Watershed protection:

- Reduce the rate of surface run-off of water.
- Prevent flash floods and soil erosion.
- Produces prolonged gradual run-off and thus prevent effects of drought.

Atmospheric regulation:

- Absorption of solar heat during evapo-transpiration.
- Maintaining carbon dioxide levels for plant growth.
- Maintaining the local climatic conditions.

Erosion control:

- Holding soil (by preventing rain from directly washing soil away).

Land bank:

- Maintenance of soil nutrients and structure.

Local use - Consumption of forest produce by local people who collect it for subsistence – (Consumptive use)

- Food - gathering plants, fishing, hunting from the forest.
  (In the past when wildlife was plentiful, people could hunt and kill animals for food. Now that populations of most wildlife species have diminished, continued hunting would lead to extinction.)
- Fodder - for cattle.
- Fuel wood and charcoal for cooking, heating.
- Poles - building homes especially in rural and wilderness areas.
- Timber – household articles and construction.
- Fiber - weaving of baskets, ropes, nets, string, etc.
- Sericulture – for silk.
- Apiculture - bees for honey, forest bees also pollinate crops.
- Medicinal plants - traditionally used medicines, investigating them as potential source for new modern drugs.

Market use - (Productive use)

- Most of the above products used for consumptive purposes are also sold as a source of income for supporting the livelihoods of forest dwelling people.
- Minor forest produce - (non-wood products): Fuelwood, fruit, gum, fiber, etc. which are collected and sold in local markets as a source of income for forest dwellers.
- Major timber extraction - construction, industrial uses, paper pulp, etc. Timber extraction is done in India by the Forest Department, but illegal logging continues in many of the forests of India and the world.

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years saw India's residual forest wealth dwindle sharply. Timber extraction continued to remain the Forest Department's main concern up to the 1970s. The fact that forest degradation and deforestation was creating a serious loss of the important functions of the forest began to override its utilisation as a source of revenue from timber.

Deforestation: Where civilizations have looked after forests by using forest resources cautiously, they have prospered, where forests were destroyed, the people were gradually impoverished. Today logging and mining are serious causes of loss of forests in our country and all over the world. Dams built for hydroelectric power or irrigation have submerged forests and have displaced tribal people whose lives are closely knit to the forest. This has become a serious cause of concern in India.

One of India's serious environmental problems is forest degradation due to timber extraction and our dependence on fuelwood. A large number of poor rural people are still highly dependent on wood to cook their meals and heat their homes. We have not been able to plant enough trees to support the need for timber and fuelwood.

The National Forest Policy of 1988 now gives an added importance to JFM. Another resolution in 1990 provided a formal structure for community participation though the formation of Village Forest Committees. Based on these experiences, new JFM guidelines were issued in 2000. This stipulates that at least 25 per cent of the income from the area must go to the community. From the initiation of the program, until 2002, there were 63,618 JFM Committees managing over 140,953 sq. km of forest under JFM in 27 States in India.

The States have tried a variety of approaches to JFM. The share for village forest committees ranges from 25 per cent in Kerala to 100 per cent in Andhra Pradesh, 50 per cent in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Orissa and Tripura. In many States 25 per cent of the revenue is used for village development. In many States non-timber forest products (NTFPs) are available for people free of cost.

Some States have stopped grazing completely; some have rotational grazing schemes which have helped in forest regeneration.

Timber extraction, mining and dams are invariably parts of the needs of a developing country. If timber is overharvested the ecological functions of the forest are lost. Unfortunately forests are located in areas where there are rich mineral resources. Forests also cover the steep embankments of river valleys, which are ideally suited to develop hydel and irrigation projects. Thus there is a constant conflict of interests be-

CASE STUDY

Joint Forest Management

The need to include local communities in Forest Management has become a growing concern. Local people will only support greening an area if they can see some economic benefit from conservation. An informal arrangement between local communities and the Forest Department began in 1972, in Midnapore District of West Bengal. JFM has now evolved into a formal agreement which identifies and respects the local community's rights and benefits that they need from forest resources. Under JFM schemes, Forest Protection Committees from local community members are formed. They participate in restoring green cover and protect the area from being over exploited.

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tween the conservation interests of environmental scientists and the Mining and Irrigation Departments. What needs to be understood is that long-term ecological gains cannot be sacrificed for short-term economic gains that unfortunately lead to deforestation. These forests where development projects are planned, can displace thousands of tribal people who lose their homes when these plans are executed. This leads to high levels of suffering for which there is rarely a satisfactory answer.

b) Water resources

The water cycle, through evaporation and precipitation, maintains hydrological systems which form rivers and lakes and support in a variety of aquatic ecosystems. Wetlands are intermediate forms between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and contain species of plants and animals that are highly moisture dependent. All aquatic ecosystems are used by a large number of people for their daily needs such as drinking water, washing, cooking, watering animals, and irrigating fields. The world depends on a limited quantity of fresh water. Water covers 70% of the earth's surface but only 3% of this is fresh water. Of this, 2% is in polar ice caps and only 1% is usable water in rivers, lakes and subsoil aquifers. Only a fraction of this can be actually used. At a global level 70% of water is used for agriculture about 25% for industry and only 5% for domestic use. However this varies in different countries and industrialized countries use a greater percentage for industry. India uses 90% for agriculture, 7% for industry and 3% for domestic use.

One of the greatest challenges facing the world in this century is the need to rethink the overall management of water resources. The world population has passed the 6 billion mark. Based on the proportion of young people in developing countries, this will continue to increase significantly during the next few decades. This places enormous demands on the world's limited freshwater supply. The total annual freshwater withdrawals today are estimated at 3800 cubic kilometers, twice as much as just 50 years ago (World Commission on Dams, 2000). Studies indicate that a person needs a minimum of 20 to 40 liters of water per day for drinking and sanitation. More than one billion people worldwide have no access to clean water, and to many more, supplies are unreliable.

Local conflicts are already spreading to states. Eg. Karnataka and Tamil Nadu over the waters of the Krishna.

India is expected to face critical levels of water stress by 2025. At the global level 31 countries are already short of water and by 2025 there will be 48 countries facing serious water shortages. The UN has estimated that by the year 2050, 4 billion people will be seriously affected by water shortages. This will lead to multiple conflicts between countries over the sharing of water. Around 20 major cities in India face chronic or interrupted water shortages. There are 100 countries that share the waters of 13 large rivers and lakes. The upstream countries could starve the downstream nations leading to political unstable areas across the world. Examples are Ethopia, which is upstream on the Nile and Egypt, which is downstream and highly dependent on the Nile. International accords that will look at a fair distribution of water in such areas will become critical to world peace. India and Bangladesh already have a negotiated agreement on the water use of the Ganges.

Overutilization and pollution of surface and groundwater: With the growth of human population there is an increasing need for larger amounts of water to fulfill a variety of basic needs. Today in many areas this requirement cannot be met. Overutilization of water occurs at various levels. Most people use more water than they really need. Most of us waste water

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during a bath by using a shower or during washing of clothes. Many agriculturists use more water than necessary to grow crops. There are many ways in which farmers can use less water without reducing yields such as the use of drip irrigation systems.

Agriculture also pollutes surface water and underground water stores by the excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Methods such as the use of biomass as fertilizer and non toxic pesticides such as neem products and using integrated pest management systems reduces the agricultural pollution of surface and ground water.

Industry tends to maximise short-term economic gains by not bothering about its liquid waste and releasing it into streams, rivers and the sea. In the longer term, as people become more conscious of using 'green products' made by ecosensitive industries, the polluter's products may not be used. The polluting industry that does not care for the environment and pays off bribes to get away from the cost needed to use effluent treatment plants may eventually be caught, punished and even closed down. Public awareness may increasingly put pressures on industry to produce only eco-friendly products which are already gaining in popularity.

As people begin to learn about the serious health hazards caused by pesticides in their food, public awareness can begin putting pressures on farmers to reduce the use of chemicals that are injurious to health.

CASE STUDY

Water pollution - Nepal

The Narayani River of Nepal has been polluted by factories located on its bank. This has endangered fish, dolphins, crocodiles and other flora and fauna of the region.

Global climate change: Changes in climate at a global level caused by increasing air pollution have now begun to affect our climate. In some regions global warming and the El Nino winds have created unprecedented storms. In other areas, they lead to long droughts. Everywhere the 'greenhouse effect' due to atmospheric pollution is leading to increasingly erratic and unpredictable climatic effects. This has seriously affected regional hydrological conditions.

Floods: Floods have been a serious environmental hazard for centuries. However, the havoc raised by rivers overflowing their banks has become progressively more damaging, as people have deforested catchments and intensified use of river flood plains that once acted as safety valves. Wetlands in flood plains are nature's flood control systems into which overfilled rivers could spill and act like a temporary sponge holding the water, and preventing fast flowing water from damaging surrounding land.

Deforestation in the Himalayas causes floods that year after year kill people, damage crops and destroy homes in the Ganges and its tributaries and the Bramhaputra. Rivers change their course during floods and tons of valuable soil is lost to the sea. As the forests are degraded, rainwater no longer percolates slowly into the subsoil but runs off down the mountainside bearing large amounts of topsoil. This blocks rivers temporarily but gives way as the pressure mounts allowing enormous quantities of water to wash suddenly down into the plains below. There, rivers swell, burst their banks and flood waters spread to engulf peoples' farms and homes.

Drought: In most arid regions of the world the rains are unpredictable. This leads to periods when there is a serious scarcity of water to drink, use in farms, or provide for urban and industrial use. Drought prone areas are thus faced with

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irregular periods of famine. Agriculturists have no income in these bad years, and as they have no steady income, they have a constant fear of droughts. India has 'Drought Prone Areas Development Programs', which are used in such areas to buffer the effects of droughts. Under these schemes, people are given wages in bad years to build roads, minor irrigation works and plantation programs.

Drought has been a major problem in our country especially in arid regions. It is an unpredictable climatic condition and occurs due to the failure of one or more monsoons. It varies in frequency in different parts of our country.

While it is not feasible to prevent the failure of the monsoon, good environmental management can reduce its ill effects. The scarcity of water during drought years affects homes, agriculture and industry. It also leads to food shortages and malnutrition which especially affects children.

Several measures can be taken to minimise the serious impacts of a drought. However this must be done as a preventive measure so that if the monsoons fail its impact on local people's lives is minimised.

In years when the monsoon is adequate, we use up the good supply of water without trying to conserve it and use the water judiciously. Thus during a year when the rains are poor, there is no water even for drinking in the drought area.

One of the factors that worsens the effect of drought is deforestation. Once hill slopes are denuded of forest cover the rainwater rushes down the rivers and is lost. Forest cover permits water to be held in the area permitting it to seep into the ground. This charges the underground stores of water in natural aquifers. This can be used in drought years if the stores have been filled during a good monsoon. If water from the underground stores is overused, the water table drops and vegetation suffers. This soil and water management and afforestation are long-term measures that reduce the impact of droughts.

Water for Agriculture and Power Generation: India's increasing demand for water for intensive irrigated agriculture, for generating electricity, and for consumption in urban and industrial centers, has been met by creating large dams. Irrigated areas increased from 40 million ha. in 1900 to 100 million ha. in 1950 and to 271 million ha. by 1998. Dams support 30 to 40% of this area.

Although dams ensure a year round supply of water for domestic use, provide extra water for agriculture, industry, hydropower generation, they have several serious environmental problems. They alter river flows, change nature's flood control mechanisms such as wetlands and flood plains, and destroy the lives of local people and the habitats of wild plant and animal species.

Irrigation to support cash crops like sugarcane produces an unequal distribution of water. Large landholders on the canals get the lion's share of water, while poor, small farmers get less and are seriously affected.

Sustainable water management: 'Save water' campaigns are essential to make people everywhere aware of the dangers of water scarcity. A number of measures need to be taken for the better management of the world's water resources. These include measures such as:

- Building several small reservoirs instead of few mega projects.
- Develop small catchment dams and protect wetlands.

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- Soil management, micro catchment development and afforestation permits recharging of underground aquifers thus reducing the need for large dams.

- Treating and recycling municipal waste water for agricultural use.

- Preventing leakages from dams and canals.

- Preventing loss in Municipal pipes.

- Effective rain water harvesting in urban environments.

- Water conservation measures in agriculture such as using drip irrigation.

- Pricing water at its real value makes people use it more responsibly and efficiently and reduces water wasting.

- In deforested areas where land has been degraded, soil management by bunding along the hill slopes and making 'nala' plugs, can help retain moisture and make it possible to re-vegetate degraded areas.

Managing a river system is best done by leaving its course as undisturbed as possible. Dams and canals lead to major floods in the monsoon and the drainage of wetlands seriously affects areas that get flooded when there is high rainfall.

Dams: Today there are more than 45,000 large dams around the world, which play an important role in communities and economies that harness these water resources for their economic development. Current estimates suggest some 30-40% of irrigated land worldwide relies on dams. Hydropower, another contender for the use of stored water, currently supplies 19% of the world's total electric power supply and is used in over 150 countries. The world's two most populous countries – China and India – have built around 57% of the world's large dams.

Dams problems

- Fragmentation and physical transformation of rivers.

- Serious impacts on riverine ecosystems.

- Social consequences of large dams due to displacement of people.

- Water logging and salinisation of surrounding lands.

- Dislodging animal populations, damaging their habitat and cutting off their migration routes.

- Fishing and travel by boat disrupted.

- The emission of green house gases from reservoirs due to rotting vegetation and carbon inflows from the catchment is a recently identified impact.

Large dams have had serious impacts on the lives, livelihoods, cultures and spiritual existence of indigenous and tribal peoples. They have suffered disproportionately from the negative impacts of dams and often been excluded from sharing the benefits. In India, of the 16 to 18 million people displaced by dams, 40 to 50% were tribal people, who account for only 8% of our nation's one billion people.

Conflicts over dams have heightened in the last two decades because of their social and environmental impacts and failure to achieve targets for sticking to their costs as well as achieving promised benefits. Recent examples show how failure to provide a transparent process that includes effective participation of local people has prevented affected people from playing an

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active role in debating the pros and cons of the project and its alternatives. The loss of traditional, local controls over equitable distribution remains a major source of conflict.

In India, a national assessment of dam projects cleared in the 1980s and 90s shows that in 90% of cases the project authorities have not fulfilled the environmental conditions under which environmental clearance was given by the GOI under the EPA of 1986.

CASE STUDY

Sardar Sarovar Project

The World Bank's withdrawal from the Sardar Sarovar Project in India in 1993 was a result of the demands of local people threatened with the loss of their livelihoods and homes in the submergence area.

This dam in Gujarat on the Narmada has displaced thousands of tribal folk, whose lives and livelihoods were linked to the river, the forests and their agricultural lands. While they and the fishermen at the estuary, have lost their homeland, rich farmers downstream will get water for agriculture. The question is why should the local tribals be made homeless, displaced and relocated to benefit other people? Why should the less fortunate be made to bear the costs of development for better off farmers? It is a question of social and economic equity as well as the enormous environmental losses, including loss of the biological diversity of the inundated forests in the Narmada valley.

Activity 4:

How much water is needed by one person? Several international agencies and experts have proposed that 50 liters per person per day covers basic human water requirements for drinking, sanitation, bathing and food preparation. Estimate your average daily consumption.

c) Mineral Resources

A mineral is a naturally occurring substance of definite chemical composition and identifiable physical properties. An ore is a mineral or combination of minerals from which a useful substance, such as a metal, can be extracted and used to manufacture a useful product.

Minerals are formed over a period of millions of years in the earth's crust. Iron, aluminum, zinc, manganese and copper are important raw materials for industrial use. Important non-metal resources include coal, salt, clay, cement and silica. Stone used for building material, such as granite, marble, limestone, constitute another category of minerals. Minerals with special properties that humans value for their aesthetic and ornamental value are gems such as diamonds, emeralds, rubies. The luster of gold, silver and platinum is used for ornaments. Minerals in the form of oil, gas and coal were formed when ancient plants and animals were converted into underground fossil fuels.

Minerals and their ores need to be extracted from the earth's interior so that they can be used. This process is known as mining. Mining operations generally progress through four stages:

(1) Prospecting: Searching for minerals.

(2) Exploration: Assessing the size, shape, location, and economic value of the deposit.

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(3) Development: Work of preparing access to the deposit so that the minerals can be extracted from it.

(4) Exploitation: Extracting the minerals from the mines.

In the past, mineral deposits were discovered by prospectors in areas where mineral deposits in the form of veins were exposed on the surface. Today, however, prospecting and exploration is done by teams of geologists, mining engineers, geophysicists, and geochemists who work together to discover new deposits. Modern prospecting methods include the use of sophisticated instruments like GIS to survey and study the geology of the area.

The method of mining has to be determined depending on whether the ore or mineral deposit is nearer the surface or deep within the earth. The topography of the region and the physical nature of the ore deposit is studied.

Mines are of two types – surface (open cut or strip mines) or deep or shaft mines. Coal, metals and non-metalliferous minerals are all mined differently depending on the above criteria. The method chosen for mining will ultimately depend on how maximum yield may be obtained under existing conditions at a minimum cost, with the least danger to the mining personnel.

Most minerals need to be processed before they become usable. Thus 'technology' is dependent on both the presence of resources and the energy necessary to make them 'usable'.

Mine safety: Mining is a hazardous occupation, and the safety of mine workers is an important environmental consideration of the industry. Surface mining is less hazardous than underground mining. Metal mining is less hazardous than coal mining. In all underground mines, rock and roof falls, flooding, and inadequate ventilation are the greatest hazards. Large explosions have occured in coal mines, killing many miners. More miners have suffered from disasters due to the use of explosives in metal mines.

> CASE STUDY
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> Sariska Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan
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> The Forest Department has leased land for mining in the Sariska Tiger Reserve area by denotifying forest areas. The local people have fought against the mining lobby, and have filed a Public Interest Litigation in the Supreme Court in 1991. Rajendra Singh, secretary of TBS, points out that as many as 70 mines operate in close proximity to the forest.

Mining poses several long-term occupational hazards to the miners. Dust produced during mining operations is injurious to health and causes a lung disease known as black lung, or pneumoconiosis. Fumes generated by incomplete dynamite explosions are extremely poisonous. Methane gas, emanating from coal strata, is hazardous to health although not poisonous in the concentrations usually encountered in mine air. Radiation is a hazard in uranium mines.

Environmental problems: Mining operations are considered one of the main sources of environmental degradation. The extraction of all these products from the lithosphere has a variety of side effects. Depletion of available land due to mining, waste from industries, conversion of land to industry and pollution of land, water and air by industrial wastes, are environmental side effects of the use of these non-renewable resources. Public awareness of this

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problem is of a global nature and government actions to stem the damage to the natural environment have led to numerous international agreements and laws directed toward the prevention of activities and events that may adversely affect the environment.

d) Food resources

Today our food comes almost entirely from agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing. Although India is self-sufficient in food production, it is only because of modern patterns of agriculture that are unsustainable and which pollute our environment with excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides.

The FAO defines sustainable agriculture as that which conserves land, water and plant and animal genetic resources, does not degrade the environment and is economically viable and socially acceptable. Most of our large farms grow single crops (monoculture). If this crop is hit by a pest, the entire crop can be devastated, leaving the farmer with no income during the year. On the other hand, if the farmer uses traditional varieties and grows several different crops, the chance of complete failure is lowered considerably. Many studies have shown that one can use alternatives to inorganic fertilizers and pesticides. This is known as Integrated Crop Management.

World food problems: In many developing countries where populations are expanding rapidly, the production of food is unable to keep pace with the growing demand. Food production in 64 of the 105 developing countries is lagging behind their population growth levels. These countries are unable to produce more food, or do not have the financial means to import it. India is one of the countries that have been able to produce enough food by cultivating a large proportion of its arable land through irrigation. The Green Revolution of the 60's reduced starvation in the country. However many of the technologies we have used to achieve this are now being questioned.

- Our fertile soils are being exploited faster than they can recuperate.
- Forests, grasslands and wetlands have been converted to agricultural use, which has led to serious ecological questions.
- Our fish resources, both marine and inland, show evidence of exhaustion.
- There are great disparities in the availability of nutritious food. Some communities such as tribal people still face serious food problems leading to malnutrition especially among women and children.

These issues bring in new questions as to how demands will be met in future even with a slowing of population growth. Today the world is seeing a changing trend in dietary habits. As living standards are improving, people are eating more non-vegetarian food. As people change from eating grain to meat, the world's demand for feed for livestock based on agriculture increases as well. This uses more land per unit of food produced and the result is that the world's poor do not get enough to eat.

Women play an extremely vital role in food production as well as cooking the meal and feeding children. In most rural communities they have the least exposure to technical training and to health workers trained in teaching/learning on issues related to nutritional aspects. Women and girls frequently receive less food than the men. These disparities need to be corrected.

In India there is a shortage of cultivable productive land. Thus farm sizes are too small to support a family on farm produce alone. With each generation, farms are being subdivided further.

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Poor environmental agricultural practices such as slash and burn, shifting cultivation, or 'rab' (woodash) cultivation degrade forests.

Globally 5 to 7 million hectares of farmland is degraded each year. Loss of nutrients and overuse of agricultural chemicals are major factors in land degradation. Water scarcity is an important aspect of poor agricultural outputs. Salinization and water logging has affected a large amount of agricultural land worldwide.

Loss of genetic diversity in crop plants is another issue that is leading to a fall in agricultural produce. Rice, wheat and corn are the staple foods of two thirds of the world's people. As wild relatives of crop plants in the world's grasslands, wetlands and other natural habitats are being lost, the ability to enhance traits that are resistant to diseases, salinity, etc. is lost. Genetic engineering is an untried and risky alternative to traditional cross breeding.

Food Security: It is estimated that 18 million people worldwide, most of whom are children, die each year due to starvation or malnutrition, and many others suffer a variety of dietary deficiencies.

The earth can only supply a limited amount of food. If the world's carrying capacity to produce food cannot meet the needs of a growing population, anarchy and conflict will follow. Thus food security is closely linked with population control through the family welfare program. It is also linked to the availability of water for farming. Food security is only possible if food is equitably distributed to all. Many of us waste a large amount of food carelessly. This eventually places great stress on our environmental resources.

A major concern is the support needed for small farmers so that they remain farmers rather than shifting to urban centers as unskilled industrial workers. International trade policies in regard to an improved flow of food across national borders from those who have surplus to those who have a deficit in the developing world is another issue that is a concern for planners who deal with International trade concerns. 'Dumping' of underpriced foodstuffs produced in the developed world, onto markets in undeveloped countries undermines prices and forces farmers there to adopt unsustainable practices to compete.

Fisheries: Fish is an important protein food in many parts of the world. This includes marine and fresh water fish. While the supply of food from fisheries increased phenomenally between 1950 and 1990, in several parts of the world fish catch has since dropped due to overfishing. In 1995 FAO reported that 44% of the world's fisheries are fully or heavily exploited, 16% are already overexploited, 6% are depleted, and only 3% are gradually recovering. Canada had to virtually close down cod fishing in the 1990s due to depletion of fish reserves.

Modern fishing technologies using mechanized trawlers and small meshed nets lead directly to overexploitation, which is not sustainable. It is evident that fish have to breed successfully and need to have time to grow if the yield has to be used sustainably. The worst hit are the small traditional fishermen who are no match for organized trawlers.

Loss of Genetic diversity: There are 50,000 known edible plants documented worldwide. Of these only 15 varieties produce 90% of the world's food. Modern agricultural practices have resulted in a serious loss of genetic variability of crops. India's distinctive traditional varieties of rice alone are said to have numbered between 30 and 50 thousand. Most of these have been lost to the farmer during the last few decades as multinational seed companies push a few commercial types.

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This creates a risk to our food security, as farmers can loose all their produce due to a rapidly spreading disease. A cereal that has multiple varieties growing in different locations does not permit the rapid spread of a disease.

The most effective method to introduce desirable traits into crops is by using characteristics found in the wild relatives of crop plants. As the wilderness shrinks, these varieties are rapidly disappearing. Once they are lost, their desirable characteristics cannot be introduced when found necessary in future. Ensuring long-term food security may depend on conserving wild relatives of crop plants in National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.

If plant genetic losses worldwide are not slowed down, some estimates show that as many as 60,000 plant species, which accounts for 25% of the world's total, will be lost by the year 2025. The most economical way to prevent this is by expanding the network and coverage of our Protected Areas. Collections in germplasm, seed banks and tissue culture facilities, are other possible ways to prevent extinction but are extremely expensive.

Scientists now believe that the world will soon need a second green revolution to meet our future demands of food based on a new ethic of land and water management that must be based on values which include environmental sensitivity, equity, biodiversity conservation of cultivars and insitu preservation of wild relatives of crop plants. This must not only provide food for all, but also work out more equitable distribution of both food and water, reduce agricultural dependence on the use of fertilizers and pesticides (which have long term ill effects on human wellbeing) and provide an increasing support for preserving wild relatives of crop plants in Protected Areas. Pollution of water sources, land degradation and desertification must be rapidly reversed. Adopting soil conservation measures, using appropriate farming techniques, especially on hill slopes, enhancing the soil with organic matter, rotating crops and managing watersheds at the micro level are a key to agricultural production to meet future needs. Most importantly food supply is closely linked to the effectiveness of population control programs worldwide. The world needs better and sustainable methods of food production which is an important aspect of landuse management.

Alternate food sources: Food can be innovatively produced if we break out of the current agricultural patterns. This includes working on new avenues to produce food, such as using forests for their multiple non-wood forest products, which can be used for food if harvested sustainably. This includes fruit, mushrooms, sap, gum, etc. This takes time, as people must develop a taste for these new foods.

CASE STUDY

Israel began using drip irrigation systems as it is short of water. With this technique, farmers have been able to improve the efficiency of irrigation by 95%. Over a 20-year period, Israel's food production doubled without an increase in the use of water for agriculture.

In India, some traditional communities in urban and semi urban towns used to grow their own vegetables in backyards on wastewater from their own homes. Calcutta releases its waste water into surrounding lagoons in which fish are reared and the water is used for growing vegetables.

Medicines, both traditional and modern, can be harvested sustainably from forests. Madagaskar's Rosy Periwinkle used for childhood leukemia's and Taxol from Western Yew

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from the American Northwest as an anticancer drug are examples of forest products used extensively in modern medicine. Without care, commercial exploitation can lead to early extinction of such plants.

Using unfamiliar crops such as Nagli, which are grown on poor soil on hill slopes is another option. This crop grown in the Western Ghats now has no market and is thus rarely grown. Only local people use this nutritious crop themselves. It is thus not as extensively cultivated as in the past. Popularising this crop could add to food availability from marginal lands. Several crops can be grown in urban settings, including vegetables and fruit which can be grown on waste household water and fertilizers from vermicomposting pits.

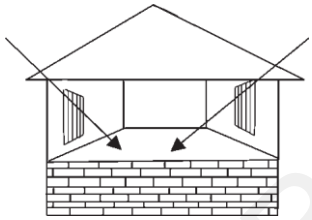
Several foods can be popularized from yet unused seafood products such as seaweed as long as this is done at sustainable levels. Educating women about nutrition, who are more closely involved with feeding the family, is an important aspect of supporting the food needs of many developing countries.

Integrated Pest Management includes preserving pest predators, using pest resistant seed varieties and reducing the use of chemical fertilizers.

e) Energy resources

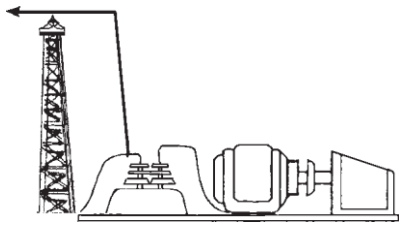
Energy is defined by physicists as the capacity to do work. Energy is found on our planet in a variety of forms, some of which are immediately useful to do work, while others require a process of transformation.

The sun is the primary energy source in our lives. We use it directly for its warmth and through various natural processes that provide us with food, water, fuel and shelter. The sun's rays power the growth of plants, which form our food material, give off oxygen which we breathe in and take up carbon dioxide that we breathe out. Energy from the sun evaporates water from oceans, rivers and lakes, to form clouds that turn into rain. Today's fossil fuels were once the forests that grew in prehistoric times due to the energy of the sun.



Chemical energy, contained in chemical compounds is released when they are broken down by animals in the presence of oxygen. In India, manual labour is still extensively used to get work done in agricultural systems, and domestic animals used to pull carts and ploughs. Electrical energy produced in several ways, powers transport, artificial lighting, agriculture and industry. This comes from hydel power based on the water cycle that is powered by the sun's energy that supports evaporation, or from thermal power stations powered by fossil fuels. Nuclear energy is held in the nucleus of an atom and is now harnessed to develop electrical energy.

We use energy for household use, agriculture, production of industrial goods and for running transport. Modern agriculture uses chemical fertilizers, which require large amounts of energy during their manufacture. Industry uses energy to power manufacturing units and the urban complexes that support it. Energy-demanding roads and railway lines are built to transport products from place to place and to reach raw materials in mines and forests.



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No energy related technology is completely 'risk free' and unlimited demands on energy increase this risk factor many fold. All energy use creates heat and contributes to atmospheric temperature. Many forms of energy release carbon dioxide and lead to global warming. Nuclear energy plants have caused enormous losses to the environment due to the leakage of nuclear material. The inability to effectively manage and safely dispose of nuclear waste is a serious global concern.

At present almost 2 billion people worldwide have no access to electricity at all. While more people will require electrical energy, those who do have access to it continue to increase their individual requirements. In addition, a large proportion of energy from electricity is wasted during transmission as well as at the user level. It is broadly accepted that long-term trends in energy use should be towards a cleaner global energy system that is less carbon intensive and less reliant on finite non-renewable energy sources. It is estimated that the currently used methods of using renewable energy and non renewable fossil fuel sources together will be insufficient to meet foreseeable global demands for power generation beyond the next 50 to 100 years.

Thus when we use energy wastefully, we are contributing to a major environmental disaster for our earth. We all need to become responsible energy users. An electrical light that is burning unnecessarily is a contributor to environmental degradation.

Growing energy needs: Energy has always been closely linked to man's economic growth and development. Present strategies for development that have focused on rapid economic growth have used energy utilization as an index of economic development. This index however, does not take into account the long-term ill effects on society of excessive energy utilisation.

> In 1998, the World Resources Institute found that the average American uses 24 times the energy used by an Indian.

Between 1950 and 1990, the world's energy needs increased four fold. The world's demand for electricity has doubled over the last 22 years! The world's total primary energy consumption in 2000 was 9096 million tons of oil. A global average per capita that works out to be 1.5 tons of oil. Electricity is at present the fastest growing form of end-use energy worldwide. By 2005 the Asia-Pacific region is expected to surpass North America in energy consumption and by 2020 is expected to consume some 40% more energy than North America.

For almost 200 years, coal was the primary energy source fuelling the industrial revolution in the 19th century. At the close of the 20th century, oil accounted for 39% of the world's commercial energy consumption, followed by coal (24%) and natural gas (24%), while nuclear (7%) and hydro/renewables (6%) accounted for the rest.

Among the commercial energy sources used in India, coal is a predominant source accounting for 55% of energy consumption estimated in 2001, followed by oil (31%), natural gas (8%), hydro (5%) and nuclear (1%).

In India, biomass (mainly wood and dung) accounts for almost 40% of primary energy supply. While coal continues to remain the dominant fuel for electricity generation, nuclear power has been increasingly used since the 1970s and 1980s and the use of natural gas has increased rapidly in the 80s and 90s.

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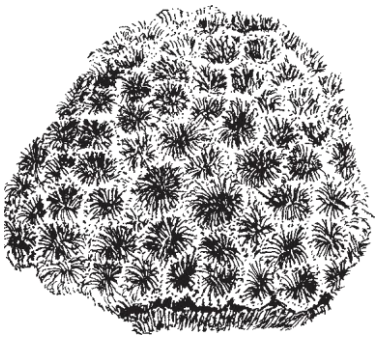
Types of energy: There are three main types of energy; those classified as non-renewable; those that are said to be renewable; and nuclear energy, which uses such small quantities of raw material (uranium) that supplies are to all effect, limitless. However, this classification is inaccurate because several of the renewable sources, if not used 'sustainably', can be depleted more quickly than they can be renewed.

Non renewable energy

To produce electricity from non-renewable resources the material must be ignited. The fuel is placed in a well contained area and set on fire. The heat generated turns water to steam, which moves through pipes, to turn the blades of a turbine. This converts magnetism into electricity, which we use in various appliances.

Non-Renewable Energy Sources: These consist of the mineral based hydrocarbon fuels coal, oil and natural gas, that were formed from ancient prehistoric forests. These are called 'fossil fuels' because they are formed after plant life is fossilized. At the present rate of extraction there is enough coal for a long time to come. Oil and gas resources however are likely to be used up within the next 50 years. When these fuels are burnt, they produce waste products that are released into the atmosphere as gases such as carbon dioxide, oxides of sulphur, nitrogen, and carbon monoxide, all causes of air pollution. These have led to lung problems in an enormous number of people all over the world, and have also affected buildings like the Taj Mahal and killed many forests and lakes due to acid rain. Many of these gases also act like a green house letting sunlight in and trapping the heat inside. This is leading to global warming, a raise in global temperature, increased drought in some areas, floods in other regions, the melting of icecaps, and a rise in sea levels, which is slowly submerging coastal belts all over the world. Warming the seas also leads to the death of sensitive organisms such as coral.

Oil and its environmental impacts: India's oil reserves which are being used at present lie off the coast of Mumbai and in Assam. Most of our natural gas is linked to oil and, because there is no distribution system, it is just burnt off. This wastes nearly 40% of available gas. The processes of oil and natural gas drilling, processing, transport and utilisation have serious environmental consequences, such as leaks in which air and water are polluted and accidental fires that may go on burning for days or weeks before the fire can be controlled. During refining oil, solid waste such as salts and grease are produced which also damage the environment. Oil slicks are caused at sea from offshore oil wells, cleaning of oil tankers and due to shipwrecks. The most well-known disaster occurred when the Exxon Valdez sank in 1989 and birds, sea otters, seals, fish and other marine life along the coast of Alaska was seriously affected.



Oil powered vehicles emit carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxide, carbon monoxide and particulate matter which is a major cause of air pollution especially in cities with heavy traffic density. Leaded petrol, leads to neuro damage and reduces attention spans. Running petrol vehicles with unleaded fuel has been achieved by adding catalytic converters on all the new cars, but unleaded fuel contains benzene and butadene which are known to be carcinogenic compounds. Delhi, which used to have serious

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smog problems due to traffic, has been able to reduce this health hazard by changing a large number of its vehicles to CNG, which contains methane.

Dependence on dwindling fossil fuel resources, especially oil, results in political tension, instability and war. At present 65 percent of the world's oil reserves are located in the Middle East.

Coal and its environmental impacts: Coal is the world's single largest contributor of green house gases and is one of the most important causes of global warming.

Many coal-based power generation plants are not fitted with devices such as electrostatic precipitators to reduce emissions of suspended particulate matter (SPM) which is a major contributor to air pollution. Burning coal also produces oxides of sulphur and nitrogen which, combined with water vapour, lead to 'acid rain'. This kills forest vegetation, and damages architectural heritage sites, pollutes water and affects human health.

Thermal power stations that use coal produce waste in the form of 'fly ash'. Large dumps are required to dispose off this waste material, while efforts have been made to use it for making bricks. The transport of large quantities of fly ash and its eventual dumping are costs that have to be included in calculating the cost-benefits of thermal power.

CASE STUDY

The Exxon Valdez was wrecked in Prince William Sound in Alaska in 1989 and polluted large parts of the surrounding seas.

CASE STUDY

Oil related disasters

During the Gulf War, oil installations burned for weeks polluting the air with poisonous gasses. The fires wasted 5 million barrels of oil and produced over a million tons of airborne pollutants, including sulphur dioxide, a major cause of acid rain. The gases moved to a height of 3km and spread as far as India. Oil also polluted coastlines, killing birds and fish.

Renewable energy

Renewable energy systems use resources that are constantly replaced and are usually less polluting. Examples include hydropower, solar, wind, and geothermal (energy from the heat inside the earth). We also get renewable energy from burning trees and even garbage as fuel and processing other plants into biofuels.

One day, all our homes may get their energy from the sun or the wind. Your car's gas tank will use biofuel. Your garbage might contribute to your city's energy supply. Renewable energy technologies will improve the efficiency and cost of energy systems. We may reach the point when we may no longer rely mostly on fossil fuel energy.

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CASE STUDY

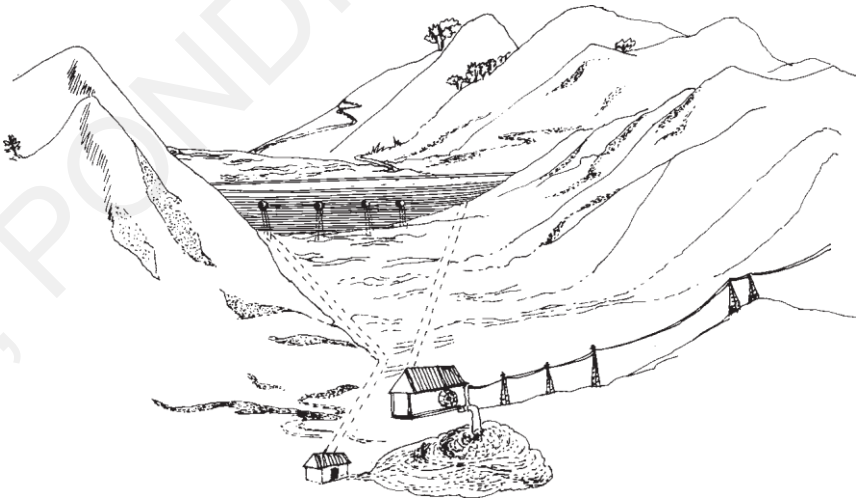
Nearly 50% of the world's population is dependent on fuel wood as a source of energy. This is obvious in our own country, which has lost a large proportion of its forest cover as our population expands and burns enormous amounts of wood. Rural women, and even women from the lower economic strata in towns, still have to spend a large part of their lives collecting fuel wood. To overcome this, various types of fuel-efficient stoves ('chulas') can burn wood extremely slowly and do not waste the heat, and also produce less smoke and ash than normal 'chulas'. There have also been several efforts to grow fuelwood by involving local people in these efforts. Examples include Social Forestry, Farm Forestry and Joint Forestry Management.

CASE STUDY

In 1882, the first Hydroelectric power dam was built in Appleton, Wisconsin. In India the first hydroelectric power dams were built in the late 1800s and early 1900s by the Tatas in the Western Ghats of Maharashtra. Jamshedjee Tata, a great visionary who developed industry in India in the 1800s, wished to have a clean source of energy to run cotton and textile mills in Bombay as he found people were getting respiratory infections due to coal driven mills. He thus asked the British Government to permit him to develop dams in the Western Ghats to generate electricity. The four dams are the Andhra, Shirowata, Valvan and Mulshi hydel dams. An important feature of the Tata power projects is that they use the high rainfall in the hills as storage areas. While the rivers flowing eastwards from the Western Ghats are dammed in the foothills near the Deccan plateau, the water is tunneled through the crest of the Ghats to drop several hundred meters to the coastal belt. Large turbines in the power plants generate electricity for Mumbai and its giant industrial belt.

Hydroelectric Power

This uses water flowing down a natural gradient to turn turbines to generate electricity known as 'hydroelectric power' by constructing dams across rivers. Between 1950 and 1970, Hydropower generation worldwide increased seven times. The long life of hydropower plants, the renewable nature of the energy source, very low operating and maintenance costs, and absence of inflationary pressures as in fossil fuels, are some of its advantages.



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Drawbacks: Although hydroelectric power has led to economic progress around the world, it has created serious ecological problems.

- To produce hydroelectric power, large areas of forest and agricultural lands are submerged. These lands traditionally provided a livelihood for local tribal people and farmers. Conflicts over land use are inevitable.

- Silting of the reservoirs (especially as a result of deforestation) reduces the life of the hydroelectric power installations.

- Water is required for many other purposes besides power generation. These include domestic requirements, growing agricultural crops and for industry. This gives rise to conflicts.

- The use of rivers for navigation and fisheries becomes difficult once the water is dammed for generation of electricity.

- Resettlement of displaced persons is a problem for which there is no ready solution. The opposition to many large hydroelectric schemes is growing as most dam projects have been unable to resettle people that were affected and displaced.

- In certain regions large dams can induce seismic activity which will result in earthquakes. There is a great possibility of this occurring around the Tehri dam in the Himalayan foothills. Shri Sunderlal Bahuguna, the initiator of the Chipko Movement has fought against the Tehri Dam for several years.

CASE STUDY

Narmada Project

The Narmada Bachao Andolan in India is an example of a movement against large dams. The gigantic Narmada River Project has affected the livelihoods of hundreds of extremely poor forest dwellers. The rich landholders downstream from the Sardar Sarovar dam will derive the maximum economic benefit, whereas the poor tribal people have lost their homes and traditional way of life. The dam will also destroy the livelihood of fishermen at the estuary. The disastrous impact that this project has on the lives of the poor, and the way in which they are being exploited, need to be clearly understood.

With large dams causing social problems, there has been a trend to develop small hydroelectric generation units. Multiple small dams have less impact on the environment. China has the largest number of these - 60,000, generating 13,250 megawatts, i.e. 30% of China's electricity. Sweden, the US, Italy and France also have developed small dams for electrical power generation. The development of small hydroelectric power units could become a very important resource in India, which has steeply falling rivers and the economic capability and technical resources to exploit them.

Solar energy: In one hour, the sun pours as much energy onto the earth as we use in a whole year. If it were possible to harness this colossal quantum of energy, humanity would need no other source of energy. Today we have developed several methods of collecting this energy for heating water and generating electricity.

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Solar heating for homes: Modern housing that uses air conditioning and/ or heating are extremely energy dependant. A passive solar home or building is designed to collect the sun's heat through large, south-facing glass windows. In solar heated buildings, *sunspaces* are built on the south side of the structure which act as large heat absorbers. The floors of sunspaces are usually made of tiles or bricks that absorb heat throughout the day, then release heat at night when its cold.

In energy efficient architecture the sun, water and wind are used to heat a building when the weather is cold and to cool it in summer. This is based on design and building material. Thick walls of stone or mud were used in traditional architecture as an insulator. Small doors and windows kept direct sunlight and heat out. Deeply set glass windows in colonial homes, on which direct sunlight could not reach, permitted the glass from creating a green house effect. Verandahs also served a similar purpose.

Traditional bungalows had high roofs and ventilators that permitted hot air to rise and leave the room. Cross ventilation where wind can drive the air in and out of a room keeps it cool. Large overhangs over windows prevent the glass from heating the room inside. Double walls are used to prevent heating. Shady trees around the house help reduce temperature.

Solar water heating: Most solar water-heating systems have two main parts: the solar *collector* and the *storage tank*. The solar energy collector heats the water, which then flows to a well insulated storage tank.

A common type of collector is the *flat-plate collector,* a rectangular box with a transparent cover that faces the sun, usually mounted on the roof. Small tubes run through the box, carrying the water or other fluid, such as antifreeze, to be heated. The tubes are mounted on a metal *absorber plate,* which is painted black to absorb the sun's heat. The back and sides of the box are insulated to hold in the heat. Heat builds up in the collector, and as the fluid passes through the tubes, it too heats up.

Solar water-heating systems cannot heat water when the sun is not shining. Thus homes must also have a conventional backup system. About 80% of homes in Israel have solar hot water heaters.

Solar cookers: The heat produced by the sun can be directly used for cooking using solar cookers. A solar cooker is a metal box which is black on the inside to absorb and retain heat. The lid has a reflective surface to reflect the heat from the sun into the box. The box contains black vessels in which the food to be cooked is placed.

India has the world's largest solar cooker program and an estimated 2 lakh families that use solar cookers. Although solar cookers reduce the need for fuel wood and pollution from smoky wood fires, they have not caught on well in rural areas as they are not suitable to traditional cooking practices. However, they have great potential if marketed well.

Other Solar-Powered Devices: Solar desalination systems (for converting saline or brackish water into pure distilled water) have been developed. In future, they should become important alternatives for man's future economic growth in areas where fresh water is not available.

Photovoltaic energy: The solar technology which has the greatest potential for use throughout the world is that of solar photo voltaic cells which directly produce electricity from sunlight using *photovoltaic (PV)* (also called *solar*) cells.

Solar cells use the sun's light, not its heat, to make electricity. PV cells require little maintenance, have no moving parts, and essentially no environmental impact. They work cleanly,

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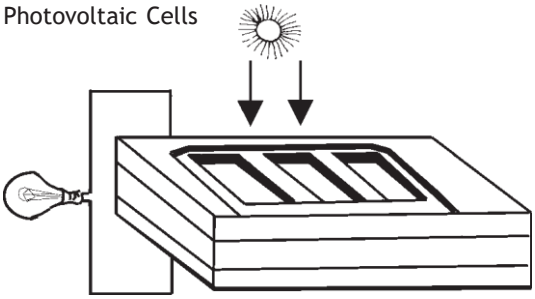
Photovoltaic Cells



safely and silently. They can be installed quickly in small modules, anywhere there is sunlight. Solar cells are made up of two separate layers of silicon, each of which contains an electric charge. When light hits the cells, the charges begin to move between the two layers and electricity is produced. PV cells are wired together to form a module. A module of about 40 cells is enough to power a light bulb. For more power, PV modules are wired together into an array. PV arrays can produce enough power to meet the electrical needs of a home. Over the past few years, extensive work has been done in decreasing PV technology costs, increasing efficiency, and extending cell lifetimes. Many new materials, such as amorphous silicon, are being tested to reduce costs and automate manufacturing.

PV cells are commonly used today in calculators and watches. They also provide power to satellites, electric lights, and small electrical appliances such as radios and for water pumping, highway lighting, weather stations, and other electrical systems located away from power lines. Some electric utility companies are building PV systems into their power supply networks.

PV cells are environmentally benign, ie. they do not release pollutants or toxic material to the air or water, there is no radioactive substance, and no catastrophic accidents. Some PV cells, however, do contain small quantities of toxic substances such as cadmium and these can be released to the environment in the event of a fire. Solar cells are made of silicon which, al-

CASE STUDIES

- In 1981, a plane called 'The Solar Challenger' flew from Paris to England in 5 hours, 20 minutes. It had 16,000 solar cells glued to the wings and tail of the plane and they produced enough power to drive a small electric motor and propeller. Since 1987, every three years there is a World Solar challenge for solar operated vehicles in Australia where the vehicles cover 3000 kms.

- The world's first solar-powered hospital is in Mali in Africa. Being situated at the edge of the Sahara desert, Mali receives a large amount of sunlight. Panels of solar cells supply the power needed to run vital equipment and keep medical supplies cool in refrigerators.

- Space technology required solar energy and the space race spurred the development of solar cells. Only sunlight can provide power for long periods of time for a space station or long distance spaceship.

- Japanese farmers are substituting PV operated insect killers for toxic pesticides.

- In recent years, the popularity of building integrated photovoltaics (BIPV's) has grown considerably. In this application, PV devices are designed as part of building materials (i.e. roofs and siding) both to produce electricity and reduce costs by replacing the costs of normal construction materials. There are more than 3,000 BIPV systems in Germany and Japan has a program that will build 70,000 BIPV buildings.

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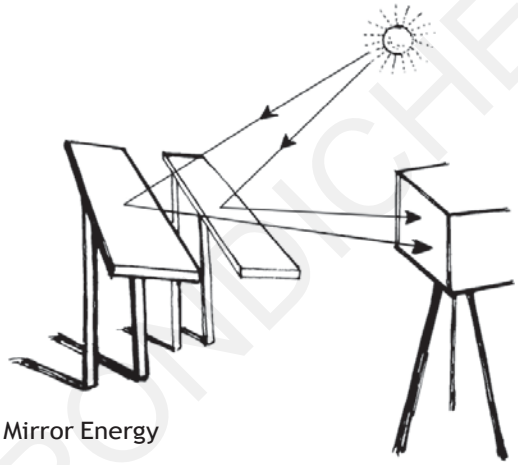
though the second most abundant element in the earth's crust, has to be mined. Mining creates environmental problems. PV systems also of course only work when the sun is shining, and thus need batteries to store the electricity.

Solar thermal electric power: Solar radiation can produce high temperatures, which can generate electricity. Areas with low cloud levels of cover with little scattered radiation as in the desert are considered most suitable sites. According to a UNDP assessment, STE is about 20 years behind the wind energy market exploitation, but is expected to grow rapidly in the near future.

Mirror energy: During the 1980s, a major solar thermal electrical generation unit was built in California, containing 700 parabolic mirrors, each with 24 reflectors, 1.5 meters in diameter, which focused the sun's energy to produce steam to generate electricity.



Mirror Energy

Solar thermal systems change sunlight into electricity, by focusing sunlight to boil water to make steam.

Biomass energy: When a log is burned we are using *biomass energy.* Because plants and trees depend on sunlight to grow, biomass energy is a form of stored solar energy. Although wood is the largest source of biomass energy, we also use agricultural waste, sugarcane wastes, and other farm byproducts to make energy.

There are three ways to use biomass. It can be burned to produce heat and electricity, changed to a gas-like fuel such as methane, or changed to a liquid fuel. Liquid fuels, also called *biofuels,* include two forms of alcohol: *ethanol* and *methanol.* Because biomass can be changed directly into liquid fuel, it could someday supply much of our transportation fuel needs for cars, trucks, buses, airplanes and trains with diesel fuel replaced by '*biodiesel*' made from vegetable oils. In the United States, this fuel is now being produced from soybean oil. Researchers are also developing algae that produce oils, which can be converted to biodiesel and new ways have been found to produce ethanol from grasses, trees, bark, sawdust, paper, and farming wastes.

Organic municipal solid waste includes paper, food wastes, and other organic non-fossil-fuel derived materials such as textiles, natural rubber, and leather that are found in the waste of urban areas. Currently, in the US, approximately 31% of organic waste is recovered from municipal solid waste via recycling and composting programs, 62% is deposited in landfills, and 7% is incinerated. Waste material can be converted into electricity by combustion boilers or steam turbines.

Note that like any fuel, biomass creates some pollutants, including carbon dioxide, when burned or converted into energy. In terms of air pollutants, biomass generate less relative to fossil fuels. Biomass is naturally low in sulphur and therefore, when burned, generates low sulphur dioxide emissions. However, if burned in the open air, some biomass feedstocks would emit relatively high levels of nitrous oxides (given the

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high nitrogen content of plan material), carbon monoxide, and particulates.

Biogas: Biogas is produced from plant material and animal waste, garbage, waste from households and some types of industrial wastes, such as fish processing, dairies, and sewage treatment plants. It is a mixture of gases which includes methane, carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulphide and water vapour. In this mixture, methane burns easily. With a ton of food waste, one can produce 85 Cu. M of biogas. Once used, the residue is used as an agricultural fertilizer.

Denmark produces a large quantity of biogas from waste and produces 15,000 megawatts of electricity from 15 farmers' cooperatives. London has a plant which makes 30 megawatts of electricity a year from 420,000 tons of municipal waste which gives power to 50,000 families. In Germany, 25% of landfills for garbage produce power from biogas. Japan uses 85% of its waste and France about 50%.

Biogas plants have become increasingly popular in India in the rural sector. The biogas plants use cowdung, which is converted into a gas which is used as a fuel. It is also used for running dual fuel engines. The reduction in kitchen smoke by using biogas has reduced lung conditions in thousands of homes.

The fibrous waste of the sugar industry is the world's largest potential source of biomass energy. Ethanol produced from sugarcane molasses is a good automobile fuel and is now used in a third of the vehicles in Brazil.

The National Project on Biogas Development (NPBD), and Community/ Institutional Biogas Plant Program promote various biogas projects. By 1996 there were already 2.18 million families in India that used biogas. However China has 20 million households using biogas!

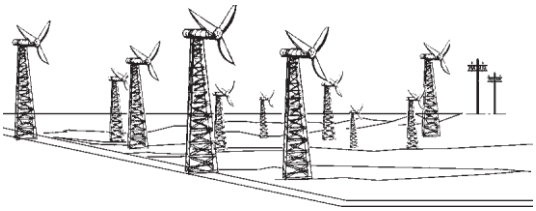
Activity 5:

What you may throw out in your garbage today could be used as fuel for someone else. Municipal solid waste has the potential to be a large energy source. Garbage is an inexpensive energy resource. Unlike most other energy resources, someone will collect garbage, deliver it to the power plant, and even pay to get rid of it. This helps cover the cost of turning garbage into energy. Garbage is also a unique resource because we all contribute to it.

Keep a record of all the garbage that you and our family produce in a day. What proportion of it is in the form of biomass? Weigh this.

How long would it take you to gather enough waste biomass to make a tankful (0.85 cu.m.) of biogas? (Remember one ton of biomass produces 85 cu.m. of biogas)

Wind Power: Wind was the earliest energy source used for transportation by sailing ships. Some 2000 years ago, windmills were developed



in China, Afghanistan and Persia to draw water for irrigation and grinding grain. Most of the early work on generating electricity from wind was carried out in Denmark, at the end of the last century. Today, Denmark and California have large wind turbine cooperatives which sell electricity to the government grid. In Tamil Nadu, there are large wind farms producing 850 megawatts of electricity. At present, India is the third largest wind energy producer in the world.

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The power in wind is a function of the wind speed and therefore the average wind speed of an area is an important determinant of economically feasible power. Wind speed increases with height. At a given turbine site, the power available 30 meters above ground is typically 60 percent greater than at 10 meters.

Over the past two decades, a great deal of technical progress has been made in the design, siting, installation, operation, and maintenance of power-producing wind mills (turbines). These improvements have led to higher wind conversion efficiencies and lower electricity production costs.

Environmental Impacts: Wind power has few environmental impacts, as there are virtually no air or water emissions, or radiation, or solid waste production. The principal problems are bird kills, noise, effect on TV reception, and aesthetic objections to the sheer number of wind turbines that are required to meet electricity needs.

Although large areas of land are required for setting up wind farms, the amount used by the turbine bases, the foundations and the access roads is less than 1% of the total area covered by the wind farm. The rest of the area can also be used for agricultural purposes or for grazing.

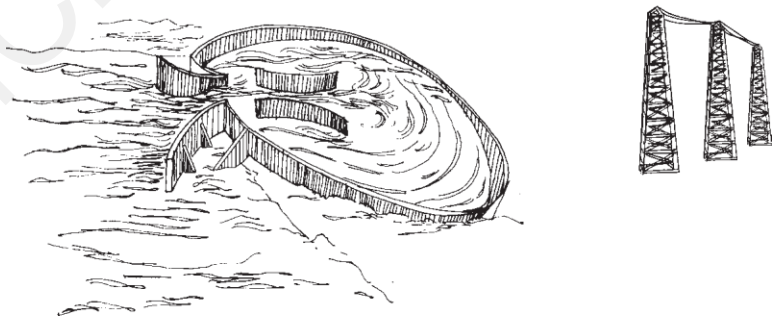
Siting windmills offshore reduces their demand for land and visual impact.

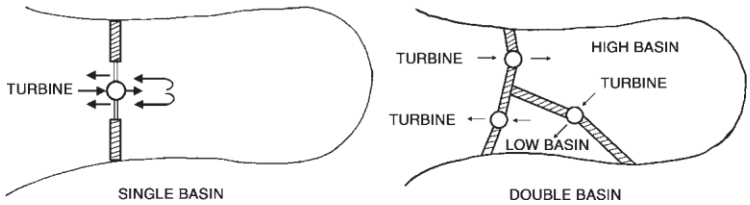
Wind is an intermittent source and the intermittency of wind depends on the geographic distribution of wind. Wind therefore cannot be used as the sole resource for electricity, and requires some other backup or stand-by electricity source.

Tidal and Wave Power: The earth's surface is 70% water. By warming the water, the sun, creates ocean currents and wind that produces waves. It is estimated that the solar energy absorbed by the tropical oceans in a week could equal the entire oil reserves of the world – 1 trillion barrels of oil. The energy of waves in the sea that crash on the land of all the continents is estimated at 2 to 3 million megawatts of energy. From the 1970s several countries have been experimenting with technology to harness the kinetic energy of the ocean to generate electricity.

Tidal power is tapped by placing a barrage across an estuary and forcing the tidal flow to pass through turbines. In a one-way system the incoming tide is allowed to fill the basin through a sluice, and the water so collected is used to produce electricity during the low tide. In a two-way system power is generated from both the incoming as well as the outgoing tide.

WAVE POWER PLANT





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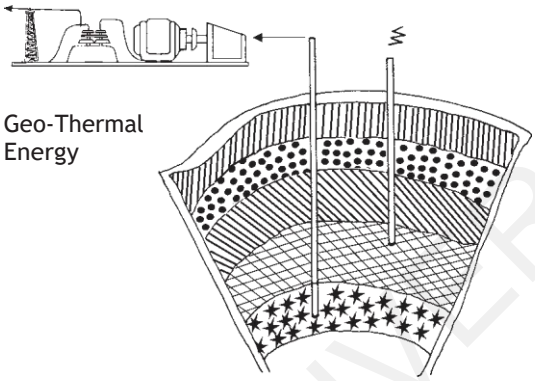
Tidal power stations bring about major ecological changes in the sensitive ecosystem of coastal regions and can destroy the habitats and nesting places of water birds and interfere with fisheries. A tidal power station at the mouth of a river blocks the flow of polluted water into the sea, thereby creating health and pollution hazards in the estuary. Other drawbacks include offshore energy devices posing navigational hazards. Residual drift current could affect spawning of some fish, whose larvae would be carried away from spawning grounds. They may also affect the migration patterns of surface swimming fish.

Wave power converts the motion of waves into electrical or mechanical energy. For this, an energy extraction device is used to drive turbo-generators. Electricity can be generated at sea and transmitted by cable to land. This energy source has yet to be fully explored. The largest concentration of potential wave energy on earth is located between latitudes 40 to 60 degrees in both the northern and southern hemispheres, where the winds blow most strongly.

Another developing concept harnesses energy due to the differences in temperature between the warm upper layers of the ocean and the cold deep sea water. These plants are known as Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC). This is a high tech installation which may prove to be highly valuable in the future.

Geothermal energy: is the energy stored within the earth ("geo" for earth and "thermal" for heat). Geothermal energy starts with hot, molten rock (called *magma*) deep inside the earth which surfaces at some parts of the earth's crust. The heat rising from the magma warms underground pools of water known as *geothermal reservoirs*. If there is an opening, hot underground water comes to the surface and forms hot springs, or it may boil to form geysers. With modern technology, wells are drilled



deep below the surface of the earth to tap into geothermal reservoirs. This is called *direct use* of geothermal energy, and it provides a steady stream of hot water that is pumped to the earth's surface.

In the 20th century geothermal energy has been harnessed on a large scale for space heating, industrial use and electricity production, especially in Iceland, Japan and New Zealand.

Geothermal energy is nearly as cheap as hydropower and will thus be increasingly utilised in future. However, water from geothermal reservoirs often contains minerals that are corrosive and polluting. Geothermal fluids are a problem which must be treated before disposal.

Nuclear Power

In 1938 two German scientists Otto Hahn and Fritz Strassman demonstrated nuclear fission. They found they could split the nucleus of a uranium atom by bombarding it with neutrons. As the nucleus split, some mass was converted to energy. The nuclear power industry however was born in the late 1950s. The first large-scale nuclear power plant in the world became operational in 1957 in Pennsylvania, US.

Dr. Homi Bhabha was the father of Nuclear Power development in India. The Bhabha Atomic

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Research Center in Mumbai studies and develops modern nuclear technology. India has 10 nuclear reactors at 5 nuclear power stations that produce 2% of India's electricity. These are located in Maharashtra (Tarapur), Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Gujrat. India has uranium from mines in Bihar. There are deposits of thorium in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

The nuclear reactors use Uranium 235 to produce electricity. Energy released from 1kg of Uranium 235 is equivalent to that produced by burning 3,000 tons of coal. U235 is made into rods which are fitted into a nuclear reactor. The control rods absorb neutrons and thus adjust the fission which releases energy due to the chain reaction in a reactor unit. The heat energy produced in the reaction is used to heat water and produce steam, which drives turbines that produce electricity. The drawback is that the rods need to be changed periodically. This has impacts on the environment due to disposal of nuclear waste. The reaction releases very hot waste water that damages aquatic ecosystems, even though it is cooled by a water system before it is released.

The disposal of nuclear waste is becoming an increasingly serious issue. The cost of Nuclear Power generation must include the high cost of disposal of its waste and the decommissioning of old plants. These have high economic as well as ecological costs that are not taken into account when developing new nuclear installations. For environmental reasons, Sweden has decided to become a Nuclear Free Country by 2010.

Although the conventional environmental impacts from nuclear power are negligible, what overshadows all the other types of energy sources is that an accident can be devastating and the effects last for long periods of time. While it does not pollute air or water routinely like oil or biomass, a single accident can kill thousands of people, make many others seriously ill, and destroy an area for decades by its radioactivity which leads to death, cancer and genetic deformities. Land, water, vegetation are destroyed for long periods of time. Management, storage and disposal of radioactive wastes resulting from nuclear power generation are the biggest expenses of the nuclear power industry. There have been nuclear accidents at Chernobyl in USSR and at the Three Mile Island in USA. The radioactivity unleashed by such an accident can affect mankind for generations.

Energy Conservation: Conventional energy sources have a variety of impacts on nature and human society.

India needs to rapidly move into a policy to reduce energy needs and use cleaner energy production technologies. A shift to alternate energy use and renewable energy sources that are used judiciously and equitably would bring about environmentally friendly and sustainable lifestyles. India must reduce its dependency on imported oil. At present we are under-utilizing our natural gas resources. We could develop thousands of mini dams to generate electricity. India wastes great amounts of electricity during transmission. Fuel wood plantations need to be enhanced and management through Joint Forestry Management (JFM) has a great promise for the future.

Energy efficient cooking stoves or 'chulas' help the movement of air through it so that the wood is burnt more efficiently. They also have a chimney to prevent air pollution and thus reduce respiratory problems. While over 2 lakh improved chulas have been introduced throughout the country, the number in active use is unknown as most rural people find it to be unusable for several reasons. TERI in 1995 estimated that in India 95% of rural people and 60% of urban poor still depend on firewood, cattle dung and crop residue for cooking and other domestic purposes. Biomass can be converted into biogas

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or liquid fuels ie. ethanol and methanol. Biogas digesters convert animal waste or agricultural residues into gas. This is 60% methane and 40% CO_2 generated by fermentation. The commonly used agri waste is dung of domestic animals and rice husk, coconut shells, straw or weeds. The material left after the gas is used acts as a fertilizer.

Small hydrogeneration units are environment-friendly. They do not displace people, destroy forests or wildlife habitats or kill aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity. They can be placed in several hill streams, on canals or rivers. The generation depends on flowing water due to gravity. However, this fails if the flow is seasonal.

It is easy to waste energy but cheaper to save it than generate it. We can conserve energy by preventing or reducing waste of energy and by using resources more efficiently. People waste energy because government subsidises it. If the real cost was levied, people would not be able to afford to waste it carelessly.

Industry and transport are the main growing users of energy in India. Industries that are known for generating pollution also waste the most energy. These include chemical industries, especially petrochemical units, iron and steel, textiles, paper, etc. Unplanned and inefficient public transport systems, especially in cities, waste large amount of energy. Using bicycles is an excellent method to reduce the use of energy. In agriculture, irrigation pumps to lift water are the most energy intensive agricultural use. These are either electrical or run on fossil fuels.

CASE STUDIES

Indian industries use more energy than necessary.

Steel and energy: To produce one tonne of steel, India spends 9.5 million kilocalories. In Italy it is 4.3 million kilocalories and for Japan it is only 4.1 million kilocalories.

Cement industry: Over 2 million kilocalories are used to produce one tonne of cement in India. In Germany it is 0.82 million kilocalories, in USA, 0.92 million kilocalories.

Vehicles: Lighter materials should be used for cars. Instead of steel we should use aluminum, fiber glass or plastics. These lighter materials can reduce the weight by 15 % and increase the fuel economy by 6 to 8%.

Refrigerators: Better technologies reduced the annual energy needed by a typical Danish 200 liter refrigerator (with no freezer) from 350 kilo Watt hour (kWh) to 90 kWh.

Lighting: An 18-watt modern, compact fluorescent lamp, can replace a standard 75-watt incandescent lamp.

f) Land resources:

Land as a resource: Landforms such as hills, valleys, plains, river basins and wetlands include different resource generating areas that the people living in them depend on. Many traditional farming societies had ways of preserving areas from which they used resources. Eg. In the 'sacred groves' of the Western Ghats, requests to the spirit of the Grove for permission to cut a tree, or extract a resource, were accompanied by simple rituals. The outcome of a chance fall on one side or the other of a stone

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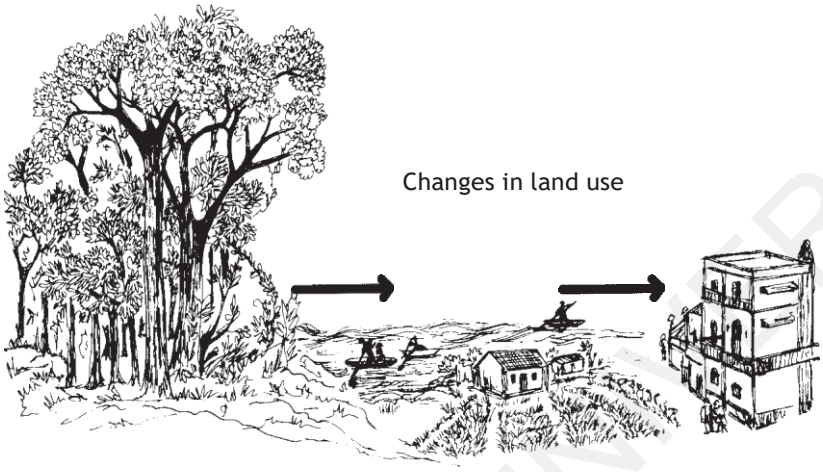
balanced on a rock gave or withheld permission. The request could not be repeated for a specified period.



If land is utilized carefully it can be considered a renewable resource.

The roots of trees and grasses bind the soil. If forests are depleted, or grasslands overgrazed, the land becomes unproductive and wasteland is formed. Intensive irrigation leads to water logging and salination, on which crops cannot grow. Land is also converted into a non-renewable resource when highly toxic industrial and nuclear wastes are dumped on it.

Land on earth is as finite as any of our other natural resources. While mankind has learnt to adapt his lifestyle to various ecosystems world over, he cannot live comfortably for instance on polar ice caps, on under the sea, or in space in the foreseeable future.

Man needs land for building homes, cultivating food, maintaining pastures for domestic animals, developing industries to provide goods, and supporting the industry by creating towns and cities. Equally importantly, man needs to protect wilderness area in forests, grasslands, wetlands, mountains, coasts, etc. to protect our vitally valuable biodiversity.

Thus a rational use of land needs careful planning. One can develop most of these different types of land uses almost anywhere, but Protected Areas (National Park's and Wildlife Sanctuaries) can only be situated where some of the natural ecosystems are still undisturbed. These Protected Areas are important aspects of good landuse planning.

Land Degradation: Farmland is under threat due to more and more intense utilisation. Every year, between 5 to 7 million hectares of land worldwide is added to the existing degraded farmland. When soil is used more intensively by farming, it is eroded more rapidly by wind and rain. Over irrigating farmland leads to salinisation, as evaporation of water brings the salts to the surface of the soil on which crops cannot grow. Over irrigation also creates water logging of the topsoil so that crop roots are affected and the crop deteriorates. The use of more and more chemical fertilizers poisons the soil so that eventually the land becomes unproductive.

As urban centers grow and industrial expansion occurs, the agricultural land and forests shrink. This is a serious loss and has long term ill effects on human civilisation.

Soil erosion: The characteristics of natural ecosystems such as forests and grasslands depend on the type of soil. Soils of various types support a wide variety of crops. The misuse of an ecosystem leads to loss of valuable soil through erosion by the monsoon rains and, to a smaller extent, by wind. The roots of the trees in the forest hold the soil. Deforestation thus leads to

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rapid soil erosion. Soil is washed into streams and is transported into rivers and finally lost to the sea. The process is more evident in areas where deforestation has led to erosion on steep hill slopes as in the Himalayas and in the Western Ghats. These areas are called 'ecologically sensitive areas' or ESAs. To prevent the loss of millions of tons of valuable soil every year, it is essential to preserve what remains of our natural forest cover. It is equally important to reforest denuded areas. The linkage between the existence of forests and the presence of soil is greater than the forest's physical soil binding function alone. The soil is enriched by the leaf-litter of the forest. This detritus is broken down by soil micro-organisms, fungi, worms and insects, which help to recycle nutrients in the system. Further losses of our soil wealth will impoverish our country and reduce its capacity to grow enough food in future.

CASE STUDY

Selenium – Punjab

In 1981-82, farmers from Hoshirapur and Nawanshehar Districts approached scientists of the Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Ludhiana, as wheat crops had turned white. Soil analysis indicated selenium (Se) levels in the area were above toxic limits. Se is a naturally occurring trace element, essential for animal and human health, but the gap between requirement and excess is narrow. Soils containing 0.5 microgrammes (ug) of Se per kg or more are injurious to health. In some areas of Punjab, Se levels ranges from 0.31 ug/kg to 4.55ug/kg. Rice cultivation requires the presence of standing water. Being highly soluble, Se dissolves and comes to the surface. The water then evaporates leaving the Se behind.

2.3 ROLE OF AN INDIVIDUAL IN CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Until fairly recently mankind acted as if he could go on for ever exploiting the ecosystems and natural resources such as soil, water, forests and grasslands on the Earth's surface and extracting minerals and fossil fuels from underground. But, in the last few decades, it has become increasingly evident that the global ecosystem has the capacity to sustain only a limited level of utilization. Biological systems cannot go on replenishing resources if they are overused or misused. At a critical point, increasing pressure destabilizes their natural balance. Even biological resources traditionally classified as 'renewable' - such as those from our oceans, forests, grasslands and wetlands, are being degraded by overuse and may be permanently destroyed. And no natural resource is limitless. 'Non-renewable' resources will be rapidly exhausted if we continue to use them as intensively as at present.

The two most damaging factors leading to the current rapid depletion of all forms of natural resources are increasing 'consumerism' on the part of the affluent sections of society, and rapid population growth. Both factors are the results of choices *we make as individuals*. As individuals we need to decide;

- What will we leave to our children? (Are we thinking of short-term or long-term gain?)
- Is my material gain someone else's loss?

Greed for material goods has become a way of life for a majority of people in the developed world. Population growth and the resulting shortage of resources most severely affects people in the developing countries. In nations such as ours, which are both developing rapidly, and suffering from a population explosion, both factors are responsible for environmental degradation. We must ask ourselves if we have

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perhaps reached a critical flash point, at which economic 'development' affects the lives of people more adversely than the benefits it provides.

What can you do to save electricity?

- Turn off lights and fans as soon as you leave the room.
- Use tube lights and energy efficient bulbs that save energy rather than bulbs. A 40-watt tube light gives as much light as a 100 watt bulb.
- Keep the bulbs and tubes clean. Dust on tubes and bulbs decreases lighting levels by 20 to 30 percent.
- Switch off the television or radio as soon as the program of interest is over.
- A pressure cooker can save up to 75 percent of energy required for cooking. It is also faster.
- Keeping the vessel covered with a lid during cooking, helps to cook faster, thus saving energy.

2.4 EQUITABLE USE OF RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES

Reduction of the unsustainable and unequal use of resources, and control of our population growth are essential for the survival of our nation and indeed of human kind everywhere. Our environment provides us with a variety of goods and services necessary for our day-to-day lives, but the soil, water, climate and solar energy which form the 'abiotic' support that we derive from nature, are in themselves not distributed evenly throughout the world or within countries. A new economic order at the global and at national levels must be based on the ability to distribute benefits of natural resources by sharing them more equally among the countries as well as among communities within countries such as our own. It is at the local level where people subsist by the sale of locally collected resources, that the disparity is greatest. 'Development' has not reached them and they are often unjustly accused of 'exploiting' natural resources. They must be adequately compensated for the removal of the sources to distant regions and thus develop a greater stake in protecting natural resources.

There are several principles that each of us can adopt to bring about sustainable lifestyles. This primarily comes from caring for our Mother Earth in all respects. A love and respect for Nature is the greatest sentiment that helps bring about a feeling for looking at how we use natural resources in a new and sensitive way. Think of the beauty of a wilderness, a natural forest in all its magnificence, the expanse of a green grassland, the clean water of a lake that supports so much life, the crystal clear water of a hill stream, or the magnificent power of the oceans, and we cannot help but support the conservation of nature's wealth. If we respect this we cannot commit acts that will deplete our life supporting systems.

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UNIT 3:
Ecosystems

3.1 CONCEPT OF AN ECOSYSTEM **54**
3.1.1 Understanding ecosystems 55
3.1.2 Ecosystem degradation 55
3.1.3 Resource utilisation 56

3.2 STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF AN ECOSYSTEM **56**

3.3 PRODUCERS, CONSUMERS AND DECOMPOSERS **57**

3.4 ENERGY FLOW IN THE ECOSYSTEM **58**
3.4.1 The water cycle 58
3.4.2 The Carbon cycle 59
3.4.3 The Oxygen cycle 60
3.4.4 The Nitrogen cycle 60
3.4.5 The energy cycle 61
3.4.6 Integration of cycles in nature 62

3.5 ECOLOGICAL SUCCESSION **62**

3.6 FOOD CHAINS, FOOD WEBS AND ECOLOGICAL PYRAMIDS **62**
3.6.1 The food chains 62
3.6.2 The food webs 63
3.6.3 The ecological pyramids 63

3.7 INTRODUCTION, TYPES, CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES, STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS **63**
3.7.1 Forest ecosystem 65
3.7.2 Grassland ecosystem 70
3.7.3 Desert ecosystem 74
3.7.4 Aquatic ecosystems (ponds, lakes, streams, rivers, estuaries, oceans) 75

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3.1 CONCEPT OF AN ECOSYSTEM

An 'Ecosystem' is a region with a specific and recognizable landscape form such as forest, grassland, desert, wetland or coastal area. The nature of the ecosystem is based on its geographical features such as hills, mountains, plains, rivers, lakes, coastal areas or islands. It is also controlled by climatic conditions such as the amount of sunlight, the temperature and the rainfall in the region. The geographical, climatic and soil characteristics form its non-living (abiotic) component. These features create conditions that support a community of plants and animals that evolution has produced to live in these specific conditions. The living part of the ecosystem is referred to as its biotic component.

Ecosystems are divided into terrestrial or land-based ecosystems, and aquatic ecosystems in water. These form the two major habitat conditions for the Earth's living organisms.

All the living organisms in an area live in communities of plants and animals. They interact with their non-living environment, and with each other at different points in time for a large number of reasons. Life can exist only in a small proportion of the earth's land, water and its atmosphere. At a *global level* the thin skin of the earth on the land, the sea and the air, forms the biosphere.

At *a sub-global level,* this is divided into **biogeographical realms,** eg. Eurasia called the palaeartic realm; South and South-East Asia (of which India forms a major part) is the Oriental realm; North America is the Nearctic realm; South America forms the Neotropical realm; Africa the Ethiopian realm; and Australia the Australian realm.

At a national or state level, this forms **biogeographic regions.** There are several distinctive geographical regions in India- the Himalayas, the Gangetic Plains, the Highlands of Central India, the Western and Eastern Ghats, the semi-arid desert in the West, the Deccan Plateau, the Coastal Belts, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. These geographically distinctive areas have plants and animals that have been adapted to live in each of these regions.

At an even more local level, each area has several structurally and functionally identifiable **ecosystems** such as different types of forests, grasslands, river catchments, mangrove swamps in deltas, seashores, islands, etc. to give only a few examples. Here too each of these forms a habitat for specific plants and animals.

Ecosystems have been formed on land and in the sea by evolution that has created species to live together in a specific region. Thus ecosystems have both non-living and living components that are typical to an area giving it its own special characteristics that are easily observed.

Definition: The living community of plants and animals in any area together with the non-living components of the environment such as soil, air and water, constitute the ecosystem.

Some ecosystems are fairly robust and are less affected by a certain level of human disturbance. Others are highly fragile and are quickly destroyed by human activities. Mountain ecosystems are extremely fragile as degradation of forest cover leads to severe erosion of soil and changes in river courses. Island ecosystems are easily affected by any form of human activity which can lead to the rapid extinction of several of their unique species of plants and animals. Evergreen forests and coral reefs are also examples of species rich fragile ecosystems which must be protected against a variety of human activities that lead to their degradation. River and wetland ecosystems can be seriously affected by pollution and changes in surrounding landuse.

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3.1.1 Understanding ecosystems

Natural ecosystems include the forests, grasslands, deserts, and aquatic ecosystems such as ponds, rivers, lakes, and the sea. Man modified ecosystems include agricultural land and urban or industrial land use patterns.

Each ecosystem has a set of common features that can be observed in the field:

- 'What does the ecosystem look like?'
  One should be able to describe specific features of the different ecosystems in ones own surroundings. Field observations must be made in both urban and natural surroundings.

- What is its structure?
  Is it a forest, a grassland, a water body, an agricultural area, a grazing area, an urban area, an industrial area, etc.?

  What you should see are its different characteristics. A forest has layers from the ground to the canopy. A pond has different types of vegetation from the periphery to its center. The vegetation on a mountain changes from its base to its summit.

- What is the composition of its plant and animal species?
  List the well-known plants and animals you can see. Document their abundance and numbers in nature: very common, common, uncommon, rare. Wild mammals will not be seen in large numbers, cattle would be common. Some birds are common – which are the most common species? Insect species are very common and most abundant. In fact there are so many that they cannot be easily counted.

- 'How does the ecosystem work'?
  The ecosystem functions through several biogeochemical cycles and energy transfer mechanisms. Observe and document the components of the ecosystem which consists of its non-living or abiotic features such as air, water, climate and soil. Its biotic components, the various plants and animals. Both these aspects of the ecosystem interact with each other through several functional aspects to form Nature's ecosystems. Plants, herbivores and carnivores can be seen to form food chains. All these chains are joined together to form a 'web of life' on which man depends. Each of these use energy that comes from the sun and powers the ecosystem.

3.1.2 Ecosystem degradation

Ecosystems are the basis of life itself! The natural ecosystems in the wilderness provide a variety of products and are regions in which a number of vital ecological processes are present, without which human civilization would not be able to exist.

Ecosystems are however frequently disrupted by human actions which lead to the extinction of species of plants and animals that can live only in the different natural ecosystems. Some species if eliminated seriously affect the ecosystem. These are called 'keystone' species. Extinction occurs due to changes in land use. Forests are deforested for timber, wetlands are drained to create more agricultural land and semi arid grasslands that are used as pastures are changed into irrigated fields. Pollution from industry and waste from urban settings can also lead to extinction of several species.

The reason for the depletion of natural resources is twofold – our rapidly exploding population that needs to sustain itself on resources, and the growth of affluent societies, which consume

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and waste a very large proportion of resources and energy. Increasing extraction of resources is at the cost of natural ecosystems, leading to a derangement of their important functions. Each of us in our daily lives use a variety of resources. If tracked back to their source, one finds that the resources were originally obtained from nature and natural ecosystems. Our insensitivity to using resources carefully has produced societies that nature can no longer sustain. If one thinks before wasting resources such as water, reusing and recycling paper, using less plastics that are non-degradable, culminatively this can have positive implications on the integrity of our natural resource base and conserve the resources that nature provides.

Ecosystems and man: Every region of our earth has different ecosystems based on its climatic conditions and geographical feature. There are terrestrial ecosystems on land and aquatic ecosystems in water.

3.1.3 Resource utilisation

Most traditional societies used their environment sustainably. Though inequality in resource utilization has existed in every society, the number of individuals that used a large proportion of resources was extremely limited. In recent times the proportion of 'rich' people in affluent societies, grew rapidly. Inequality thus became a serious problem. Whereas in the past many resources such as timber and fuel wood from the forest were extracted sustainably, this pattern has drastically changed during the last century. The economically better off sections began to use greater amounts of forest products, while those people who lived in the forest became increasingly poor. Similarly the building of large irrigation projects led to wealth in those areas that had canals, while those who hand to remain dependent on a constant supply of water from the river itself, found it difficult to survive.

The key to this issue is the need for an 'equitable' distribution of all types of natural resources. A more even sharing of resources within the community can reduce these pressures on the natural ecosystems.

3.2 STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF AN ECOSYSTEM

Structural aspects

Components that make up the structural aspects of an ecosystem include:

1) Inorganic aspects – C, N, CO_2, H_2O.
2) Organic compounds – Protein, Carbohydrates, Lipids – link abiotic to biotic aspects.
3) Climatic regimes – Temperature, Moisture, Light & Topography.
4) Producers – Plants.
5) Macro consumers – Phagotrophs – Large animals.
6) Micro consumers – Saprotrophs, absorbers – fungi.

Functional aspects

1) Energy cycles.
2) Food chains.
3) Diversity-interlinkages between organisms.
4) Nutrient cycles-biogeochemical cycles.
5) Evolution.

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Since each ecosystem has a non-living and a living part that are linked to each other, one needs to look around us and observe this closely. This is an important aspect that is a vital part of our lives.

The non-living components of an ecosystem are the amount of water, the various inorganic substances and organic compounds, and climatic conditions such as rainfall and temperature, which depend on geographical conditions and location which is also related to the amount of sunlight. The living organisms in an ecosystem are inseparable from their habitat.

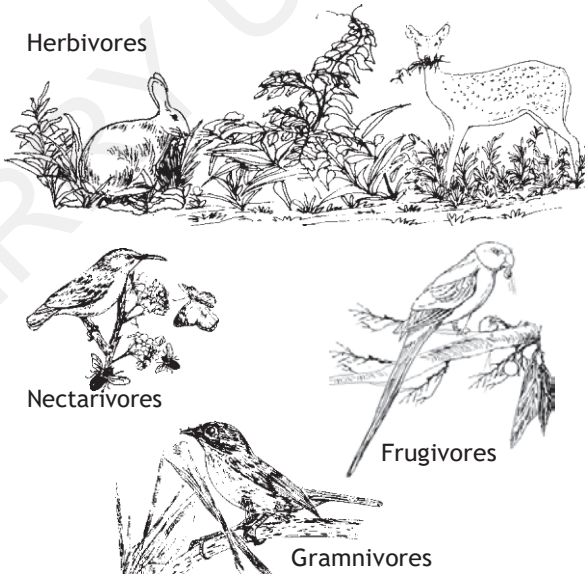
The living component of plant life ranges from extremely small bacteria, which live in air, water and soil, algae which live in fresh and salt water, to the terrestrial plants which range from grasses and herbs that grow after the monsoon every year, to the giant long-lived trees of the forest. The plants convert energy from sunlight into organic matter for their growth. They thus function as producers in the ecosystem. The living component of the animal world ranges from microscopic animals, to small insects and the larger animals such as fish, amphibia, reptiles, birds and mammals. Man is just one of the 1.8 million species of plants and animals that inhabit the earth.

3.3 PRODUCERS, CONSUMERS AND DECOMPOSERS

Every living organism is in some way dependent on other organisms. Plants are food for herbivorous animals which are in turn food for carnivorous animals. Thus there are different tropic levels in the ecosystem. Some organisms such as fungi live only on dead material and inorganic matter.

Plants are the '**producers**' in the ecosystem as they manufacture their food by using energy from the sun. In the forest these form communities of plant life. In the sea these include tiny algal forms to large seaweed.

The **herbivorous animals** are primary consumers as they live on the producers. In a forest, these are the insects, amphibia, reptiles, birds and mammals. The herbivorous animals include for example hare, deer and elephants that live on plant life. They graze on grass or feed on the foliage from trees. In grasslands, there are herbivores such as the blackbuck that feed on grass. In the semiarid areas, there are species such as the chinkara or Indian gazelle. In the sea, there are small fish that live on algae and other plants.



At a higher tropic level, there are **carnivorous animals**, or secondary consumers, which live on herbivorous animals. In our forests, the carnivorous animals are tigers, leopards, jackals, foxes and small wild cats. In

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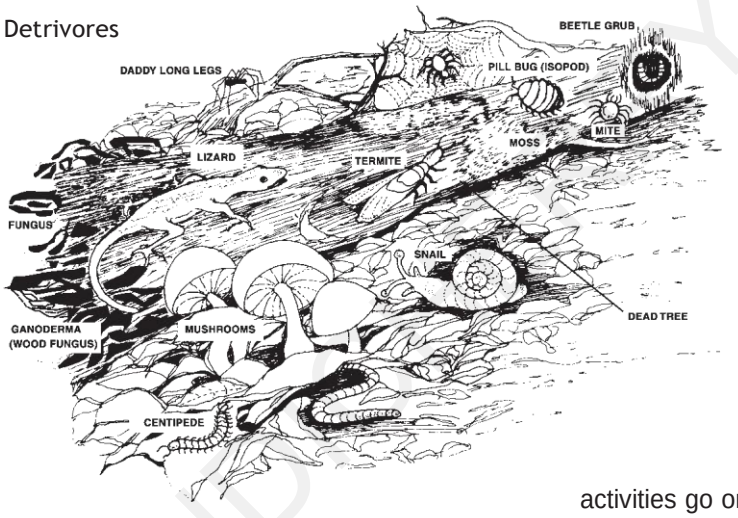
the sea, carnivorous fish live on other fish and marine animals. Animals that live in the sea range in size from microscopic forms to giant mammals such as the whale.

Decomposers or detrivores are a group of organisms consisting of small animals like worms, insects, bacteria and fungi, which break down dead organic material into smaller particles and finally into simpler substances that are used by plants as nutrition. Decomposition thus is a vital function in nature, as without this, all the nutrients would be tied up in dead matter and no new life could be produced.

Most ecosystems are highly complex and consist of an extremely large number of individuals

Detrivores



of a wide variety of species. In the species-rich tropical ecosystems (such as in our country), only a few species are very common, while most species have relatively few individuals. Some species of plants and animals are extremely rare and may occur only at a few locations. These are said to be 'endemic' to these areas.

When human activities alter the balance in these ecosystems, the "perturbation" leads to the disappearance of these uncommon species. When this happens to an endemic species that is not widely distributed, it becomes extinct for all time.

3.4 ENERGY FLOW IN THE ECOSYSTEM

Every ecosystem has several interrelated mechanisms that affect human life. These are the water cycle, the carbon cycle, the oxygen cycle, the nitrogen cycle and the energy cycle. While every ecosystem is controlled by these cycles, in each ecosystem its abiotic and biotic features are distinct from each other.

All the functions of the ecosystem are in some way related to the growth and regeneration of its plant and animal species. These linked processes can be depicted as the various cycles. These processes depend on energy from sunlight. During photosynthesis carbon dioxide is taken up by plants and oxygen is released. Animals depend on this oxygen for their respiration. The water cycle depends on the rainfall, which is necessary for plants and animals to live. The energy cycle recycles nutrients into the soil on which plant life grows. Our own lives are closely linked to the proper functioning of these cycles of life. If human activities go on altering them, humanity cannot survive on our earth.

3.4.1 The Water Cycle

When it rains, the water runs along the ground and flows into rivers or falls directly into the sea. A part of the rainwater that falls on land percolates into the ground. This is stored underground throughout the rest of the year. Water is drawn up from the ground by plants along with the nutrients from the soil. The water is transpired from the leaves as water vapour and returned

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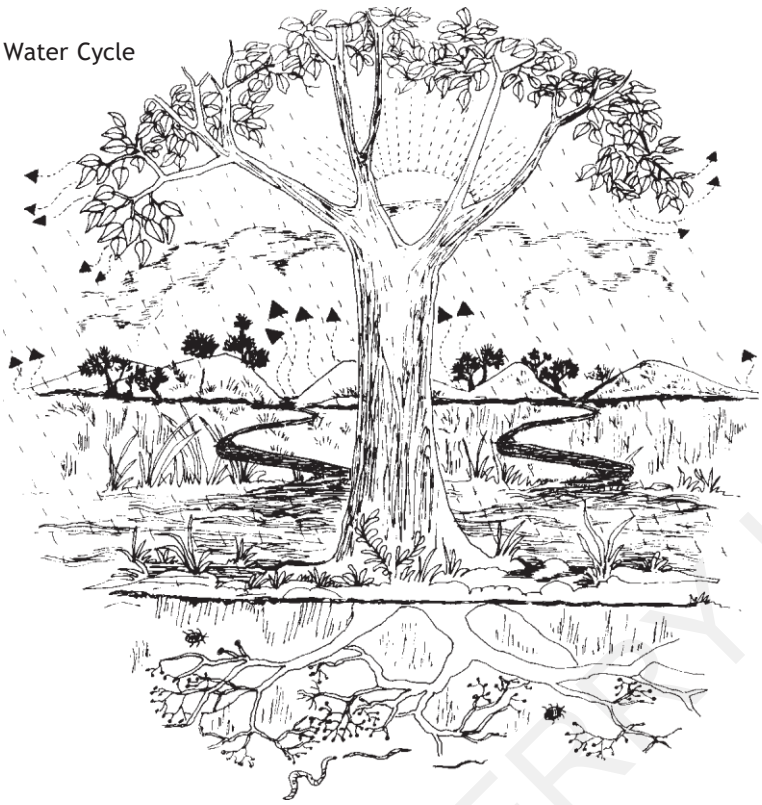
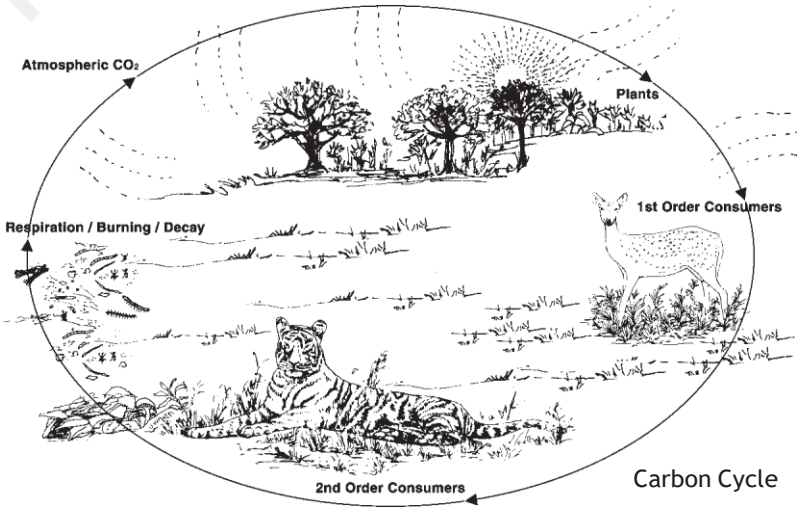


Water Cycle

to the atmosphere. As it is lighter than air, water vapour rises and forms clouds. Winds blow the clouds for long distances and when the clouds rise higher, the vapour condenses and changes into droplets, which fall on the land as rain. Though this is an endless cycle on which life depends, man's activities are making drastic changes in the atmosphere through pollution which is altering rainfall patterns. This is leading to prolonged drought periods extending over years in countries such as Africa, while causing floods in countries such as the US. El Nino storms due to these effects have devastated many places in the last few years.

3.4.2 The Carbon cycle

The carbon, which occurs in organic compounds, is included in both the abiotic and biotic parts of the ecosystem. Carbon is a building block of both plant and animal tissues. In the atmosphere, carbon occurs as carbon dioxide (CO_2). In the presence of sunlight, plants take up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through their leaves. The plants combine carbon dioxide with water, which is absorbed by their roots from the soil. In the presence of sunlight they are able to form carbohydrates that contain carbon. This process is known as photosynthesis. Plants use this complex mechanism for their growth and development. In this process, plants release oxygen into the atmosphere on which animals depend for their respiration. Plants therefore help in regulating and monitoring the percentage of Oxygen and Carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere. All of mankind thus depends on



Carbon Cycle

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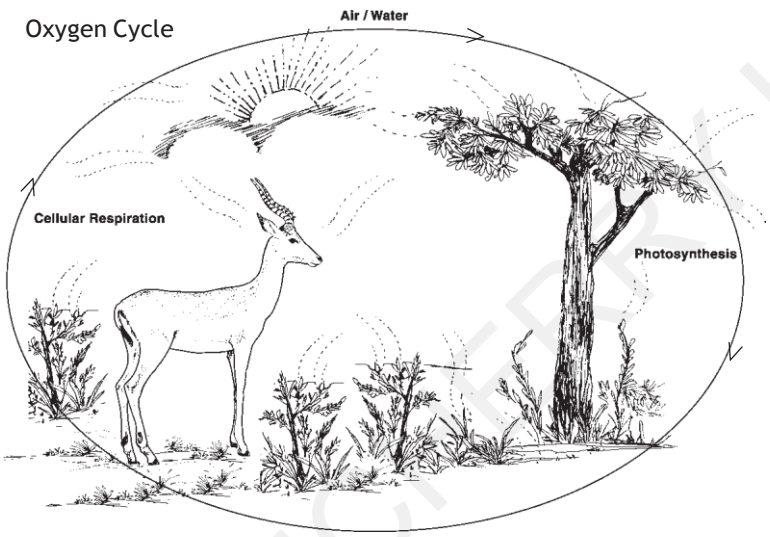
the oxygen generated through this cycle. It also keeps the CO_2 at acceptable levels.

Herbivorous animals feed on plant material, which is used by them for energy and for their growth. Both plants and animals release carbon dioxide during respiration. They also return fixed carbon to the soil in the waste they excrete. When plants and animals die they return their carbon to the soil. These processes complete the carbon cycle.



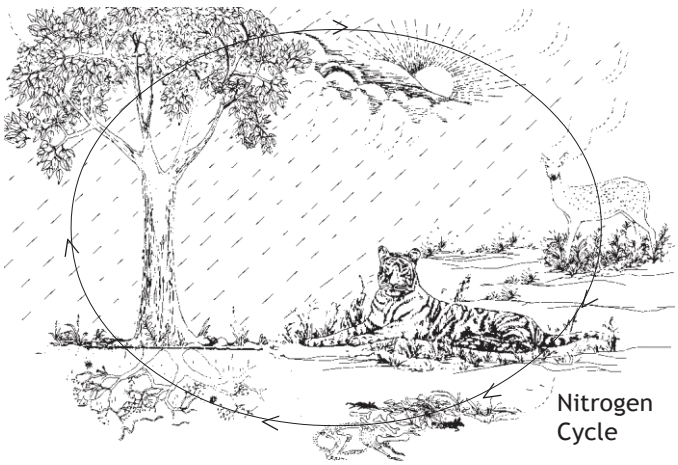
3.4.3 The Oxygen Cycle

Oxygen is taken up by plants and animals from the air during respiration. The plants return oxygen to the atmosphere during photosynthesis. This links the Oxygen Cycle to the Carbon Cycle. Deforestation is likely to gradually reduce the oxygen levels in our atmosphere. Thus plant life plays an important role in our lives which we frequently do not appreciate. This is an important reason to participate in afforestation programs.

3.4.4 The Nitrogen Cycle

Carnivorous animals feed on herbivorous animals that live on plants. When animals defecate, this waste material is broken down by worms and insects mostly beetles and ants. These small 'soil animals' break the waste material into smaller bits on which microscopic bacteria and fungi can act. This material is thus broken down further into nutrients that plants can absorb and use for their growth. Thus nutrients are recycled back from animals to plants. Similarly the bodies of dead animals are also broken down into nutrients that are used by the plants for their growth. Thus the nitrogen cycle on which life is dependent is completed.

Nitrogen fixing bacteria and fungi in soil gives this important element to plants, which absorb it as nitrates. The nitrates are a part of the plant's metabolism, which help in forming new plant proteins. This is used by animals that feed on the plants. The nitrogen is then transferred to carnivorous animals when they feed on the herbivores. Thus our own lives are



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closely interlinked to soil animals, fungi and even bacteria in the soil. When we think of food webs, we usually think of the large mammals and other large forms of life. But we need to understand that it is the unseen small animals, plants and microscopic forms of life that are of great value for the functioning of the ecosystem.

3.4.5 The Energy Cycle

The energy cycle is based on the flow of energy through the ecosystem. Energy from sunlight is converted by plants themselves into growing new plant material which includes leaves, flowers, fruit, branches, trunks and roots of plants.

Energy Cycle

Since plants can grow by converting the sun's energy directly into their tissues, they are known as **producers** in the ecosystem. The plants are used by **herbivorous animals** as food, which gives them energy. A large part of this energy is used up for day to day functions of these animals such as breathing, digesting food, supporting growth of tissues, maintaining blood flow and body temperature. Energy is also used for activities such as looking for food, finding shelter, breeding and bringing up young ones. The carnivore**s** in turn depend on herbivorous animals on which they feed. Thus the different plant and animal species are linked to one another through **food chains**. Each food chain has three or four links. However as each plant or animal can be linked to several other plants or animals through many different linkages, these inter-linked chains can be depicted as a complex **food web**. This is thus called the 'web of life' that shows that there are thousands of interrelationships in nature.

The energy in the ecosystem can be depicted in the form of a **food pyramid** or **energy pyramid**. The food pyramid has a large base of plants called '**producers**'. The pyramid has a narrower middle section that depicts the number and biomass of **herbivorous animals**, which are called '**first order consumers**'. The apex depicts the small biomass of **carnivorous animals** called '**second order consumers**'. Man is one of the animals at the apex of the pyramid. Thus to support mankind, there must be a large base of herbivorous animals and an even greater quantity of plant material.

When plants and animals die, this material is returned to the soil after being broken down into simpler substances by **decomposers** such as insects, worms, bacteria and fungi so that plants can absorb the nutrients through their roots.

Animals excrete waste products after digesting food, which goes back to the soil. This links the energy cycle to the Nitrogen cycle.

3.4.6 Integration of cycles in Nature

These cycles are a part of global life processes. These biogeochcemical cycles have specific features in each of the ecosystems. These cycles are however linked to those of adjacent ecosystems. Their characteristics are specific to the plant and animal communities in the region. This is related to the geographical features of the area, the climate and the chemical composition of the soil. Together the cycles are responsible for maintaining life on earth. If mankind disturbs these cycles beyond the limits that nature can sustain, they will eventually break down and lead to a degraded earth on which man will not be able to survive.

3.5 ECOLOGICAL SUCCESSION

Ecological succession is a process through which ecosystems tend to change over a period of time. Succession can be related to seasonal environmental changes, which create changes in the community of plants and animals living in the ecosystem. Other successional events may take much longer periods of time extending to several decades. If a forest is cleared, it is initially colonized by a certain group of species of plants and animals, which gradually change through an orderly process of community development. One can predict that an opened up area will gradually be converted into a grassland, a shrubland and finally a woodland and a forest if permitted to do so without human interference. There is a tendency for succession to produce a more or less stable state at the end of the successional stages. Developmental stages in the ecosystem thus consist of a pioneer stage, a series of changes known as serel stages, and finally a climax stage. The successive stages are related to the way in which energy flows through the biological system. The most frequent example of successional changes occur in a pond ecosystem where it fluctuates from a dry terrestrial habitat to the early colonisation stage by small aquatic species after the monsoon, which gradually passes through to a mature aquatic ecosystem, and then reverts back to its dry stage in summer where its aquatic life remains dormant.

3.6 FOOD CHAINS, FOOD WEBS AND ECOLOGICAL PYRAMIDS

The transfer of energy from the source in plants through a series of organisms by eating and being eaten constitutes food chains. At each transfer, a large proportion of energy is lost in the form of heat. These food chains are not isolated sequences, but are interconnected with each other. This interlocking pattern is known as the food web. Each step of the food web is called a trophic level. Hence green plants occupy the first level, herbivores the second level, carnivores the third level and secondary carnivores the fourth level. These trophic levels together form the ecological pyramid.

3.6.1 The food chains

The most obvious aspect of nature is that energy must pass from one living organism to another. When herbivorous animals feed on plants, energy is transferred from plants to animals. In an ecosystem, some of the animals feed on other living organisms, while some feed on dead organic matter. The latter form the 'detritus' food chain. At each linkage in the chain, a major part of the energy from the food is lost for daily activities. Each chain usually has only four to five such links. However a single species may be linked to a large number of species.

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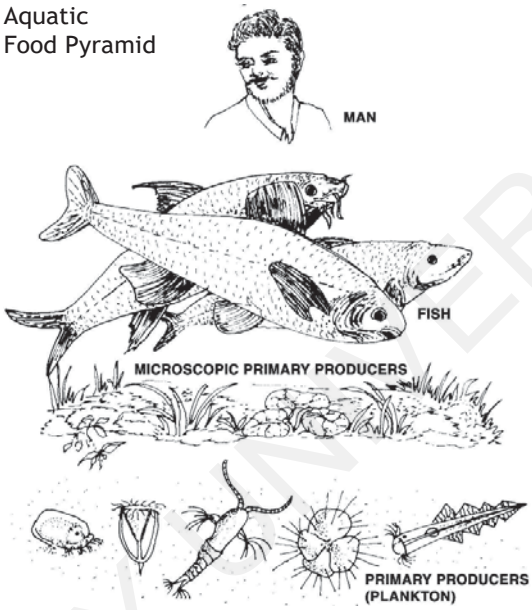
3.6.2 The food webs

In an ecosystem there are a very large number of interlinked chains. This forms a food web. If the linkages in the chains that make up the web of life are disrupted due to human activities that lead to the loss or extinction of species, the web breaks down.

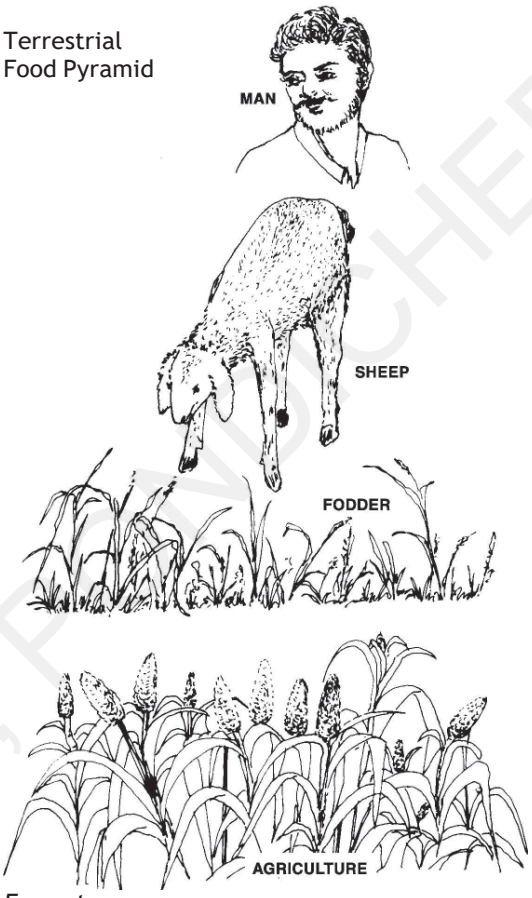
3.6.3 The ecological pyramids

In an ecosystem, green plants – the producers, utilize energy directly from sunlight and convert it into matter. A large number of these organisms form the most basic, or first 'trophic level' of the food pyramid. The herbivorous animals that eat plants are at the second trophic level

Aquatic
Food Pyramid



Terrestrial
Food Pyramid



and are called primary consumers. The predators that feed on them form the third trophic level and are known as secondary consumers. Only a few animals form the third trophic level consisting of carnivores at the apex of the food pyramid. This is how energy is used by living creatures and flows through the ecosystem from its base to the apex. Much of the energy is used up in activities of each living organism.

3.7 INTRODUCTION, TYPES, CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES, STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS

Types of Ecosystems

Terrestrial Ecosystems	*Aquatic Ecosystems*
Forest	*Pond*
Grassland	*Lake*
Semi arid areas	*Wetland*
Deserts	*River*
Mountains	*Delta*
Islands	*Marine*

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For each of these ecosystems we need to understand 4 basic issues:

1. What is the nature of the ecosystem? What is its structure and its functions?

2. Who uses the ecosystem and for what purpose?

3. How are these ecosystems degraded?

4. What can be done to protect it from deteriorating in the long-term? How can the ecosystem be conserved?

Ecosystem goods and services

Direct Values:
These are resources that people depend upon directly and are easy to quantify in economic terms.

- Consumptive Use Value - Non-market value of fruit, fodder, firewood, etc. that are used by people who collect them from their surrounds.]

- Productive Use Value - Commercial value of timber, fish, medicinal plants, etc. that people collect for sale.

Indirect Values:
These are uses that do not have easy ways to quantify them in terms of a clearly definable price.

- Non-consumptive use value - scientific research, bird-watching, ecotourism, etc.

- Option value - maintaining options for the future, so that by preserving them one could reap economic benefits in the future.

- Existence value - ethical and emotional aspects of the existence of wildlife and nature.

Terrestrial ecosystems in their natural state are found in different types of forests, grasslands, semiarid areas, deserts and sea coasts. Where the land is intensively used, these have been gradually modified over several thousand years into agricultural and pastoral regions. In the recent past they have been rapidly converted into intensively irrigated agricultural ecosystems or into urban and industrial centers. **Though this has increased production of food and provides the raw material for 'consumer' goods that we use, the overuse and misuse of land and natural ecosystems has led to a serious degradation of our environment.** The unsustainable use of environmental goods such as soil, water, fuelwood, timber from forest, grasses and herbs from grasslands for grazing and repeatedly burning the grass, degrades these natural ecosystems. Similarly, improper use of resources can destroy the services that the natural ecosystems provide. These processes of nature such as photosynthesis, climate control, prevention of soil erosion are disturbed by many human activities. When our human population was small, most ecosystems could supply all our needs. Resources were thus used '**sustainably'.** As industrial 'development' led to a very great increase in consumption of resources, the short term economic gains for people became an indicator of progress, rather than long term ecological benefits. This has resulted in an '**unsustainable use'** of natural resources. Forests thus disappear, rivers run dry, deserts begin to spread, and air, water and soil become increasingly polluted as by-products of development. Human well being itself is then seriously affected.

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3.7.1 Forest ecosystem

Forests are formed by a community of plants which is predominantly structurally defined by its trees, shrubs, climbers and ground cover. Natural vegetation looks vastly different from a group of planted trees, which are in orderly rows. The most 'natural' undisturbed forests are located mainly in our National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries. The landscapes that make up various types of forests look very different from each other. Their distinctive appearance is a fascinating aspect of nature. Each forest type forms a habitat for a specific community of animals that are adapted to live in it.

What is a forest ecosystem?
The forest ecosystem has two parts:

- ***The non-living or abiotic aspects of the forest*:** The type of forest depends upon the abiotic conditions at the site. Forests on mountains and hills differ from those along river valleys. Vegetation is specific to the amount of rainfall and the local temperature which varies according to latitude and altitude. Forests also vary in their plant communities in response to the type of soil.

- ***The living or the biotic aspects of the forest:*** The plants and animals form communities that are specific to each forest type. For instance coniferous trees occur in the Himalayas. Mangrove trees occur in river deltas. Thorn trees grow in arid areas. The snow leopard lives in the Himalayas while the leopard and tiger live in the forests of the rest of India. Wild sheep and goats live high up in the Himalayas. Many of the birds of the Himalayan forests are different from the rest of India. Evergreen forests of the Western Ghats and North East India are most rich in plant and animal species.

The **biotic** component includes both the large (macrophytes) and the microscopic plants and animals.

Plants include the trees, shrubs, climbers, grasses, and herbs in the forest. These include species that flower (angiosperms), and non-flowering species (gymnosperms) such as ferns, bryophytes, fungi and algae.

The **animals** include species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects and other invertebrates and a variety of microscopic animals.

As the plant and animal species are closely dependent on each other, together they form different types of forest communities. Man is a part of these forest ecosystems and the local people depend directly on the forest for several natural resources that act as their life support systems. People who do not live in the forest buy forest products such as wood and paper, which has been extracted from the forest. Thus they use forest produce indirectly from the market.

Forest types in India: The forest type depends upon the abiotic factors such as climate and soil characteristics of a region. Forests in India can be broadly divided into Coniferous forests and Broadleaved forests.

They can also be classified according to the nature of their tree species – evergreen, deciduous, xerophytic or thorn trees, mangroves, etc. They can also be classified according to the most abundant species of trees such as Sal or Teak forests. In many cases a forest is named after the first three or four most abundant tree species.

Coniferous forests grow in the Himalayan mountain region, where the temperatures are low. These forests have tall stately trees with needle-like leaves and downward sloping branches so that the snow can slip off the branches. They

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Coniferous forest

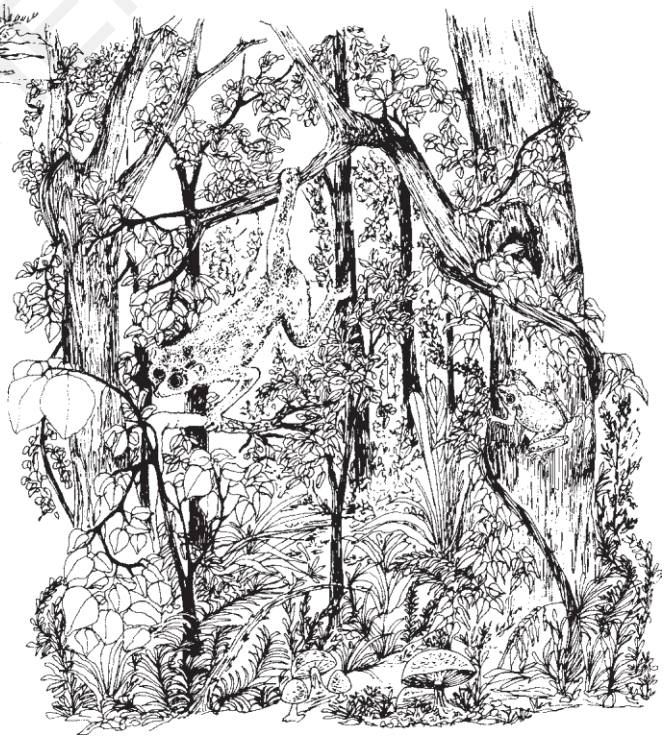
Broadleaved forest

have cones instead of seeds and are called gymnosperms.

Broadleaved forests have several types, such as evergreen forests, deciduous forests, thorn forests, and mangrove forests. Broadleaved forests have large leaves of various shapes.

Evergreen forests grow in the high rainfall areas of the Western Ghats, North Eastern India and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. These forests grow in areas where the monsoon lasts for several months. Some even get two monsoons, such as in Southern India. Evergreen plants shed a few of their leaves throughout the year. There is no dry leafless phase as in a deciduous forest. An evergreen forest thus looks green throughout the year. The trees overlap with each other to form a continuous canopy. Thus very little light penetrates down to the forest floor. Only a few shade loving plants can grow in the ground layer in areas where some light filters down from the closed canopy. The forest is rich in orchids and ferns. The barks of the trees are covered in moss. The forest abounds in animal life and is most rich in insect life.

Evergreen forest



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Deciduous forest

Thorn forest

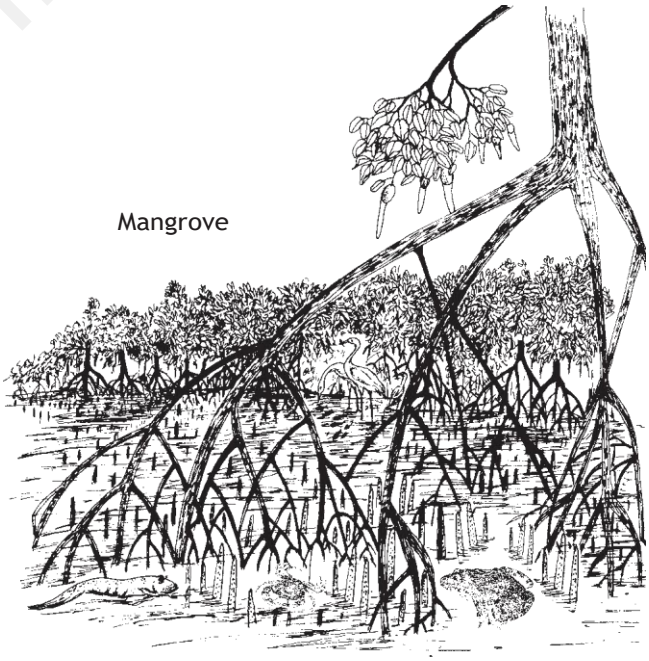
called xerophytic species and are able to conserve water. Some of these trees have small leaves, while other species have thick, waxy leaves to reduce water losses during transpiration. Thorn forest trees have long or fibrous roots to reach water at great depths. Many of these plants have thorns, which reduce water loss and protect them from herbivores.

Mangrove forests grow along the coast especially in the river deltas. These plants are able to grow

Deciduous forests are found in regions with a moderate amount of seasonal rainfall that lasts for only a few months. Most of the forests in which Teak trees grow are of this type. The *deciduous* trees shed their leaves during the winter and hot summer months. In March or April they regain their fresh leaves just before the monsoon, when they grow vigorously in response to the rains. Thus there are periods of leaf fall and canopy regrowth. The forest frequently has a thick undergrowth as light can penetrate easily onto the forest floor.

Thorn forests are found in the semi- arid regions of India. The trees, which are sparsely distributed, are surrounded by open grassy areas. Thorny plants are

Mangrove



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Forest communities:

Forest type	Plants Examples	Common Animal Examples	Rare Animal Examples
Himalayan Coniferous	Pine, deodar	Wild goats and sheep, Himalayan black bear.	Snow leopard, Hangul, Himalayan brown bear, Musk deer, Himalayan Wolf.
Himalayan Broadleaved	Maple, oak		
Evergreen North-east, Western Ghats, Andaman & Nicobar	Jamun, Ficus, Dipterocarpus	Tiger, Leopard, Sambar, Malabar whistling thrush, Malabar Pied hornbill, tree frogs.	Pigmy Hog, Rhino, Liontailed macaque
Deciduous - Dry	Teak, Ain, Terminalia	Tiger, Chital, Barking deer, Babblers, Flycatchers, Hornbills.	
Moist	Sal		
Thorn and scrub, Semiarid forests	Babul, Ber, Neem	Blackbuck, Chinkara, Fourhorned antelope, Partridge, Monitor lizard.	Wolf, Bustard, Florican, Bustards,
Mangrove Delta Forests	Avicenia	Crocodile, shorebirds – sandpipers, plovers, fish, crustacea.	Water monitor lizard.

in a mix of saline and fresh water. They grow luxuriantly in muddy areas covered with silt that the rivers have brought down. The mangrove trees have breathing roots that emerge from the mudbanks.

Forest utilisation: Natural forests provide local people with a variety of products if the forest is used carefully. Over-exploitation for fuel wood or timber, and conversion to monoculture plantations for timber or other products, impoverishes local people as the economic benefit goes to people who live elsewhere. The entire resource base on which local people have traditionally survived for generations, is rapidly destroyed. Eventually the forest is completely degraded.

Natural forest ecosystems play an important role in controlling local climate and water regimes. It is well-known that under the canopy of a natural forest, it is cooler than outside the forest. During the monsoon, the forest retains moisture and slowly releases it through perennial streams during the rest of the year. Plantations fail to perform this function adequately. The loss of forest cover in the catchments of a river thus leads to irreversible changes such as excessive soil erosion, large run-off of surface water during monsoons leading to flash floods, and a shortage of water once the monsoons are over.

Forest products that are collected by people include food such as fruit, roots, herbs and medicinal plants. People depend on fuelwood to cook food, collect fodder for domestic animals, cut building material for housing, collect medicinal plants that have been known for generations for several ailments and use a variety of non timer forest products such as fiber, cane, gum, to make household articles. Wood from different species of trees have special uses. For instance a soft wood is used for the yok of a bullock cart while a very hard wood is used for its axil. These forest products are of great eco-

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Forest Products

nomic value as they are collected, sold and marketed. Forest dwellers and agricultural people use these goods directly. Other people get them indirectly from the market. Traditional types of agriculture needs forest material such as branches and leaves, which are burnt to form wood ash which acts as a fertiliser for crops such as rice.

Urban people use these forest resources indirectly as all their food and other goods come from agricultural areas that are dependent on the neighbouring forests.

Forest services include the control of the flow of water in streams and rivers. Forest cover reduces surface runoff of rainwater and allows ground water to be stored. Forests prevent erosion of soil. Once soil is lost by erosion, it can take thousands of years to reform. Forests regulate local temperature. It is cooler and more moist under the shade of the trees in the forest. Most importantly, forests absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen that we breathe.

The wild relatives of our crop plants and fruit trees have special characteristics in their genes which are used to develop new crops and newer varieties of fruit. These newer varieties developed from wild relatives give greater yields or are more resistant to diseases. New industrial products are being produced from the wild plants of the forest. Many of our new medicines come from wild plants.

Direct uses of forest products

Fruits – mango, jamun, awla

Roots – Dioscoria

Medicine – Gloriosa, Foxglove

Fuelwood – many species of trees and shrubs

Small timber for building huts and houses

Wood for farm implements

Bamboo and cane for baskets

Grass for grazing and stall feeding livestock

Indirect uses of forest products

Building material for construction and furniture for the urban sector

Medicinal products collected and processed into drugs

Gums and resins processed into a variety of products

Raw material for industrial products and chemicals

Paper from bamboo and softwoods

What are the threats to the forest ecosystem?

As forests grow very slowly, we cannot use more resources than they can produce during a growing season. If timber is felled beyond a certain limit the forest cannot regenerate. The gaps in the forest change the habitat quality for its animals. The more sensitive species cannot survive under these changed conditions. Overutilizing

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forest resources is an unsustainable way of misusing our limited forest resources. We are now creating more and more goods that are manufactured from raw material from the forest. This leads to forest degradation and finally changes the ecosystem into wasteland. Wood is illegally extracted from many forests leading to a highly disturbed ecosystem.

Developmental activities such as rapid population growth together with, urbanisation, industrialisation and the increasing use of consumer goods, leads to over utilisation of forest produce. Forests are shrinking as our need for agricultural land increases. It is estimated that India's forest cover has decreased from about 33% to 11% in the last century. The increasing use of wood for timber, wood pulp for paper and the extensive use of fuelwood results in continual forest loss. Forests are also lost by mining and building dams. As the forest resources are exploited beyond what they can produce the forest canopy is opened up, the ecosystem is degraded, and its wildlife is seriously threatened. As the forest is fragmented into small patches its wild plant and animal species become extinct. These can never be brought back. Extinction is forever.

What if the forests disappear?

When forests are cut down tribal people who depend directly on them for food and fuelwood and other products find it very difficult to survive. Agricultural people do not get enough fuelwood, small timber, etc. for making houses and farm implements. Urban people who depend on food from agricultural areas, which in turn depend on neighbouring forest ecosystems have to pay a higher price for food as human population grows.

Insects that live and breed in the forest such as bees, butterflies and moths decrease in abundance once forests are degraded. As their numbers decrease they are unable to effectively pollinate agricultural crops and fruit trees. This leads to a decrease in agricultural yields.

The rain that falls on deforested land flows directly into nearby rivers. Thus water is not retained under the ground. People thus do not get a sufficient quantity of water throughout the year. The exposed soil is rapidly washed away during the rains once the protective forest cover is removed. Thus agriculture is seriously affected in such areas. In deforested areas, the water in streams is brown in colour as soil is washed away while water in forested streams is crystal clear.

Wild animals lose their habitat. This leads to extinction of our precious species. Residual forests must be protected from being destroyed any further if all the diverse species of plants and animals are to be kept for future generations.

How can forest ecosystems be conserved?

We can conserve forests only if we use its resources carefully. This can be done by using alternate sources of energy instead of fuelwood. There is a need to grow more trees than are cut down from forests every year for timber. Afforestation needs to be done continuously from which fuelwood and timber can be judiciously used.

The natural forests with all their diverse species must be protected as National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries where all the plants and animals can be preserved.

3.7.2 Grassland ecosystems

A wide range of landscapes in which the vegetation is mainly formed by grasses and small annual plants are adapted to India's various climatic conditions. These form a variety of grassland ecosystems with their specific plants and animals.

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What is a grassland ecosystem?

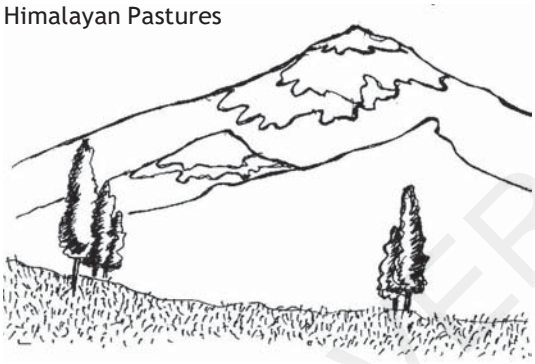
Grasslands cover areas where rainfall is usually low and/or the soil depth and quality is poor. The low rainfall prevents the growth of a large number of trees and shrubs, but is sufficient to support the growth of grass cover during the monsoon. Many of the grasses and other small herbs become dry and the part above the ground dies during the summer months. In the next monsoon the grass cover grows back from the root stock and the seeds of the previous year. This change gives grasslands a highly seasonal appearance with periods of increased growth followed by a dormant phase.

A variety of grasses, herbs, and several species of insects, birds and mammals have evolved so that they are adapted to these wide-open grass covered areas. These animals are able to live in conditions where food is plentiful after the rains, so that they can store this as fat that they use during the dry period when there is very little to eat. Man began to use these grasslands as pastures to feed his livestock when he began to domesticate animals and became a pastoralist in ancient times.

Grassland Types in India: Grasslands form a variety of ecosystems that are located in different climatic conditions ranging from near desert conditions, to patches of shola grasslands that occur on hillslopes alongside the extremely moist evergreen forests in South India. In the Himalayan mountains there are the high cold Himalayan pastures. There are tracts of tall elephant grass in the low-lying Terai belt south of the Himalayan foothills. There are semi-arid grasslands in Western India, parts of Central India, and in the Deccan Plateau.

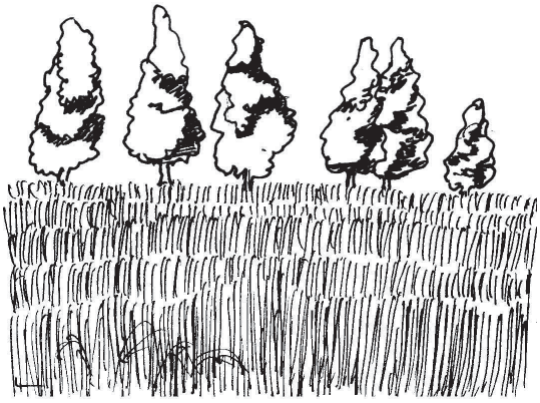
The ***Himalayan pasture belt*** extends upto the snowline. The grasslands at a lower level form patches along with coniferous or broadleaved forests. Himalayan wildlife require both the forest and the grassland ecosystem as important parts of their habitat. The animals migrate up

Himalayan Pastures



into the high altitude grasslands in summer and move down into the forest in winter when the snow covers the grassland. These Himalayan pastures have a large variety of grasses and herbs. Himalayan hill slopes are covered with thousands of colourful flowering plants. There are also a large number of medicinal plants.

The ***Terai*** consists of patches of tall grasslands interspersed with a Sal forest ecosystem. The patches of tall elephant grass, which grows to a height of about five meters, are located in the low-lying waterlogged areas. The Sal forest patches cover the elevated regions and the Himalayan foothills. The Terai also includes marshes in low-lying depressions. This ecosystem extends as a belt south of the Himalayan foothills.



Terai grassland

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Semiarid grassland

The ***Semi-arid plains of Western India, Central India and the Deccan*** are covered by grassland tracts with patches of thorn forest. Several mammals such as the wolf, the blackbuck, the chinkara, and birds such as the bustards and floricans are adapted to these arid conditions. The Scrublands of the Deccan Plateau are covered with seasonal grasses and herbs on which its fauna is dependent. It is teaming with insect life on which the insectivorous birds feed.

Shola grassland

The ***Shola grasslands*** consist of patches on hillslopes along with the Shola forests on the Western Ghats, Nilgiri and Annamalai ranges. This forms a patchwork of grassland on the slopes and forest habitats along the streams and lowlying areas.

Grasslands are not restricted only to low rainfall areas. Certain grassland types form when clearings are made in different forest types. Some are located on the higher steep hill slopes with patches of forest that occur along the streams and in depressions. The grasslands are related to repeated fires that do not permit the forest to grow.

The grasses are the major producers of biomass in these regions. Each grassland ecosystem has a wide variety of species of grasses and herbs. Some grass and herb species are more sensitive to excessive grazing and are suppressed if the area is over grazed. Others are destroyed by repeated fires and cannot regenerate. Thus overused or frequently burnt grasslands are degraded and are poor in plant species diversity.

How are grasslands used?

Grasslands are the grazing areas of many rural communities. Farmers who keep cattle or goats, as well as shepherds who keep sheep, are highly dependent on grasslands. Domestic animals are grazed in the 'common' land of the village. Fodder is collected and stored to feed cattle when there is no grass left for them to graze in summer. Grass is also used to thatch houses and farm sheds. The thorny bushes and branches of the few trees that are seen in grasslands are used as a major source of fuelwood.

Overgrazing by huge herds of domestic livestock has degraded many grasslands. Grasslands have diverse species of insects that pollinate crops. There are also predators of these insects such as the small mammals like shrews, reptiles like lizards, birds of prey, and amphibia such as frogs and toads. All these carnivorous animals help to control insect pests in adjoining agricultural lands.

What are the threats to grassland ecosystems?

In many areas grasslands have been used for centuries by pastoral communities. Overutilization and changes in landuse of the

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'common grazing lands' of rural communities has lead to their degradation. The grassland cover in the country in terms of permanent pastures now covers only 3.7 percent of land. A major threat to natural grasslands is the conversion of grasslands into irrigated farmlands. In the Deccan, grasslands have been altered to irrigated farms and are now mainly used to grow sugarcane. After continuous irrigation such land becomes saline and useless in a few years. More recently many of these residual grassland tracts have been converted into industrial areas. This provides short-term economic gains but result in long-term economic and ecological losses.

Grasslands have a limited ability to support domestic animals and wildlife. Increasing this pressure by increasing the number of domestic animals reduces the 'naturalness' of the grassland ecosystem leading to its degradation.

Most grassland ecosystems are highly modified by human activities. Cattle, sheep and goat grazing, and lighting repeated fires affects grasslands adversely. Changing the grasslands to other forms of landuse such as agriculture, tree plantations and industrialisation forms a serious threat to this highly productive ecosystem. Thus some of the grassland patches which are in a less disturbed state and have retained their special plants and animals need to be urgently protected.

Degradation of grasslands due to over grazing by cattle, sheep and goats occurs if more than a critical number of domestic animals are present in the grasslands. When animals overgraze the area, the grasses are converted into flat stubs with very little green matter. Degraded grasslands have fewer grass species as the nutritious species are entirely used up by the large number of domestic animals. They are thus unable to regenerate.

When fires are lit in the grasslands in summer, the burnt grass gets a fresh flush of small green shoots which the domestic animals graze on. If this is done too frequently the grasslands begin to deteriorate. Finally grasslands become bare, the soil is solidly compacted by trampling, or is washed away during the monsoon by rain and whipped into dust storms during the hot dry summer. The land is degraded, as there is no grass to hold the soil in place. It becomes a wasteland.

Why are our grassland species vanishing?

Most people feel that it is only our forests and its wildlife that is disappearing. However, other natural ecosystems such as grasslands are disappearing even more rapidly.

Many of the grassland species have disappeared from several parts of India in which they were found 50 or 60 years ago. The Cheetah is extinct in India. The Wolf is now highly threatened. Blackbuck and chinkara are poached for meat. Birds such as the beautiful Great Indian Bustards are vanishing. Unless grassland species are protected they will vanish from their shrinking habitat, as natural and undisturbed grasslands are left in very few locations. If these animals and birds are killed or their habitat is reduced further, their extinction will rapidly follow.

What if our grasslands disappear?

If our grasslands are lost we will lose a highly specialised ecosystem in which plants and animals have been adapted to these habitat conditions over millions of years. Local people will not be able to support their livestock herds.

The extinction of species is a great loss to Mankind. The genes of wild grasses are extremely useful for developing new crop varieties. New medicines could well be discovered from wild grassland plants. It is possible that genes from wild herbivores such as wild sheep, goats and antelopes may be used for developing new strains of domestic animals.

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How can grassland ecosystems be conserved?
Grasslands should not be overgrazed and areas of the grasslands should be closed for grazing. It is better to collect grass for stall feeding cattle. A part of the grassland in an area must be closed every year so that a rotational grazing pattern is established. Fires must be prevented and rapidly controlled. In hilly areas soil and water management in each micro-catchment helps grasslands to return to a natural highly productive ecosystem.

To protect the most natural undisturbed grassland ecosystems, Sanctuaries and National Parks must be created. Their management should focus on preserving all their unique species of plants and animals. Thus they should not be converted into plantations of trees. The open grassland is the habitat of its specialised fauna. Planting trees in these areas reduces the natural features of this ecosystem resulting in the destruction of this unique habitat for wildlife.

What should we do?

- There is a need to preserve the few natural grassland areas that still survive by creating National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries in all the different types of grasslands.

- Animals such as the wolf, blackbuck, chinkara and birds such as bustards and floricans have now become rare all over the country. They must be carefully protected in the few National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries that have natural grassland habitats as well as outside these Protected Areas.

- We need to create an awareness among people that grasslands are of great value. If we are all concerned about our disappearing grasslands and their wonderful wildlife, the Government will be motivated to protect them.

- Keeping grasslands alive is a National priority.

3.7.3 Desert ecosystem

Desert and semi arid lands are highly specialised and sensitive ecosystems that are easily destroyed by human activities. The species of these dry areas can live only in this specialised habitat.

What is a desert or a semi-arid ecosystem?
Deserts and semi arid areas are located in Western India and the Deccan Plateau. The climate in these vast tracts is extremely dry. There are also cold deserts such as in Ladakh, which are located in the high plateaus of the Himalayas. The most typical desert landscape that is seen in Rajasthan is in the Thar Desert. This has sand dunes. There are also areas covered with sparse grasses and a few shrubs, which grow if it rains. In most areas of the Thar the rainfall is scanty and sporadic. In an area it may rain only once every few years. In the adjoining semi arid tract the vegetation consists of a few shrubs and thorny trees such as kher and babul.

The Great and Little Rann of Kutch are highly specialised arid ecosystems. In the summers they are similar to a desert landscape. However as

Desert and Semi arid eco systems

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these are low-lying areas near the sea, they get converted to salt marshes during the monsoons. During this period they attract an enormous number of aquatic birds such as ducks, geese, cranes, storks, etc. The Great Rann is famous, as it is the only known breeding colony of the Greater and Lesser Flamingos in our country. The Little Rann of Kutch is the only home of the wild ass in India.

Desert and semi arid regions have a number of highly specialized insects and reptiles. The rare animals include the Indian wolf, desert cat, desert fox and birds such as the Great Indian Bustard and the Florican. Some of the commoner birds include partridges, quails and sandgrouse.

How are desert and semi-arid ecosystems used?

Areas of scanty vegetation with semi-arid scrubland have been used for camel, cattle and goat grazing in Rajasthan and Gujarat, and for sheep grazing in the Deccan Plateau.

Areas that have a little moisture, such as along the watercourses, have been used for growing crops such as jowar, and bajra. The natural grasses and local varieties of crops have adapted to growing at very low moisture levels. These can be used for genetic engineering and developing arid land crops for the future.

What are the threats to desert ecosystems?

Several types of development strategies as well as human population growth have begun to affect the natural ecosystem of the desert and semi arid land. Conversion of these lands through extensive irrigation systems has changed several of the natural characteristics of this region. The canal water evaporates rapidly bringing the salts to the surface. The region becomes highly unproductive as it becomes saline. Pulling excessive groudwater from tube wells lowers the water table creating an even drier environment. Thus human activities destroy the naturalness of this unique ecosystem. The special species that evolved here over millions of years may soon become extinct.

How can desert ecosystems be conserved?

Desert ecosystems are extremely sensitive. Their ecological balance that forms a habitat for their plants and animals is easily disturbed. Desert people have traditionally protected their meagre water resources. The Bishnois in Rajasthan are known to have protected their Khejdi trees and the blackbuck antelope for several generations. The tradition began when the ruler of their region ordered his army to cut down trees for his own use. Several Bishnois were said to have been killed while trying to protect their trees.

There is an urgent need to protect residual patches of this ecosystem within National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries in desert and semi arid areas. The Indira Gandhi Canal in Rajasthan is destroying this important natural arid ecosystem, as it will convert the region into intensive agriculture. In Kutch, areas of the little Rann, which is the only home of the Wild Ass, will be destroyed by the spread of salt works.

Development Projects alter the desert and arid landscape. There is a sharp reduction in the habitat available for its specialised species bringing them to the verge of extinction. We need a sustainable form of development that takes the special needs of the desert into account.

3.7.4 Aquatic ecosystems

The aquatic ecosystems constitute the marine environments of the seas and the fresh water systems in lakes, rivers, ponds and wetlands. These ecosystems provide human beings with a wealth of natural resources. They provide goods that people collect for food such as fish and

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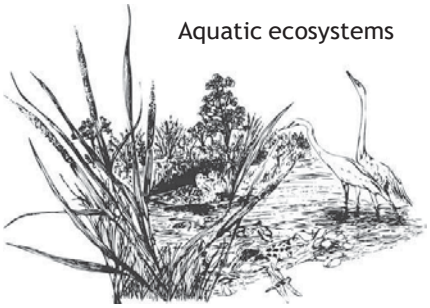

crustaceans. Natural aquatic systems such as rivers and seas break down chemical and organic wastes created by man. However, this function has limitations, as the aquatic ecosystem cannot handle great quantities of waste. Beyond a certain limit, pollution destroys this natural function.

If aquatic ecosystems are misused or over utilized, their ability to provide resources suffers in the long term. Over-fishing leads to a fall in the fish catch. River courses that are changed by dams to provide electricity affect thousands of people who do not get a continuous supply of water downstream for their daily use. When wetlands are drained, their connected rivers tend to cause floods. These are all examples of unsustainable changes in the use of natural resources and nature's ecosystems that are dependent on hydrological regimes.

Water is an important factor in all our ecosystems. Several ecosystems exist in freshwater and marine salt water. There is very little fresh water on earth, which is a key resource for people all over the world.

What is an aquatic ecosystem?

In aquatic ecosystems, plants and animals live in water. These species are adapted to live in different types of aquatic habitats. The special abiotic features are its physical aspects such as the quality of the water, which includes its clarity, salinity, oxygen content and rate of flow. Aquatic ecosystems may be classified as being **stagnant** ecosystems, or **running water** ecosystems. The mud gravel or rocks that form the bed of the aquatic ecosystem alter its characteristics and influence its plant and animal species composition. The aquatic ecosystems are classified into **freshwater**, **brackish** and **marine** ecosystems, which are based on the salinity levels.

The fresh water ecosystems that have running water are streams and rivers. Ponds, tanks and lakes are ecosystems where water does not flow. *Wetlands* are special ecosystems in which the water level fluctuates dramatically in different seasons. They have expanses of shallow water with aquatic vegetation, which forms an ideal habitat for fish, crustacea and water birds.

Marine ecosystems are highly saline, while brackish areas have less saline water such as in river deltas. *Coral reefs* are very rich in species and

Types of Aquatic ecosystems

Fresh water ecosystems			Marine ecosystems		
Flowing water		Still water	Brackish water	Saline water	
Streams	Rivers	Ponds, wetlands, lakes	Deltas	Coastal shallows, Coral reefs	Deep ocean

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are found in only a few shallow tropical seas. The richest coral reefs in India are around the Andaman and Nicobar islands and in the gulf of Kutch.

Brackish water ecosystems in river deltas are covered by mangrove forests and are among the world's most productive ecosystems in terms of biomass production. The largest mangrove swamps are in the Sunderbans in the delta of the Ganges.

The Pond ecosystem

The pond is the simplest aquatic ecosystem to observe.

There are differences in a pond that is temporary and has water only in the monsoon, and a larger tank or lake that is an aquatic ecosystem throughout the year. Most ponds become dry after the rains are over and are covered by terrestrial plants for the rest of the year.

When a pond begins to fill during the rains, its life forms such as the algae and microscopic animals, aquatic insects, snails, and worms come out of the floor of the pond where they have remained dormant in the dry phase. Gradually more complex animals such as crabs frogs and fish return to the pond. The vegetation in the water consists of floating weeds and rooted vegetation on the periphery which grow on the muddy floor under water and emerge out of the surface of the water.

As the pond fills in the monsoon a large number of food chains are formed. Algae is eaten by microscopic animals, which are in turn eaten by small fish on which larger carnivorous fish depend. These are in turn eaten by birds such as kingfishers, herons and birds of prey. Aquatic insects, worms and snails feed on the waste material excreted by animals and the dead or decaying plant and animal matter. They act on the detritus, which is broken down into nutrients which aquatic plants can absorb, thus completing the nutrient cycle in the pond. The temporary ponds begin to dry after the rains and the surrounding grasses and terrestrial plants spread into the moist mud that is exposed. Animals such as frogs, snails and worms remain dormant in the mud, awaiting the next monsoon.

Lake ecosystem

A lake ecosystem functions like a giant permanent pond. A large amount of its plant material is the algae, which derives energy from the sun. This is transferred to the microscopic animals, which feed on the algae. There are fish that are herbivorous and are dependent on algae and aquatic weeds. The small animals such as snails are used as food by small carnivorous fish, which in turn are eaten by larger carnivorous fish. Some specialised fish, such as catfish, feed on the detritus on the muddy bed of the lake.

Energy cycles through the lake ecosystem from the sunlight that penetrates the water surface to the plants. From plants energy is transferred to herbivorous animals and carnivores. Animals excrete waste products, which settle on the bottom of the lake. This is broken down by small ani-

Pond

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mals that live in the mud in the floor of the lake. This acts as the nutrient material that is used by aquatic plants for their growth. During this process plants use Carbon from CO_2 for their growth and in the process release Oxygen. This Oxygen is then used by aquatic animals, which filter water through their respiratory system.

Stream and River ecosystems

Streams and rivers are flowing water ecosystems in which all the living forms are specially adapted to different rates of flow. Some plants and animals such as snails and other burrowing animals can withstand the rapid flow of the hill streams. Other species of plants and animals such as water beetles and skaters can live only in slower moving water. Some species of fish, such as Mahseer, go upstream from rivers to hill streams for breeding. They need crystal clear water to be able to breed. They lay eggs only in clear water so that their young can grow successfully.

As deforestation occurs in the hills the water in the streams that once flowed throughout the year become seasonal. This leads to flash floods in the rains and a shortage of water once the streams dry up after the monsoon.

The community of flora and fauna of streams and rivers depends on the clarity, flow and oxygen content as well as the nature of their beds. The stream or river can have a sandy, rocky or muddy bed, each type having its own species of plants and animals.

Marine ecosystems

The Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal constitute the marine ecosystems around peninsular India. In the coastal area the sea is shallow while further away, it is deep. Both these are different ecosystems. The producers in this ecosystem vary from microscopic algae to large seaweeds. There are millions of zooplankton and a large variety of invertebrates on which live fish, turtles and marine mammals.

The shallow areas near Kutch and around the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are some of the most incredible coral reefs in the world. Coral reefs are only second to tropical evergreen forests in their richness of species. Fish, crustacea, starfish, jellyfish and the polyps that deposit the coral are a few of the thousands of species that form this incredible world under the shallow sea.

Deforestation of adjacent mangroves leads to silt being carried out to sea where it is deposited on the coral which then dies. There are many different types of coastal ecosystems which are highly dependent on the tide.

The marine ecosystem is used by coastal fisherfolk for fishing which forms their livelihood. In the past, fishing was done at a sustainable level. The marine ecosystem continued to maintain its abundant supply of fish over many generations. Now with intensive fishing by using giant nets and mechanised boats, fish catch in the Indian Ocean has dropped significantly.

Seashore ecosystems

Beaches can be sandy, rocky, shell covered or muddy. On each of these different types, there are several specific species which have evolved to occupy a separate niche. There are different crustacea such as crabs that make holes in the sand.

Various shore birds feed on their prey by probing into the sand or mud on the sea shore.

Several different species of fish are caught by fishermen. In many areas the fish catch has decreased during the last decade or two.

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How are aquatic ecosystems used?

Man uses aquatic ecosystems for the clean freshwater on which his life is completely dependent. We need clean water to drink and for other domestic uses. Water is essential for agriculture. Fisherfolk use the aquatic ecosystems to earn a livelihood. People catch fish and crabs. They also collect edible plants. This is used locally as food or for sale in the market. Over fishing leads to a serious decline in the catch and a long-term loss of income for fisherfolk.

Marshes and wetlands are of great economic importance for people who live on their fish, crustacea, reeds, grasses and other produce.

Modern man impounds water in dams to be able to store it throughout the year. Agriculture and industry are highly dependent on large quantities of water. However this leads to problems for tribal people who have lived there before the dams were built as they are displaced to build large dams. These dams make rich people richer in the farmland and supports people in large urban centres that use enormous quantities of water. The poor tribal folk become even poorer as the natural resources they depend on are taken away as their lands are submerged under the water of the dam.

Dams are built across rivers to generate electricity. A large proportion of this energy is used by urban people, by agriculturists in irrigated farmlands and in enormous quantities for industry. Large dams have serious ill effects on natural river ecosystems. While water from dams used for irrigation has lead to economic prosperity in some areas, in semiarid areas that are artificially irrigated the high level of evaporation leads to severe salinisation as salts are brought up into the surface layers of the soil. This makes such lands gradually more and more saline and unproductive.

What are the threats to aquatic ecosystems?

Water pollution occurs from sewage and poorly managed solid waste in urban areas when it enters the aquatic ecosystem of lakes and rivers. Sewage leads to a process called eutrophication, which destroys life in the water as the oxygen content is severely reduced. Fish and crustacea cannot breathe and are killed. A foul odour is produced. Gradually the natural flora and fauna of the aquatic ecosystem is destroyed.

In rural areas the excessive use of fertilisers causes an increase in nutrients, which leads to eutrophication. Pesticides used in adjacent fields pollute water and kills off its aquatic animals. Chemical pollution from industry kills a large number of life forms in adjacent aquatic ecosystems. Contamination by heavy metals and other toxic chemicals affects the health of people who live near these areas as they depend on this water.

CASE STUDY

Threats to wetlands in Assam

Almost 40% of all wetlands in Assam are under threat. A survey conducted by the Assam Remote Sensing Application Center (ARSAC), Guwahati, and the Space Research Center, Ahemadabad, has revealed that 1367 out of 3513 wetlands in Assam are under severe threat due to invasion of aquatic weeds and several developmental activities. The wetlands of Assam form the greatest potential source of income for the State in terms of fisheries and tourism. Though the wetlands of Assam have the capacity of producing 5,000 tones of fish per hectare per year, around 20,000 tones of fish have to be imported to meet local demands. This is primarily due to poor wetland management.

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How can aquatic ecosystems be conserved?
For sustainable use of an aquatic ecosystem, water pollution must be prevented. It does not make sense to allow water to be polluted and then try to clean it up.

Changing the nature of the aquatic ecosystem from a flowing water ecosystem to a static ecosystem destroys its natural biological diversity. Thus dams across rivers decrease the population of species that require running water, while favouring those that need standing water.

Aquatic ecosystems, especially wetlands, need protection by including them in Sanctuaries or National Parks in the same way in which we protect natural forests. These sanctuaries in aquatic ecosystems protect a variety of forms of life as well as rare fish which are now highly endangered such as the Mahseer. Wetland Sanctuaries and National Parks are of greatest importance as this is one of the most threatened of our ecosystems. As the proportion of the earth's surface that is naturally covered by wetlands is very small compared to forests or grasslands, the wetland ecosystems are very highly threatened.

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UNIT 4:
Biodiversity

4.1 INTRODUCTION – DEFINITION: GENETIC, SPECIES, ECOSYSTEM DIVERSITY 82
4.1.1 Genetic diversity 82
4.1.2 Species diversity 82
4.1.3 Ecosystem diversity 83

4.2 BIOGEOGRAPHIC CLASSIFICATION OF INDIA 84

4.3 VALUE OF BIODIVERSITY: CONSUMPTIVE, PRODUCTIVE USE, SOCIAL, ETHICAL, AESTHETIC AND OPTION VALUES 84
4.3.1Consumptive value 85
4.3.2 Productive value 86
4.3.3 Social value 86
4.3.4 Ethical value 88
4.3.5 Aesthetic value 88
4.3.6 Option value 88

4.4 BIODIVERSITY AT GLOBAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS 88

4.5 INDIA AS A MEGA DIVERSITY NATION 89

4.6 HOTSPOTS OF BIODIVERSITY 90

4.7 THREATS TO BIODIVERSITY: HABITAT LOSS, POACHING OF WILDLIFE, MAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICTS 91

4.8 ENDANGERED AND ENDEMIC SPECIES OF INDIA 94
4.8.1 Common Plant species 94
4.8.2 Common Animal species 99

4.9 CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY: IN-SITU AND EX-SITU 104
4.9.1 In-situ conservation 104
4.9.2 Ex-situ conservation 108

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

The great variety of life on earth has provided for man's needs over thousands of years. This diversity of living creatures forms a support system which has been used by each civilization for its growth and development. Those that used this "bounty of nature" carefully and sustainably survived. Those that overused or misused it disintegrated.

Science has attempted to classify and categorize the variability in nature for over a century. This has led to an understanding of its organization into communities of plants and animals. This information has helped in utilizing the earth's biological wealth for the benefit of humanity and has been integral to the process of 'development'. This includes better health care, better crops and the use of these life forms as raw material for industrial growth which has led to a higher standard of living for the developed world. However this has also produced the modern consumerist society, which has had a negative effect on the diversity of biological resources upon which it is based. The diversity of life on earth is so great that if we use it sustainably we can go on developing new products from biodiversity for many generations. This can only happen if we manage biodiversity as a precious resource and prevent the extinction of species.

Definition:
'Biological diversity' or biodiversity is that part of nature which includes the differences in genes among the individuals of a species, the variety and richness of all the plant and animal species at different scales in space, locally, in a region, in the country and the world, and various types of ecosystems, both terrestrial and aquatic, within a defined area.

What is biodiversity?
Biological diversity deals with the degree of nature's variety in the biosphere. This variety can be observed at three levels; the genetic variability within a species, the variety of species within a community, and the organisation of species in an area into distinctive plant and animal communities constitutes ecosystem diversity.

4.1.1 Genetic diversity

Each member of any animal or plant species differs widely from other individuals in its genetic makeup because of the large number of combinations possible in the genes that give every individual specific characteristics. Thus, for example, each human being is very different from all others. This genetic variability is essential for a healthy breeding population of a species. If the number of breeding individuals is reduced, the dissimilarity of genetic makeup is reduced and in-breeding occurs. Eventually this can lead to the extinction of the species. The diversity in wild species forms the 'gene pool' from which our crops and domestic animals have been developed over thousands of years. Today the variety of nature's bounty is being further harnessed by using wild relatives of crop plants to create new varieties of more productive crops and to breed better domestic animals. Modern biotechnology manipulates genes for developing better types of medicines and a variety of industrial products.

4.1.2 Species diversity

The number of species of plants and animals that are present in a region constitutes its species diversity. This diversity is seen both in natural ecosystems and in agricultural ecosystems. Some areas are more rich in species than others. Natural undisturbed tropical forests have a much greater species richness than plantations developed by the Forest Department for timber

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production. A natural forest ecosystem provides a large number of non-wood products that local people depend on such as fruit, fuel wood, fodder, fiber, gum, resin and medicines. Timber plantations do not provide the large variety of goods that are essential for local consumption. In the long-term the economic sustainable returns from non-wood forest products is said to be greater than the returns from felling a forest for its timber. Thus the value of a natural forest, with all its species richness is much greater than a plantation. Modern intensive agricultural ecosystems have a relatively lower diversity of crops than traditional agropastoral farming systems where multiple crops were planted.

At present conservation scientists have been able to identify and categorise about 1.8 million species on earth. However, many new species are being identified, especially in the flowering plants and insects. Areas that are rich in species diversity are called 'hotspots' of diversity. India is among the world's 15 nations that are exceptionally rich in species diversity.

4.1.3 Ecosystem diversity

There are a large variety of different ecosystems on earth, which have their own complement of distinctive inter linked species based on the differences in the habitat. Ecosystem diversity can be described for a specific geographical region, or a political entity such as a country, a State or a taluka. Distinctive ecosystems include landscapes such as forests, grasslands, deserts, mountains, etc., as well as aquatic ecosystems such as rivers, lakes, and the sea. Each region also has man-modified areas such as farmland or grazing pastures.

An ecosystem is referred to as 'natural' when it is relatively undisturbed by human activities, or 'modified' when it is changed to other types of uses, such as farmland or urban areas. Ecosystems are most natural in wilderness areas. If natural ecosystems are overused or misused their productivity eventually decreases and they are then said to be degraded. India is exceptionally rich in its ecosystem diversity.

Evolution and the Genesis of Biodiversity: The origins of life on earth some three and a half billion years ago are obscure. Life was probably initiated as a product of organic reactions in the Earth's primordial seas. Alternative possibilities such as life beginning in a muddy ooze, or of life having been seeded from outer space have also been suggested. Once life took hold on the planet, it began gradually to diversify. Unicellular unspecialized forms gradually evolved into complex multi-cellular plants and animals. Evolution is related to the ability of living organisms to adapt to changes in their environment. Thus the abiotic changes in nature such as climatic and atmospheric upheavals, repeated glaciations, continental drift and the formation of geographical barriers, segregated different communities of plants and animals and gradually lead to the formation of new species over millions of years.

Most species appear to have a life span extending over several million years. Their adaptability to gradual changes in their habitat, and interactions with newly formed species produce groups of inter linked organisms that continue to evolve together. Food chains, prey-predator relationships, parasitism (complete dependence on another species), commensalism (a partnership beneficial to both species), etc. are important examples. Behavioural patterns of the different species comprising a community of species links them to each other through their breeding biology, feeding patterns, migrations, etc. As ancient species became extinct due to geological upheavals, they left behind empty 'niches' in the habitat that stimulated existing species to fill them through the formation of new species. The Earth's ancient history has seen periods of mega extinctions, which have been followed by periods of formation of new species. Though these repeatedly led to a drastic

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reduction in the number of species, the diversity of life recuperated each time by gradually increasing the number of species existing on earth. This however took millions of years, as evolution is a very slow process. Thus when man came on the scene some 2 million years ago, the earth was more rich in species than ever before. During the recent past however, extinctions due to the activities of modern man have begun to take place so rapidly that nature has had no time to evolve new species. The earth is loosing species more rapidly than ever before.

The diversity of life at all three organisational levels, genetic, species and ecosystem, is thus being rapidly modified by modern man. This is a great loss to future generations who will follow us.

4.2 BIOGEOGRAPHIC CLASSIFICATION OF INDIA

Our country can be conveniently divided into ten major regions, based on the geography, climate and pattern of vegetation seen and the communities of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibia, insects and other invertebrates that live in them. Each of these regions contains a variety of ecosystems such as forests, grasslands, lakes, rivers, wetlands, mountains and hills, which have specific plant and animal species.

India's Biogeographic Zones

1. The cold mountainous snow covered Trans Himalayan region of Ladakh.
2. The Himalayan ranges and valleys of Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Assam and other North Eastern States.
3. The Terai, the lowland where the Himalayan rivers flow into the plains.
4. The Gangetic and Bhramaputra plains.
5. The Thar Desert of Rajasthan.
6. The semi arid grassland region of the Deccan plateau Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
7. The Northeast States of India,
8. The Western Ghats in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala.
9. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
10. The long western and eastern coastal belt with sandy beaches, forests and mangroves.

4.3 VALUE OF BIODIVERSITY

Environmental services from species and ecosystems are essential at global, regional and local levels. Production of oxygen, reducing carbon dioxide, maintaining the water cycle, protecting soil are important services. The world now acknowledges that the loss of biodiversity contributes to global climatic changes. Forests are the main mechanism for the conversion of carbon dioxide into carbon and oxygen. The loss of forest cover, coupled with the increasing release of carbon dioxide and other gases through industrialization contributes to the 'greenhouse effect'. Global warming is melting ice caps, resulting in a rise in the sea level which will submerge the low lying areas in the world. It is causing major atmospheric changes, leading to increased temperatures, serious droughts in some areas and unexpected floods in other areas.

Biological diversity is also essential for preserving ecological processes, such as fixing and recycling of nutrients, soil formation, circulation and cleansing of air and water, global life support (plants absorb CO_2, give out O_2), maintain-

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ing the water balance within ecosystems, watershed protection, maintaining stream and river flows throughout the year, erosion control and local flood reduction.

Food, clothing, housing, energy, medicines, are all resources that are directly or indirectly linked to the biological variety present in the biosphere. This is most obvious in the tribal communities who gather resources from the forest, or fisherfolk who catch fish in marine or freshwater ecosystems. For others, such as agricultural communities, biodiversity is used to grow their crops to suit the environment. Urban communities generally use the greatest amount of goods and services, which are all indirectly drawn from natural ecosystems.

It has become obvious that the preservation of biological resources is essential for the well-being and the long-term survival of mankind. This diversity of living organisms which is present in the wilderness, as well as in our crops and livestock, plays a major role in human 'development'. The preservation of 'biodiversity' is therefore integral to any strategy that aims at improving the quality of human life.

4.3.1 Consumptive use value

The direct utilisation of timber, food, fuelwood, fodder by local communities.

The biodiversity held in the ecosystem provides forest dwellers with all their daily needs, food, building material, fodder, medicines and a variety of other products. They know the qualities and different uses of wood from different species of trees, and collect a large number of local fruits, roots and plant material that they use as food, construction material or medicines. Fisherfolk are highly dependent on fish and know where and how to catch fish and other edible aquatic animals and plants.

Man and the Web of Life

The Biodiversity of an area influences every aspect of the lives of people who inhabit it. Their living space and their livelihoods depend on the type of ecosystem. Even people living in urban areas are dependent on the ecological services provided by the wilderness in the PAs. We frequently don't see this in everyday life as it is not necessarily overt. It is linked with every service that nature provides us. The quality of water we drink and use, the air we breathe, the soil on which our food grows are all influenced by a wide variety of living organisms both plants and animals and the ecosystem of which each species is linked with in nature.

While it is well known that plant life removes carbon dioxide and releases the oxygen we breathe, it is less obvious that fungi, small soil invertebrates and even microbes are essential for plants to grow.

That a natural forest maintains the water in the river after the monsoon, or that the absence of ants could destroy life on earth, are to be appreciated to understand how we are completely dependent on the living 'web of life' on earth.

The wilderness is an outcome of a long evolutionary process that has created an unimaginably large diversity of living species, their genetic differences and the various ecosystems on earth in which all living creatures live. This includes mankind as well. Think about this and we cannot but want to protect out earth's unique biodiversity. We are highly dependent on these living resources.

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4.3.2 Productive use value

Marketable goods.

Value of MFP>Timber (which is part of sustainable use).

The biotechnologist uses biorich areas to 'prospect' and search for potential genetic properties in plants or animals that can be used to develop better varieties of crops that are used in farming and plantation programs or to develop better livestock. To the pharmacist, biological diversity is the raw material from which new drugs can be identified from plant or animal products. To industrialists, biodiversity is a rich store-house from which to develop new products. For the agricultural scientist the biodiversity in the wild relatives of crop plants is the basis for developing better crops.

Genetic diversity enables scientists and farmers to develop better crops and domestic animals through careful breeding. Originally this was done by selecting or pollinating crops artificially to get a more productive or disease resistant strain. Today this is increasingly being done by genetic engineering, selecting genes from one plant and introducing them into another. New crop varieties (cultivars) are being developed using the genetic material found in wild relatives of crop plants through biotechnology.

Even today, species of plants and animals are being constantly discovered in the wild. Thus these wild species are the building blocks for the betterment of human life and their loss is a great economic loss to mankind. Among the known species, only a tiny fraction have been investigated for their value in terms of food, or their medicinal or industrial potential.

Preservation of biodiversity has now become essential for industrial growth and economic development. A variety of industries such as pharmaceuticals are highly dependent on identifying compounds of great economic value from the wide variety of wild species of plants located in undisturbed natural forests. This is called biological prospecting.

4.3.3 Social values

While traditional societies which had a small population and required less resources had preserved their biodiversity as a life supporting resource, modern man has rapidly depleted it even to the extent of leading to the irrecoverable loss due to extinction of several species. Thus apart from the local use or sale of products of biodiversity there is the social aspect in which more and more resources are used by affluent societies. The biodiversity has to a great extent been preserved by traditional societies that valued it as a resource and appreciated that its depletion would be a great loss to their society.

The consumptive and productive value of biodiversity is closely linked to social concerns in traditional communities. 'Ecosystem people' value biodiversity as a part of their livelihood as well as through cultural and religious sentiments. A great variety of crops have been cultivated in traditional agricultural systems and this permitted a wide range of produce to be grown and marketed throughout the year and acted as an insurance against the failure of one crop. In recent years farmers have begun to receive economic incentives to grow cash crops for national or international markets, rather than to supply local needs. This has resulted in local food shortages, unemployment (cash crops are usually mechanised), landlessness and increased vulnerability to drought and floods.

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Commonly used modern drugs derived from plant sources:

DRUG	PLANT SOURCE	USE
Atropine	Belladonna	Anticholinergic: reduces intestinal pain in diarrhoea.
Bromelain	Pineapple	Controls tissue inflammation due to infection.
Caffeine	Tea, Coffee	Stimulant of the central nervous system.
Camphor	Camphor tree	Rebefacient: increases local blood supply.
Cocaine	Cocoa	Analgesic and local anesthetic: reduces pain and prevents pain during surgery.
Codeine	Opium poppy	Analgesic: reduces pain.
Morphine	Opium poppy	Analgesic: controls pain.
Colchicine	Autumn crocus	Anticancer agent.
Digitoxin	Common foxglove	Cardiac stimulant used in heart diseases.
Diosgenin	Wild yams	Source of female contraceptive: prevents pregnancy.
L-Dopa	Velvet bean	Controls Parkinson's Disease which leads to jerky movements of the hands
Ergotamine	Smut-of-rye or ergot	Control of haemorrhage and migraine headaches.
Glaziovine	ocotea glaziovii	Antidepressant: Elevates mood of depressed patients.
Gossypol	Cotton	Male contraceptive.
Indicine N-oxide	heliotropium indicum	Anticancer agent.
Menthol	Mint	Rubefacient: increases local blood supply and reduces pain on local application.
Monocrotaline	Cotolaria sessiliflora	Anticancer agent.
Papain	Papaya	Dissolves excess protein and mucus, during digestion.
Penicillin	Penicillium fungi	General antibiotic, skills bacteria and controls infection by various micro-organisms.
Quinine	Yellow cinochona	Antimalarial.
Reserpine	Indian snakeroot	Reduces high blood pressure.
Scopolamine	Thorn apple	Sedative.
Taxol	Pacific yew	Anticancer (ovarian).
Vinblastine, vincristine	Rosy periwinkle (Vinca rosea) (Sadaphali)	Anticancer agent: Controls cancer in children.

From: 'The Diversity of Life'; Edward O. Wilson
(Norton Paperback. In association with Havard University Press – 1993)

Biodiversity

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4.3.4 Ethical and moral values

Ethical values related to biodiversity conservation are based on the importance of protecting all forms of life. All forms of life have the right to exist on earth. Man is only a small part of the Earth's great family of species. Don't plants and animals have an equal right to live and exist on our planet which is like an inhabited spaceship? We do not know if life as we know it exists elsewhere in the universe. Do we have the right to destroy life forms or do we have a duty to protect them?

Apart from the economic importance of conserving biodiversity, there are several cultural, moral and ethical values which are associated with the sanctity of all forms of life. Indian civilization has over several generations preserved nature through local traditions. This has been an important part of the ancient philosophy of many of our cultures. We have in our country a large number of sacred groves or 'deorais' preserved by tribal people in several States. These sacred groves around ancient sacred sites and temples act as gene banks of wild plants.

4.3.5 Aesthetic value

Knowledge and an appreciation of the presence of biodiversity for its own sake is another reason to preserve it. Quite apart from killing wildlife for food, it is important as a tourist attraction. Biodiversity is a beautiful and wonderful aspect of nature. Sit in a forest and listen to the birds. Watch a spider weave its complex web. Observe a fish feeding. It is magnificent and fascinating.

Symbols from wild species such as the lion of Hinduism, the elephant of Buddhism and deities such as Lord Ganesh, and the vehicles of several deities that are animals, have been venerated for thousands of years. Valmiki begins his epic story with a couplet on the unfortunate killing of a crane by a hunter. The 'Tulsi' has been placed at our doorsteps for centuries.

4.3.6 Option value

Keeping future possibilities open for their use is called option value. It is impossible to predict which of our species or traditional varieties of crops and domestic animals will be of great use in the future. To continue to improve cultivars and domestic livestock, we need to return to wild relatives of crop plants and animals. Thus the preservation of biodiversity must also include traditionally used strains already in existence in crops and domestic animals.

4.4 BIODIVERSITY AT GLOBAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS

There are at present 1.8 million species known and documented by scientists in the world. However, scientists have estimated that the number of species of plants and animals on earth could vary from 1.5 to 20 billion! Thus the majority of species are yet to be discovered.

Most of the world's bio-rich nations are in the South, which are the developing nations. In contrast, the majority of the countries capable of exploiting biodiversity are Northern nations, in the economically developed world. These nations however have low levels of biodiversity. Thus the developed world has come to support the concept that biodiversity must be considered to be a 'global resource'. However, if biodiversity should form a 'common property resource' to be shared by all nations, there is no reason to exclude oil, or uranium, or even intellectual and technological expertise as global assets. India's sovereignty over its biological diversity cannot be compromised without a revolutionary change in world thinking about sharing of all types of natural resources.

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Countries with diversities higher than India are located in South America such as Brazil, and South East Asian countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia. The species found in these countries, however, are different from our own. This makes it imperative to preserve our own biodiversity as a major economic resource. While few of the other 'megadiversity nations' have developed the technology to exploit their species for biotechnology and genetic engineering, India is capable of doing so.

Throughout the world, the value of biologically rich natural areas is now being increasingly appreciated as being of unimaginable value. International agreements such as the World Heritage Convention attempt to protect and support such areas. India is a signatory to the convention and has included several protected Areas as World Heritage sites. These include Manas on the border between Bhutan and India, Kaziranga in Assam, Bharatpur in U.P., Nandadevi in the Himalayas, and the Sunderbans in the Ganges delta in West Bengal.

India has also signed the Convention in the Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) which is intended to reduce the utilization of endangered plants and animals by controlling trade in their products and in the pet trade.

4.5 INDIA AS A MEGA DIVERSITY NATION

Geological events in the landmass of India have provided conditions for high levels of biological diversity. A split in the single giant continent around 70 million years ago, led to the formation of northern and southern continents, with India a part of Gondwanaland - the southern landmass, together with Africa, Australia and the Antarctic. Later tectonic movements shifted India northward across the equator to join the Northern Eurasian continent. As the intervening shallow Tethis Sea closed down, plants and animals that had evolved both in Europe and in the Far East migrated into India before the Himalayas had formed. A final influx came from Africa with Ethiopian species, which, were adapted to the Savannas and semi-arid regions. Thus India's special geographical position between three distinctive centres of biological evolution and radiation of species is responsible for our rich and varied biodiversity.

Among the biologically rich nations, India stands among the top 10 or 15 countries for its great variety of plants and animals, many of which are not found elsewhere. India has 350 different mammals (rated eight highest in the world), 1,200 species of birds (eighth in the world), 453 species of reptiles (fifth in the world) and 45,000 plant species, of which most are angiosperms, (fifteenth in the world). These include especially high species diversity of ferns (1022 species) and orchids (1082 species). India has 50,000 known species of insects, including 13,000 butterflies and moths. It is estimated that the number of unknown species could be several times higher.

It is estimated that 18% of Indian plants are endemic to the country and found nowhere else in the world. Among the plant species the flowering plants have a much higher degree of endemism, a third of these are not found elsewhere in the world. Among amphibians found in India, 62% are unique to this country. Among lizards, of the 153 species recorded, 50% are endemic. High endemism has also been recorded for various groups of insects, marine worms, centipedes, mayflies and fresh water sponges.

	India's World Ranking	Number of species in India
Mammals	8th	350
Birds	8th	1200
Reptiles	5th	453
Amphibia	15th	182
Angiosperms	15th-20th	14,500

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Apart from the high biodiversity of Indian wild plants and animals there is also a great diversity of cultivated crops and breeds of domestic livestock. This is a result of several thousand years during which civilizations have grown and flourished in the Indian subcontinent. The traditional cultivars included 30,000 to 50,000 varieties of rice and a number of cereals, vegetables and fruit. The highest diversity of cultivars is concentrated in the high rainfall areas of the Western Ghats, Eastern Ghats, Northern Himalayas and the North-Eastern hills.

Gene-banks have collected over 34,000 cereals and 22,000 pulses grown in India. India has 27 indigenous breeds of cattle, 40 breeds of sheep, 22 breeds of goats and 8 breeds of buffaloes.

4.6 HOTSPOTS OF BIODIVERSITY

The earth's biodiversity is distributed in specific ecological regions. There are over a thousand major ecoregions in the world. Of these, 200 are said to be the richest, rarest and most distinctive natural areas. These areas are referred to as the Global 200.

It has been estimated that 50,000 endemic plants which comprise 20% of global plant life, probably occur in only 18 'hot spots' in the world. Countries which have a relatively large proportion of these hot spots of diversity are referred to as 'megadiversity nations'.

The rate at which the extinction of species is occurring throughout our country remains ob-

Global species diversity

Group	No. of Described Species	
Bacteria and blue-green algae	4,760	
Fungi	46,983	
Algae	26,900	
Bryophytes (Mosses and Liverworts)	17,000	(WCMC, 1988)
Gymnosperms (Conifers)	750	(Reven et al., 1986)
Angiosperms (Flowering plants)	250,000	(Reven et al., 1986)
Protozoans	30,800	
Sponges	5,000	
Corals and Jellyfish	9,000	
Roundworms and earthworms	24,000	
Crustaceans	38,000	
Insects	751,000	
other arthropods and minor Invertebrates	132,461	
Molluscs	50,000	
Starfish	6,100	
Fishes (Teleosts)	19,056	
Amphibians	4,184	
Reptiles	6,300	
Birds	9,198	(Clements, 1981)
Mammals	4,170	(Honacki et al., 1982)
Total: 1,435,662 SPECIES		

From 'Conserving the World's Biological Diversity WRI, IUCN, CI, WWF-US, The World Bank.'

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scure. It is likely to be extremely high as our wilderness areas are shrinking rapidly. Our globally accepted national 'hot spots' are in the forests of the North-East and the Western Ghats, which are included in the world's most biorich areas. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are extremely rich in species and many subspecies of different animals and birds have evolved. Among the endemic species i.e. those species found only in India, a large proportion are concentrated in these three areas. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands alone have as many as 2200 species of flowering plants and 120 species of ferns. Out of 135 genera of land mammals in India, 85 (63%) are found in the Northeast. The Northeast States have 1,500 endemic plant species. A major proportion of amphibian and reptile species, especially snakes, are concentrated in the Western Ghats, which is also a habitat for 1,500 endemic plant species.

Coral reefs in Indian waters surround the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep Islands, the Gulf areas of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. They are nearly as rich in species as tropical evergreen forests!

4.7 THREATS TO BIODIVERSITY: HABITAT LOSS, POACHING OF WILDLIFE, MAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICTS

Man has begun to overuse or misuse most of these natural ecosystems. Due to this 'unsustainable' resource-use, once productive forests and grasslands have been turned into deserts and wasteland have increased all over the world. Mangroves have been cleared for fuelwood and prawn farming, which has led to a decrease in the habitat essential for breeding of marine fish. Wetlands have been drained to increase agricultural land. These changes have grave economic implications in the longer term.

The current destruction of the remaining large areas of wilderness habitats, especially in the

CASE STUDY

Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary – Sawai Madhopur, Rajashtan

While conservation efforts are associated with conflicts between villagers and Forest Officials in most Protected Areas across the country, the Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary in Rajasthan has involved local community initiatives for conservation and regeneration. The Sanctuary was initiated in 1983, over 674 sq km forming a part of the 1334 sq km Ranthambore Tiger Reserve. It is located within the Karauli and Sapotra blocks of Sawai Madhopur district.

The primary occupation of the predominant Meena and Gujjar communities is pastoralism and subsistence agriculture.

Pressures on the sanctuary included migrant grazers known as the Rabaris, who came from the Mewar region of Rajasthan with herds of over 150,000 sheep. Other pressures were from exploitation of timber and fuelwood and mining. The threat poised by the migrant grazers spurred the formation of the "Baragaon ki Panchayat" in 1990, which in turn initiated a 'Bhed Bhagao Andolan'.

The Forest Department supported the villagers in the formation of Forest Protection Committees and Van Suraksha Samitis. The benefits of involving local people in protection of their resources were obvious. Illegal felling was checked. The use of forest resources for local use was monitored. The *Forest Protection Committees (FPCs)* were also successful in stopping the mining in the Sanctuary. Mining is now banned in the Sanctuary. The people not only protect their forests but also use their resources judiciously.

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super diverse tropical forests and coral reefs, is the most important threat worldwide to biodiversity. Scientists have estimated that human activities are likely to eliminate approximately 10 million species by the year 2050.

There are about 1.8 million species of plants and animals, both large and microscopic, known to science in the world at present. The number of species however is likely to be greater by a factor of at least 10. Plants and insects as well as other forms of life not known to science are continually being identified in the worlds' 'hotspots' of diversity. Unfortunately at the present rate of extinction about 25% of the worlds' species will undergo extinction fairly rapidly. This may occur at the rate of 10 to 20 thousand species per year, a thousand to ten thousand times faster than the expected natural rate! Human actions could well exterminate 25% of the world's species within the next twenty or thirty years. Much of this mega extinction spasm is related to human population growth, industrialization and changes in land-use patterns. A major part of these extinctions will occur in 'biorich' areas such as tropical forests, wetlands, and coral reefs. The loss of wild habitats due to rapid human population growth and short term economic development are major contributors to the rapid global destruction of biodiversity.

Island flora and fauna having high endemism in small isolated areas surrounded by sea have so far been most seriously affected by human activity, which has already led to extinction of many island plants and animals (the dodo is a famous example). Habitat loss also results from man's introduction of species from one area into another, disturbing the balance in existing communities. In the process, the purposely or accidentally introduced organisms (*Eupatorium, Lantana*, Hyacinth, Congress grass or *Parthenium*) have led to the extinction of many local species.

Loss of species occurs due to the destruction of natural ecosystems, either for conversion to agriculture or industry, or by over-extraction of their resources, or through pollution of air, water and soil.

In India, forests and grasslands are continuously being changed to agricultural land. Encroachments have been legalized repeatedly. Similarly natural wetland systems have been drained to establish croplands resulting in loss of aquatic species. Grasslands that were once sustainably used by a relatively smaller number of human beings and their cattle are either changed to other forms of use or degraded by overgrazing.

CASE STUDY:

Kokkare Bellure – Karnataka: Co-existence (Man and Wildlife)

The pelican, which is an endangered species breeds in large numbers at Kokkare Bellur which is one of the ten known breeding sites in India. Kokkare Bellure is a village in Karnataka in Southern India. In December every year, hundreds of spot billed pelicans, painted storks, ibis and other birds migrate to this area to establish breeding colonies on the tall tamarind trees in the center of the village. The local people have protected the birds, believing that they bring good luck with regard to rain and crops. The villagers collect a rich supply of the natural fertilizer that collects below the nests – the *guano*. The droppings of fish-eating birds are rich in nitrates.

The owners of the trees inhabited by the birds dig deep pits under the trees, into which the guano falls. Silt from nearby lakes and ponds is mixed with the guano which is used in their fields and sold as fertilizer. They have now planted trees around their homes to encourage nesting.

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Our natural forests are being deforested for timber and replanted using teak, sal or other single species for their timber value. Such plantations do not support the same biological diversity as a multi-storied natural forest, which has a closed canopy and a rich understorey of vegetation.

When excessive firewood is collected from the forest by lopping the branches of trees, the forest canopy is opened up and this alters local biodiversity. Foraging cattle retard the regeneration of the forest as seedlings are constantly trampled.

Increasing human population on the fringes of our Protected Areas degrade forest ecosystems.

This is a major factor to consider in evaluating the quality of the ecosystem. Repeated fires started by local grazers to increase grass growth ultimately reduces regeneration and lowers the diversity of plant species. Without alternate sources of fodder this pressure cannot be decreased.

Another factor that disrupts forest biodiversity is the introduction of exotic weeds which are not a part of the natural vegetation. Common examples in India are lantana bushes, Eupatorium shrubs and 'congress' grass. These have been imported into the country from abroad and have invaded several large tracts of our natural forests. These weeds spread at the expense of the diverse range of indigenous undergrowth species. The impact on the diversity of insect, bird and other wildlife species, though not adequately studied, is quite obvious.

In our country a variety of traditional farming techniques have evolved over several centuries. Cultivation by slash and burn in the Himalayas, and 'rab' by lopping of tree branches to act as a wood-ash fertilizer in the Western Ghats, are two such systems. When human population in these areas was low, these were sustainable methods of agriculture. Unfortunately these areas now have a large number of people who subsist largely on forest agriculture. These methods are now unsustainable and are leading to a loss of forest biodiversity.

Overharvesting of fish, especially by trawling is leading to serious depletion of fish stocks. Turtles are being massacred off the coast of Orissa. The rare whale shark, a highly endangered species, is being killed off the coast of Gujarat.

Poaching: Specific threats to certain animals are related to large economic benefits. Skin and bones from tigers, ivory from elephants, horns from rhinos and the perfume from the must deer are extensively used abroad. Bears are killed for their gall bladders. Corals and shells are also collected for export or sold on the beaches of Chennai and Kanyakumari. A variety of wild plants with real or at times dubious medicinal value are being over harvested. The commonly collected plants include Rauvolfia, Nuxvomica, Datura, etc. Collection of garden plants includes orchids, ferns and moss.

The Rights of Species

We do not see all the varied functions that biodiversity plays in our lives because they are not obvious. We rarely see how they are controlling our environment unless we study nature. Thus we tend to take short-term actions that can have serious impacts on biodiversity leading to even extinction of species by disturbing their habitats. Man has no right to do so. We only share this planet with millions of other species that also have a right to survive on earth. It is morally wrong to allow man's actions to lead to the extinction of species.

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4.8 ENDANGERED AND ENDEMIC SPECIES OF INDIA

To appreciate the endemic and endangered species of India it is important to understand the wide variety of plant and animal species that are found in the country.

Of the well-known species, there are several which are endangered by human activity. The endangered species in the country are categorised as Vulnerable, Rare, Indeterminate and Threatened. Other species are found only in India and are thus endemic or restricted to our country. Some of these may have very localized distribution and are considered highly endemic.

Several plant and animal species in the country are now found in only one or a few Protected Areas. Among the important endangered animals are charismatic species such as the tiger, the elephant, the rhino, etc. The less well-known major mammals restricted to a single area include the Indian wild ass, the Hangul or Kashmir stag, the Golden langur, the pygmy hog and a host of others. There are also endangered bird species such as the Siberian crane, the Great Indian Bustard, the Florican and several birds of prey. During the recent past, vultures which were common a decade ago, have suddenly disappeared and are now highly threatened. Equally threatened are several species of reptiles and amphibia. Many invertebrates are also threatened, including a large number of species that inhabit our coral reefs.

Many plant species are now increasingly threatened due to changes in their habitats induced by human activity. Apart from major trees, shrubs and climbers that are extremely habitat specific and thus endangered, there are thousands of small herbs which are greatly threatened by habitat loss. Several orchids are yet another group of plants that are under threat. Many plants are threatened due to overharvesting as ingredients in medicinal products.

To protect endangered species India has created the Wildlife Protection Act. This includes lists of plants and animals categorised according to the threat on their survival.

We know so little about the species diversity of our country. There are several groups of which we know very little. Most of us are only aware of the plight of a few glamorous large mammals, but we need to appreciate the threat to the less known species of plants and animals. We need to find ways to support the conservation of our incredible wildlife for future generations.

4.8.1 Common Plant species

Teak: This tree is from the Southwest parts of peninsular India. It is a common tree in deciduous forests. It yields a much sought after timber used for making excellent furniture. During the early British period it was cut down from many forest tracts to build ships. As the stocks were diminishing, the British selected areas which they called Reserved Forests where teak was planted for the Government's use. Teak is grown extensively by the Forest Department and is a highly priced wood.

The teak tree is identified by its large leaves, which grow to more than 40 or 50cms long and 20cms wide. It has tiny flowers and fruit. In the winter, the trees shed all their leaves. In the growing season, which begins in April and extends through the monsoon, teak forests are bright green and shady. Most natural teak forests have various other species of plants and have a large number of wild animals. Some areas of teak forests that have exceptional populations of wildlife have been included in our National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.

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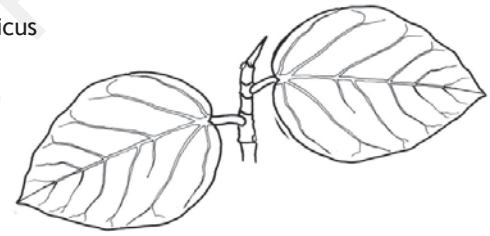
Sal: This is a common species of several types of forests of the Northeastern region of India, extending into Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. It has bright green foliage and its canopy remains green nearly throughout the year. Sal wood is hard and durable. Sal gets a large number of seeds which are used in making cosmetics. The sal forests are rich in wild mammals, birds, reptiles and insect life. Several areas are included in our network of National Parks and Sanctuaries.

Mango: This has become one of our most popular horticultural species with different varieties grown all over the country. The wild mango tree has small tangy fruit and a big seed in comparison to the large pulpy fruit used in horticulture. The mango tree is an evergreen species and gets small flowers that are pollinated by insects. In the forest, fruit dependent animals such as monkeys, squirrels and fruit eating birds relish its ripe fruit.

Mango

Ficus sp.: Peepal, Banyan and many other ficus species form a part of this group of important trees. They are all ecologically of great importance as many different species of insects, birds and mammals live on ficus berries. The flowers are inside the berries. They are pollinated by a specific wasp which lays its eggs inside the berries on which the larvae feed and grow. The ficus trees bear berries throughout the year, thus supplying nutritious food to several animal species when other trees have no fruit. Ficus species are thus known as 'keystone' species in the ecosystem and support a major part of the food web in several ecosystems. Ficus trees such as Peepal and Banyan are considered sacred and are protected in India.

Ficus



Neem: This species is known as *Azadirachta Indica*. It has been traditionally used in indigenous medicine. It has small yellow fruit. The leaves and fruit are bitter to taste. It is used extensively as an environmentally friendly insecticide. It grows extremely well in semi-arid regions and can be planted in afforestation programs where soil is poor and rainfall is low.

Neem

Tamarind: One of the best known Indian trees, it grows to a large size and is known to live for over 200 years. Its familiar fruit is a curved pod with sour pulp and contains a number of squarish seeds. The pulp in the fresh fruit is either green or red. As it ripens, it turns sticky and brown and separates from the skin. The tree is commonly cultivated as a shade tree and for its edible sour fruit which contains high concentrations of vitamin C. It is used as an additive in food to give a tangy flavour. It is valued for its timber as well as for fuelwood.

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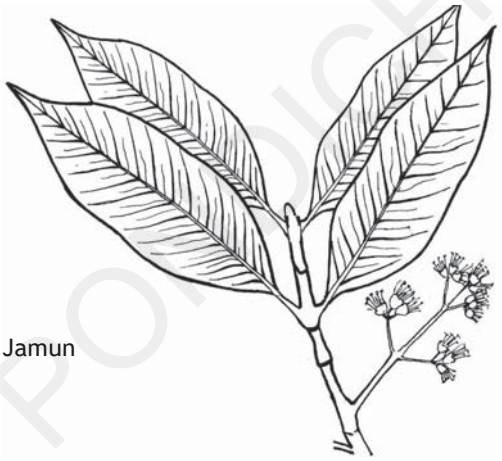
Babul: This is a thorny species that is characteristic of semi arid areas of Western India and the Deccan plateau. It grows sparsely in tracts of grassland and around farms. It is used for fodder and fuelwood. It remains green throughout the year even under the driest conditions and is browsed by wild animals and cattle. It has small leaves and bright yellow flowers and small seed-pods with multiple seeds. Its main characteristic is its long sharp, straight thorns which prevent excessive browsing of its older branches.

Zizyphus: These are the typical small trees and shrubs that are found in the arid and semi arid areas of India. *Z. mauritiana* and *Z. jujuba* are the most frequent species. It is a favourite of frugivorous birds. The tree fruits extensively and is eaten by a variety of birds and mammals. The popular fruit is commonly collected and sold in local markets.

Jamun: This tree is an evergreen species which has a tasty purple fruit. It is a favourite with not only people but also with many wild birds and mammals. It grows in many parts of India and has several varieties with fruit of different sizes.



Jamun

Tendu is a mid-sized, deciduous tree, common in dry deciduous forests throughout the Subcontinent. There are around 50 Indian species. Its bark exfoliates in large rectangular scales. It branches profusely forming a dense crown. The leaves are elliptical and leathery and its young leaves are extensively used for making 'bidis'. The fruit is brownish yellow and astringent. Tendu leaf collection necessitates burning undergrowth and slashing the branches of the trees to get at the leaves. The resulting disturbance to wildlife is a serious issue in Protected Areas.

Jackfruit: A tree that is planted around many villages and has huge fruit growing from its branches. The fruit has a prickly skin. The fruit when unripe is cooked. Once ripe it is eaten raw after it turns into a sweet, sticky, golden-yellow fruit which has a strong smell.

Flame of the Forest (Butea monosperma): This tree grows in many parts of India. It has bright orange flowers when it is leafless, thus it is called 'flame of the forest'. The flowers are full of nectar which attracts monkeys and many nectar dependent birds.

Flame of the forest

Coral Tree (Erythrina): A common deciduous tree that is leafless in February when it gets bright scarlet flowers that are used for their nectar by many birds such as mynas, crows and sunbirds, that act as its major pollinators. Its long black seed pods contain several shiny brown seeds which germinate well. This tree can also be propagated by cutting and planting its young

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Erythrina

branches. It is a rapid grower and usually begins to flower in four or five years time.

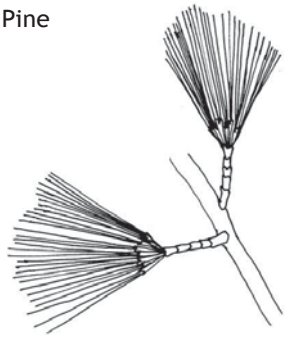
Amla: This deciduous medium sized tree is known for its sour, green-yellow fruit which is rich in vitamin C. It is used as a medicine, in pickles and for dying and tanning. It is frequently referred to as the Indian 'olive', to which it has no similarity either in appearance or taste.

Dipterocarps: This group of trees grows in evergreen forests of the southern part of the Western Ghats and in the Northeast of India, in high rainfall areas. It grows to an enormous height with a wide girth. The seed has a pair of wing like structures which aid in wind dispersal.

Quercus (Oak) is a large tree and is economically an important genus which includes many trees known for their beautiful shape and their changing seasonal colours. There are 30 to 40 Indian species of this genus found in the temperate areas throughout the Himalayas. The fruit is a large, hard, solitary characteristic nut (acorn). Oaks provide the finest hardwoods of great strength and durability and were once used for building ships and bridges. It is a famous wood for high quality furniture. Some of its species are excellent fodder plants.

Pine: There are 5 species of true pines that are found in India in the Himalayan region. The timber of these trees is frequently used in construction, carpentry and the paper industry. Pine resin is used to make turpentine, rosin, tar and pitch. Pine oils are obtained by distillation of leaves and shoots. Pine leaves are thin and needle-like.

Pine



The male and female spores are produced in woody cones. Dispersal of pollen is aided by each grain having two wings.

Cycas: These plants are uncommon in India and have a palm-like appearance. Cycads along with conifers make up the gymnosperms. They are among the most primitive seed plants, and have remained virtually unchanged through the past 200 million years. There are five species found in India, mostly in high rainfall areas.

Coconut: This tall stately palm has a more or less straight trunk with circular markings. It mostly grows in coastal plains. The base is surrounded by a mass of fine roots. It produces the familiar coconut, filled with liquid and a soft white edible, initially jelly like material that hardens when the fruit ripens. It is a common ingredient of food in India, especially in the Southern States. It is extensively cultivated along the coastal regions and islands of India. Most parts of the tree yield several useful products such as broomsticks from its leaves and fiber from the husk of dried coconuts.

Orchids: This is the largest group of flowering plants in the world with over 18,000 known species. Of these, 1500 species are found in India, making it one of the largest plant families in the country with a high concentration of a staggering 700 species in the Northeastern States. These plants are terrestrial or epiphytic herbs. Flowers show a range of bright colours

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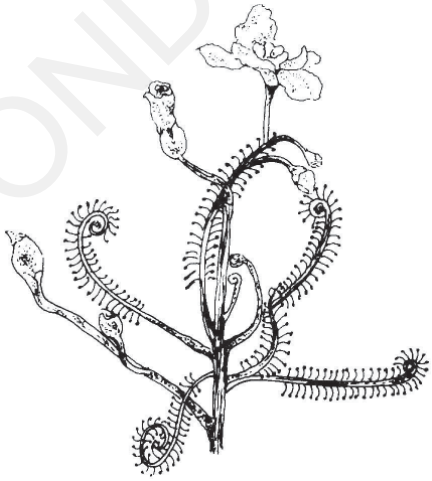
Orchid

and great variations in structure. In some species, one of the petals is distinct from the others and is called a lip or labellum. This colourful petal attracts pollinators. In India a large number of orchid species are found in the Western Ghats, the Northeast, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Orchids are however seen in several ecological conditions except extremes such as very cold or very hot and dry ecosystems.

Drosera: This is a small insectivorous plant, usually 5 or 6cms in height, which has tiny hair which secrete a sticky droplet of fluid on which insects get stuck. The leaf winds around the struggling insect which is then slowly digested. The plant has pretty flowers. It grows in shallow poor quality soil. It is a rare plant and is found in small patches.



Drosera

Lotus: An aquatic floating plant with a large rhizome, which is rooted in mud. Its leaves are circular flat and covered with a waxy coating which protects it from water. The flower grows on an erect stalk with several petals ranging from pink violet to white. The fruit is a spongy cone with multiple round seeds. It is widely distributed in wetland habitats and shallow parts of lakes and marshy areas. The rhizome, stalks of the leaves and seeds are considered delicacies. The fruit is used for dry decorations. The flower has been a traditional motif in Indian art. The lotus is the National flower of India.

Grasses: Grasses form the second largest group of flowering plants in the world. They are a very important group of plants as they are used for various purposes such as making fiber, paper, thatching material for roofs, oil, gum, medicines and many other useful products. The economically important grasses include sugarcane, bamboo and cereals like rice, wheat, millets, maize, etc. Grasses are important as they provide fodder for domestic animals.

Bamboo: This is a group of large grasslike species that grow as a clump to great heights in many forests of India. It is extremely useful and is used for constructing huts and making several useful household articles in rural areas such as baskets, farm implements, fences, household implements, matting, etc. The young shoots are used as food. It is extensively used in the pulp and paper industry as a raw material.

Bamboos flower after more than two decades. The plant then dies. The flowering produces thousands of seeds which results in the slow

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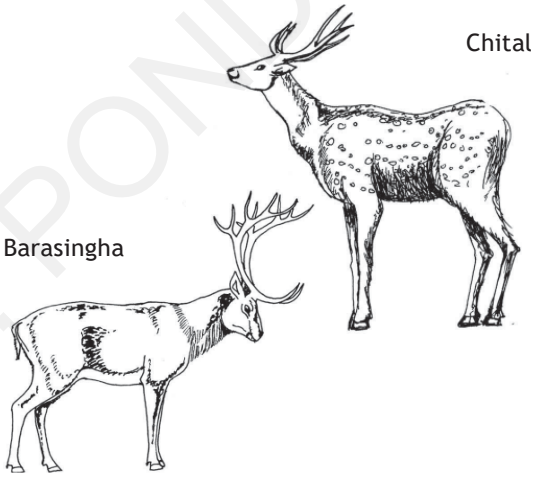
regrowth of the bamboo. Bamboo is a favorite food of elephants and other large herbivores of the forest such as gaur and deer.

Wild relatives of crop plants: All our present day cultivated varieties of rice, which are grown for food, come from wild varieties of rice, many of which have originated in India, China and Indonesia. Rice forms one of the staple foods of the world. Although wild varieties are not used as food crops, they are important as they contain genes, which can be used to develop disease or pest resistance in crops. Many local varieties of rice have already been lost, as most farmers now grow only high yielding varieties.

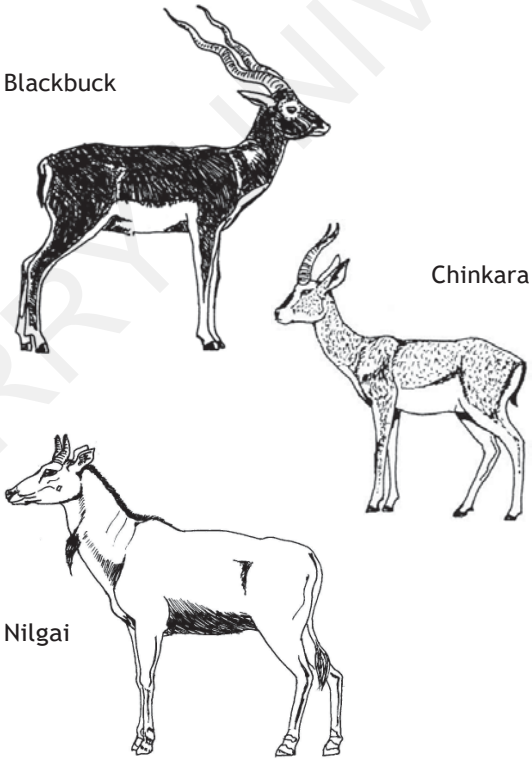
4.8.2 Common Animal species

Mammals:

The common deer species found in India include the sambar, chital, barasingha and barking deer. Sambar live in small family parties especially in hilly forested areas and feed mainly on shrubs and leaves of low branches. They are dark brown in colour and have large thick antlers, each having 3 branches. Chital or spotted deer live in large herds in forest clearings where they graze on the grass. They have a rust brown body with white spots which camouflages them in the forest. Each antler has three branches called tines.



The rare Hangul deer is found only in Kashmir. It has a magnificent spread of antlers with 6 branches on each antler. The Barasingha, or swamp deer, has wide hoofs that enable this beautiful animal to live in boggy areas of the Terai. Each antler has 6 or more branches. The tiny barking deer lives in many forest areas all over India. It has two ridges on its face and a short antler with only 2 branches. Its call sounds like the bark of a dog.



The blackbuck is the only true antelope found in India. It lives in large herds. The males are black on top and cream below and have beautiful spiral horns that form a 'V' shape. The chinkara, also known as the Indian gazelle, is a smaller animal and is pale brown in colour it has beautiful curved horns. The rare Chausingha, or four horned antelope, is the only animal in the world that has four horns. The nilgai is the largest of the dryland herbi-

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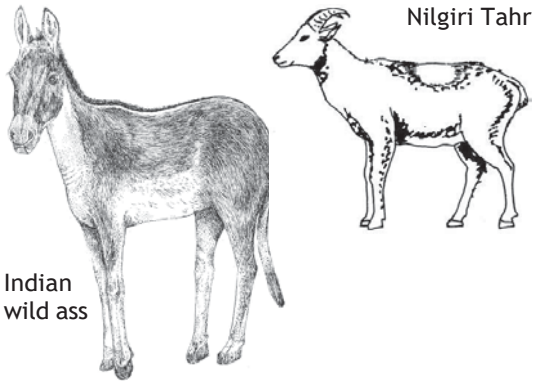
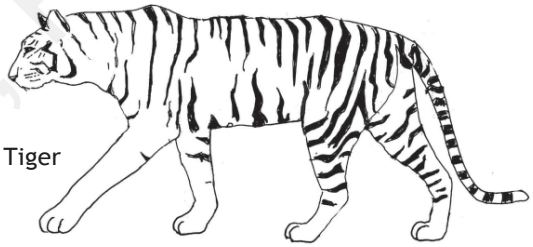
vores. The males are blue-gray. Nilgai have white markings on the legs and head. They have short strong spike-like horns.



A very special rare species is the Indian wild ass, endemic to the Little Rann of Kutch. Himalayan pastures support several species of wild goats and sheep, many of them restricted to the region, like the goral and the Himalayan tahr. A single species, the Nilgiri tahr is found in the Nilgiri and Annamalai hills in south India.

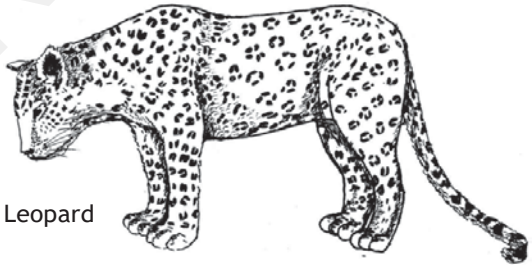
The rhinocerous is now restricted to Assam but was once found throughout the Gangetic plains. The wild buffalo is now also restricted to the Terai. The elephant is distributed in the North-eastern and Southern States. It is threatened by habitat loss and poaching for ivory. Gaur is found in patches in several well-wooded parts of India.

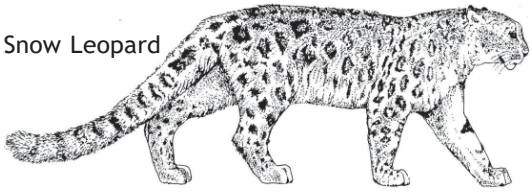
The best known predator of our forests is the tiger. Its gold and black stripes hide it perfectly in the forest undergrowth. It preys on herbivores such as sambar or chital or less frequently on domestic animals. The tiger kills only three or four times a month. Its numbers have declined due to poaching for its superb skin, and for the supposed magical value of its teeth, claws and whiskers. In the recent past it has been extensively killed for the supposed medicinal properties of its bones that are used in Chinese medicine.



The Asiatic lion is now found only in the Gir forests of Gujarat.

The leopard is more adaptable than the tiger and lives both in thick forests and degraded forest areas. Its beautiful ring like markings camouflage it so perfectly that its prey cannot see its stealthy approach. The smaller jungle cat, which is a light brown animal and the leopard cat, which is a little bigger than a domestic cat, are very rare. The most typical predator of the HImalayas is the snow leopard, which is very rare and poached for its beautiful skin which is pale grey with dark grey ring-like markings.





The wolf, jackal, fox and the wild dog or 'dhole' form a group called canids. Another threatened predator is the Himalayan wolf. The wolves are now highly threatened as they have become increasingly dependent on shepherd's flocks. Thus shepherds constantly find ways to kill the wolves.

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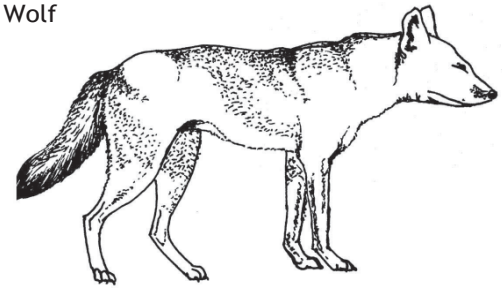
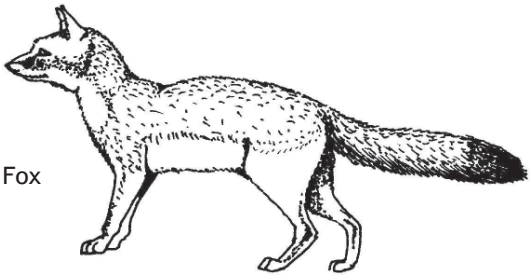
Wolf





Fox

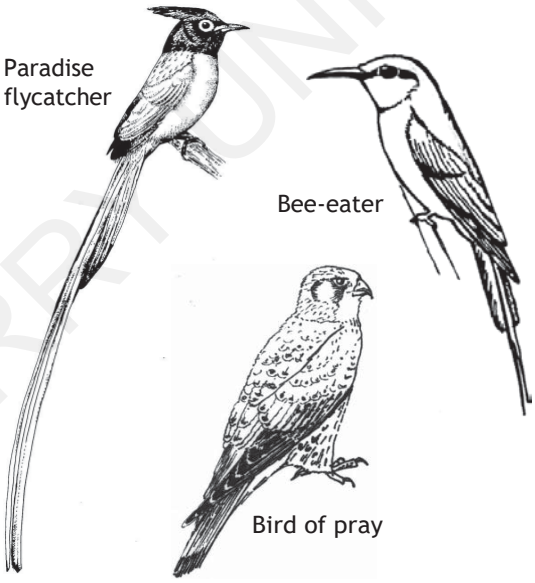
One of the common monkey species of the forest is the bonnet macaque, which has a red face, a very long tail and a whorl of hair on the scalp which looks like a cap. Our other common monkey is the rhesus macaque, which is smaller and has a shorter tail than the bonnet. A rare macaque is the lion-tailed macaque found only in a few forests of the southern Western Ghats and Annamalai ranges. It is black in colour, has long hair, a grey mane and a tassel at the end of its tail that looks like a lion's tail. The common langur has a black face and is known as the Hanuman monkey. The rare golden langur, is golden yellow in colour and lives along the banks of the Manas River in Assam. The capped langur is an uncommon species of Northeast India. The rare black nilgiri langur lives in the southern Western Ghats, Nilgiris and Annamalais.

Birds:

There are over 1200 bird species found in India in different habitats. Most of our forest birds are specially adapted to life in certain forest types. Some Himalayan species however can also be seen in the Western Ghats. There are several species of Hornbills that live on fruit. They have heavy curved beaks with a projection on top.

Hornbill

Frugivores such as parakeets, barbets and bulbuls live on fruit and are often seen eating Ficus fruits such as those of banyan and peepal.



Insectivorous birds of many species live on forest insects. They include various species of flycatchers, bee-eaters, and others. The male paradise flycatcher is a small beautiful white bird with a black head and two long white trailing tail feathers. The female is brown and does not have the long tail feathers. There are several eagles, falcons and kites many of which are now endangered.

Grasslands support many species of birds. The most threatened species is the Great Indian bustard, a large, brown stately bird with long legs which struts about through grasslands look-

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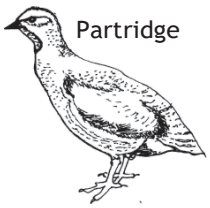
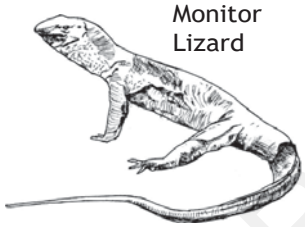
ing for locusts and grasshoppers. Another rare group of threatened birds are the floricans. There are many species of quails, partridges, larks, munias and other grain eating birds that are adapted to grasslands.



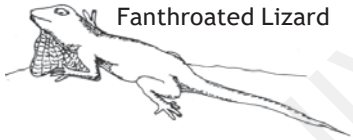
There are several species of aquatic birds such as waders, gulls and terns, which live along the seashore and go out fishing many kilometers to the sea. Many of these birds have lost their coastal habitats due to pollution. Aquatic birds in freshwater are those with long legs and are known as waders such as stilts and sandpipers. The other group form birds that swim on water such as several species of ducks and geese.

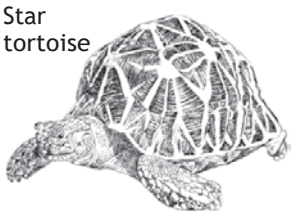
There are many species of spectacular large birds associated with water or marshy areas. These include different species of storks, cranes, spoonbills, flamingo and pelicans. Many aquatic species are migrants. They breed in Northern Europe or Siberia and come to India in thousands during winter.

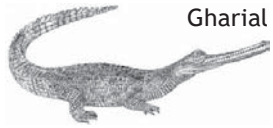
Reptiles:



India has a wide variety of lizards, snakes and turtles, with a high level of endemism. The lizards include the common garden lizard, Fan throated lizard, Chamelion, Skink, Common Monitor and Water Monitor. Some of these are threatened due to trade in reptile skins. Indian snakes include the Rock Python, Russell's viper and the Vine snake. We rarely appreciate the fact that only a few species of snakes are poisonous and most snakes are harmless. The Star tortoise and Travancore tortoise are now rare. The Olive Ridley and Flapshell turtle are the well-known turtles of India. Many turtles are becoming increasingly rare due to poaching of adults and eggs. The crocodile is our largest reptile which is poached for its prized skin. The gharial is endemic to India and is highly threatened.







Amphibia:

Most of the amphibians found in India are frogs and toads. These include several species like the Indian Bull frog, Tree frog, etc. These amphibians are mostly found in the hotspots in the Northeast and the Western Ghats. It is now thought that global warming and increasing lev-

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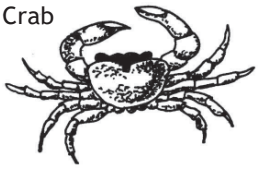
els of UV radiation may be seriously affecting amphibian populations in some areas.

Invertebrates:

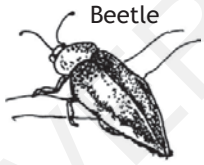
Snail

Invertebrates include a variety of taxa that inhabit both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Microscopic animals like protozoa and zooplankton form the basis of the food chain in aquatic habitats. Coral is formed by colonies of polyp like animals. Worms, molluscs (snails), spiders, crabs, jellyfish, octopus are a few of the better known invertebrates found in India.


Crab

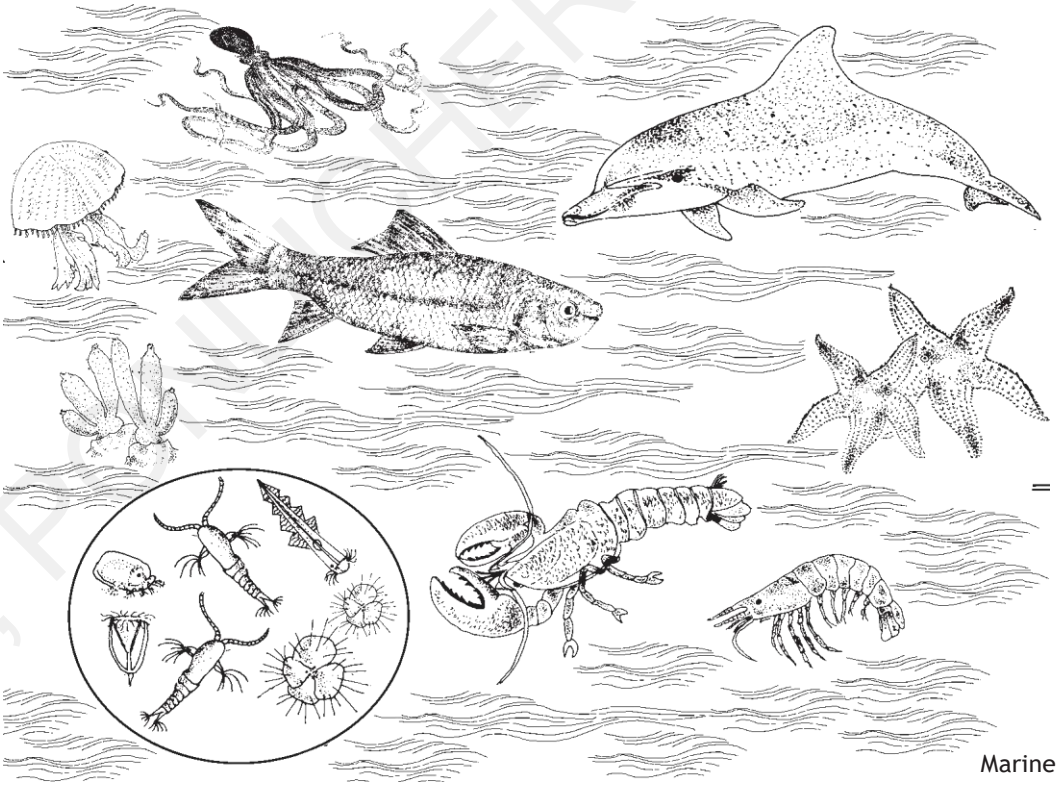
There are more than a million insect species on earth that are known to science. They include grasshoppers, bugs, beetles, ants, bees, butterflies and moths. India is rich in its butterfly and moth species.

Spider


Beetle

Marine Life:

Marine ecosystems are most frequently associated with fish and crustacea like crabs and shrimp, which we use as food. The other species that are endangered include the marine turtles, which are reptiles, and whales that are mammals. There are a large number of species of freshwater fish found in our Indian rivers and lakes that are now threatened by the introduction of fish from abroad as well as due to being


Marine Life

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introduced from one river into another. Fish are also now seriously affected by pollution. Marine fisheries are being over harvested in our coastal waters and the fish catch has decreased seriously over the last few years. Mechanized boats with giant, small-meshed nets are a major cause of depleting this resource. There are many endangered fish such as the Mahseer which once grew to over a meter in length. Many species of marine animals such as the whales, sharks and dolphins that live in the Indian Ocean are now threatened by extinction due to fishing in the deep sea.

For further details see:

1) CD ROM on 'The Biodiversity of India', Mapin Publications, Ahmedabad, mapin@icenet.net

2) The Book of Indian Animals, SH Prater, BNHS.

3) The Book of Indian Birds, Salim Ali, BNHS.

4.9 CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY: IN-SITU AND EX-SITU

4.9.1 In-situ conservation

Biodiversity at all its levels, genetic species and as intact ecosystems, can be best preserved in-situ by setting aside an adequate representation of wilderness as '*Protected Areas*'. These should consist of a network of *National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries* with each distinctive ecosystem included in the network. Such a network would preserve the total diversity of life of a region.

In the past National Parks and Sanctuaries in India were notified to preserve major wildlife species such as tigers, lions, elephants, and deer. The objective of these areas should be expanded to the preservation of relatively intact natural ecosystems, where biological diversity – from microscopic unicellular plants and animals, to the giant trees and major mammals – can all be preserved.

Project Tiger: Project Tiger was launched by the Government of India with the support of WWF-International in 1973 and was the first such initiative aimed at protecting this key species and all its habitats. Project Tiger was initiated in nine Tiger Reserves in different ecosystems of the country covering an area of 16339 sq km. By 2001 the number of Tiger Reserves increased to 27, covering an area of 37761 sq km. The tiger count climbed from 268 in 1972 in the nine Tiger Reserves, to around 1500 in 1997 in the 23 Tiger Reserves. The Project tiger recognized the fact that tigers cannot be protected in isolation, and that to protect the tiger, its habitat needed to be protected.

Crocodile Conservation: Crocodiles have been threatened as their skin is used for making leather articles. This led to the near extinction of crocodiles in the wild in the 1960s in India.

A Crocodile Breeding and Conservation Program was initiated in 1975 to protect the remaining population of crocodilians in their natural habitat and by creating breeding centers. It is perhaps one of the most successful ex situ conservation breeding projects in the country.

Crocodiles have been extensively bred in over 30 captive breeding centers, zoos and other sites where successful breeding takes place. Thousands of crocodiles of all three species have been bred and restocked in 20 natural water bodies.

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Project Elephant: Project Elephant was launched in 1992 to ensure the long-term survival of a viable population of elephants in their natural habitats in north and north-eastern India and south India. It is being implemented in 12 States. In spite of this, our elephant herds are at threat as their habitat is shrinking and their migration routes are disrupted by human activities.

However species cannot be protected individually as they are all inter dependent on each other. Thus the whole ecosystem must be protected. The biologist's view point deals with areas that are relatively species rich, or those where rare, threatened or endangered species are found, or those with 'endemic' species which are not found elsewhere. As rare endemic species are found only in a small area these easily become extinct due to human activity. Such areas must be given an added importance as their biodiversity is a special feature of the region.

Animals such as elephants require different types of habitat to feed in during different seasons. They utilize open grasslands after the rains when the young grass shoots are highly nutritious. As the grasses dry, the elephants move into the forest to feed on foliage from the trees. A Protected Area that is meant to protect elephants must therefore be large enough and include diverse habitat types to support a complete complement of inter linked species.

Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks of India: There are 589 Protected Areas in India of which 89 are National Parks and 500 are Wildlife Sanctuaries. They include a variety of ecosystems and habitats. Some have been created in order to protect highly endangered species of wild plants and animals found nowhere else in the world.

The **Great Himalayan National Park** is the largest sanctuary in this ecosystem and is one of the last homes of the beautiful snow leopard. **Dachigam Sanctuary** is the only place where the rare Hangul or Kashmir stag is found. There are several Sanctuaries in the Terai region, **Kaziranga National Park** is the most famous which has elephant, wild buffalo, gaur, wild boar, swamp deer, and hog deer, in large numbers, as well as tiger and leopard. Its bird life is extremely rich and includes ducks, geese, pelicans and storks. The **Manas Sanctuary**, in addition to the above Terai species, also includes the rare golden langur and the very rare pygmy hog, the smallest wild boar in the world. The florican is found only in a few undisturbed grasslands in the Terai sanctuaries.

In the sal forests of Madhya Pradesh, there are several Protected Areas. **Kanha** offers a wonderful opportunity to observe wild tigers from elephant back. It is the only Protected Area in which a sub species of the Barasingha is found.

Bharatpur is one of the most famous water bird sanctuaries in the world. Thousands of ducks, geese, herons, and other wading birds can be seen here. This is the only home of the very rare Siberian crane which migrates to India every winter. During the last 20 years, the 30 or 40 Siberian cranes have dwindled to only 2 or 3. During 2002-3 no cranes were seen and it is possible that this beautiful bird will never again come to India.

In the Thar desert, the wild life is protected in the **Desert National Park.** Here large numbers of black buck, neelgai and chinkara can be seen. The Great Indian Bustard lives in these arid lands.

Ranthambor was the most well known sanctuary for observing tigers in the wild till about 3 or 4 years ago. Since then many tigers have been killed by poachers.

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The Great and the Little Rann of Kutch have been made into sanctuaries to protect the very rare wild ass, the flamingo, the star tortoise and the desert fox.

In Gujarat, the Gir Sanctuary protects the last population of the majestic Asiatic lion. This thorn and deciduous forest is also the home of large herds of chital, sambhar, and nilgai.

The Sanctuaries of the Western Ghats and associated hill ranges protect some of the most diverse forest types in the country. The few examples of highly threatened species include the Malabar giant squirrel, the flying squirrel and a variety of hill birds, several species of amphibians, reptiles and insects. These regions are also rich in highly endemic plant life. Sanctuaries such as Bhimashankar, Koyana, Chandoli and Radhanagari preserve this rich flora in Maharashtra, Bandipur, Bhadra, Dandeli, Nagarhole, etc. in Karnataka, and Eraviculum, Perambiculum, Periyar, Silent Valley, in Kerala.

In the Nilgiri Hills the rich forest Sanctuaries protect some of the last pockets of the Indian elephant in South India. Examples include Bandipur, Madhumalai, Wynad and Bhadra. During the last 10 years, a large number of the great tusker elephants of this region have been ruthlessly killed for their ivory. Now very few of these magnificent animals are left in these jungles.

Two important sanctuaries meant for preservation of coastal ecosystems are the Chilka Lake and Point Calimere. The Sunderbans protect the largest mangrove delta in India. The Marine National Park in Gujarat protects shallow areas in the sea, islands, coral reefs and extensive mudflats.

Over a hundred Protected Areas have been created in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to preserve their very special island ecosystems.

CASE STUDY

Orissa – Olive Ridley Turtles

Every year at Gahirmatha and two other sites on the Orissa coast, hundreds of thousands of Olive Ridley turtles congregate on the beach, between December and April, for mass nesting. This was the largest nesting site for the Olive Ridleys in the world. In 1999 by the end of March it was estimated that around 200,000 turtles had nested at the Gahirmatha beach. Marine biologists believe that only one out of every 1000 eggs actually matures into an adult.

There are severe threats to these nesting sites. Shrinking nesting sites, construction of roads and buildings close to these rookeries, and other infrastructure development projects hamper nesting. Trawler fishing is another large threat to the turtles.

After its 'discovery' in 1974, the beach was notified as a Sanctuary (the Bhitarkanaika Sanctuary) and was closed for hunting. Recognising the threats to turtles from fishing by large trawlers, the Orissa Marine Fisheries Regulation Act was passed in 1982. This Act prohibits trawling within 10 km of the coastline throughout the state and makes it mandatory for all trawlers to use Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs). In 2001, the State Government of Orissa declared that a five month period between January to May should constitute a no-fishing season for a distance of 20 km from the coastline.

Apart form these initiatives, Operation Kachhapa is being coordinated by the Wildlife Protection Society of India, Delhi and Wildlife Society of Orissa with many local NGOs as partners. The Orissa Forest Department, WII, Dehra Dun and the Coast Guard are also involved in the Project.

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The need for an Integrated Protected Area System (IPAS): Protected Areas, to be effective, must be established in every biogeographic region. A relatively larger representation must be included of highly fragile ecosystems, areas of high species diversity or high endemism. Protected Areas must also be integrated with each other by establishing corridors between adjacent areas wherever possible so that wildlife can move between them.

In our country, which has a rapidly growing human population, it is not easily feasible to set aside more and more land to create Protected Areas. The need to provide a greater amount of land for agricultural and other needs has become an increasing cause of concern in land and resource management. This forms a major impediment for creating new Protected Areas. Having said this, there is an urgent need to add to our Protected Areas to preserve our very rich biological diversity. Much of the natural wilderness has already undergone extensive changes. The residual areas that have high levels of species richness, endemism or endangered plants and animals must be notified as National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries. Other areas can be made into Community Conserved Areas which are managed by local people.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources states that it is essential to include at least 10% of all ecosystems as Protected Areas if biodiversity is to be conserved in the long-term.

India has only 5% of land in its 589 Protected Areas in 2004. However much of this includes plantations of sal or teak, which were developed for timber in the past and are thus relatively poor in diversity and have a low level of 'naturalness'. There are only a few good grasslands left in our country that are notified as Protected Areas. Some are overgrazed wastelands in areas that were once flourishing grasslands. Most of these areas have a low biological value and need careful management to allow them to revert to a more 'natural' state, with their full complement of plants and animals. Only a few wetlands have been made into Sanctuaries. These require better management.

A major strategy to reduce impacts on the biodiversity of the PAs should be to provide a sustainable source of resources for local people living around them. A Protected Area curtails their traditional grazing practices and access fuelwood sources. These resources must be provided by developing them in buffer areas. Plantations of fuel wood and good grassland management in areas outside Protected Areas can help reduce the pressure on the habitat of wildlife in the Protected Area. Management must ensure that local people derive a direct economic benefit from the presence of the PA. Involving local people in Protected Area management and developing tourist facilities that support the income generation for local people helps in involving their support for the Protected Area.

A carefully designed management plan which incorporates an 'ecodevelopment' component aimed at providing a source of fuel wood, fodder and alternate income generation for local people, is an important aspect of PA management.

There are several species of plants and animals that survive without protection outside our current network of PAs. As it is not practical to notify more PAs without affecting the lives of people, alternate strategies such as Community Reserves or Community Conserved Areas need to be created. These should be managed by local people to bring about the conservation of biodiversity while using the area's resources in an equitable and sustainable way. A Community Conserved Area must have specific conservation goals that can be achieved without compromising the area's utilitarian potential.

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A major drive for conservation of biological diversity can only come from a mass environmental education program on the value of protecting our dwindling biological resources.

4.9.2 Ex-situ conservation

Conservation of a species is best done by protecting its habitat along with all the other species that live in it in nature. This is known as in-situ conservation, which is conserving a species in its own environment by creating National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries. However, there are situations in which an endangered species is so close to extinction that unless alternate methods are instituted, the species may be rapidly driven to extinction. This strategy is known as ex-situ conservation, i.e. outside its natural habitat in a carefully controlled situation such as a botanical garden for plants or a zoological park for animals, where there is expertise to multiply the species under artificially managed conditions. These breeding programs for rare plants and animals are however more expensive than managing a Protected Area.

There is also another form of preserving a plant by preserving its germ plasm in a gene bank so that it can be used if needed in future. This is even more expensive.

When an animal is on the brink of extinction, it must be carefully bred so that inbreeding does not lead to the genetic makeup becoming weak. Breeding from the same stock can lead to poorly adapted progeny or even inability to get enough offspring.

Modern breeding programs are done in zoos that provide for all the animal's needs, including enclosures that simulate their wild habitats. There may also be a need to assist breeding artificially. Thus while most zoos are meant to provide visitors with a visual experience of seeing a wild animal close up, and provide the visitors with information about the species, a modern zoo has to go beyond these functions that include breeding of endangered species as a conservation measure.

In India, successful ex situ conservation programs have been done for all our three species of crocodiles. This has been highly successful. Another recent success has been the breeding of the very rare pygmy hog in Gauhati zoo. Delhi zoo has successfully bred the rare Manipur brow antlered deer.

However the most important step of a successful breeding program is the reintroduction of a species into its original wild habitat. This requires rehabilitation of the degraded habitat and removal of the other causes such as poaching, disturbance, or other manmade influences that have been the primary cause of reducing the population of the species.

Conservation of cultivars and livestock breeds: There were an estimated thirty thousand varieties of rice grown in India till about 50 years ago. Now only a few of these are still grown. The new varieties which are now being cultivated everywhere have been developed using germ plasm of these original types of rice. If all the traditional varieties vanish completely it will be difficult to develop new disease resistant varieties of rice in the future. Several varieties have been preserved in gene banks. However, this is both very expensive and risky. Encouraging farmers to continue to grow several traditional varieties is thus an important concern for the future of mankind. At present gene bank collections have over 34 thousand cereals and 22 thousand pulses.

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CASE STUDY

Beej Bachao Andolan (Save the Seeds Movement)

This movement began in the Himalayan foothills. The members have collected seeds of diverse crops in Garhwal. The movement has successfully conserved hundreds of local rice varieties, rajma, pulses, millets, vegetables, spices and herbs. Many different varieties are being grown as an outcome of this program in local farmer's fields. This has also been supported by local women's groups who felt these varieties were better than those provided by the green revolution. In contrast, men who were interested in cash returns in a short time found it difficult to appreciate the benefits of growing indigenous varieties.

In the past, domestic animals were selected and bred for their ability to adapt to local conditions. Traditional agropastoralists in India have selectively bred livestock for 2 to 3 thousand years. India has 27 breeds of cattle, 40 breeds of sheep, 22 breeds of goats, and 8 breeds of buffaloes. These traditional breeds must be maintained for their genetic variability.

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UNIT 5:
Pollution

5.1 DEFINITION 112

5.2 CAUSES, EFFECTS AND CONTROL MEASURES OF: 113

5.2.1 Air Pollution 113

5.2.2 Water Pollution 123

5.2.3 Soil Pollution 131

5.2.4 Marine Pollution 135

5.2.5 Noise Pollution 140

5.2.6 Thermal Pollution 142

5.2.7 Nuclear hazards 143

5.3 SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT: CAUSES, EFFECTS AND CONTROL MEASURES OF URBAN AND INDUSTRIAL WASTE 145

5.4 ROLE OF INDIVIDUALS IN POLLUTION PREVENTION 150

5.5 POLLUTION CASE STUDIES 153

5.6 DISASTER MANAGEMENT: FLOODS, EARTHQUAKES, CYCLONES, LANDSLIDES 156

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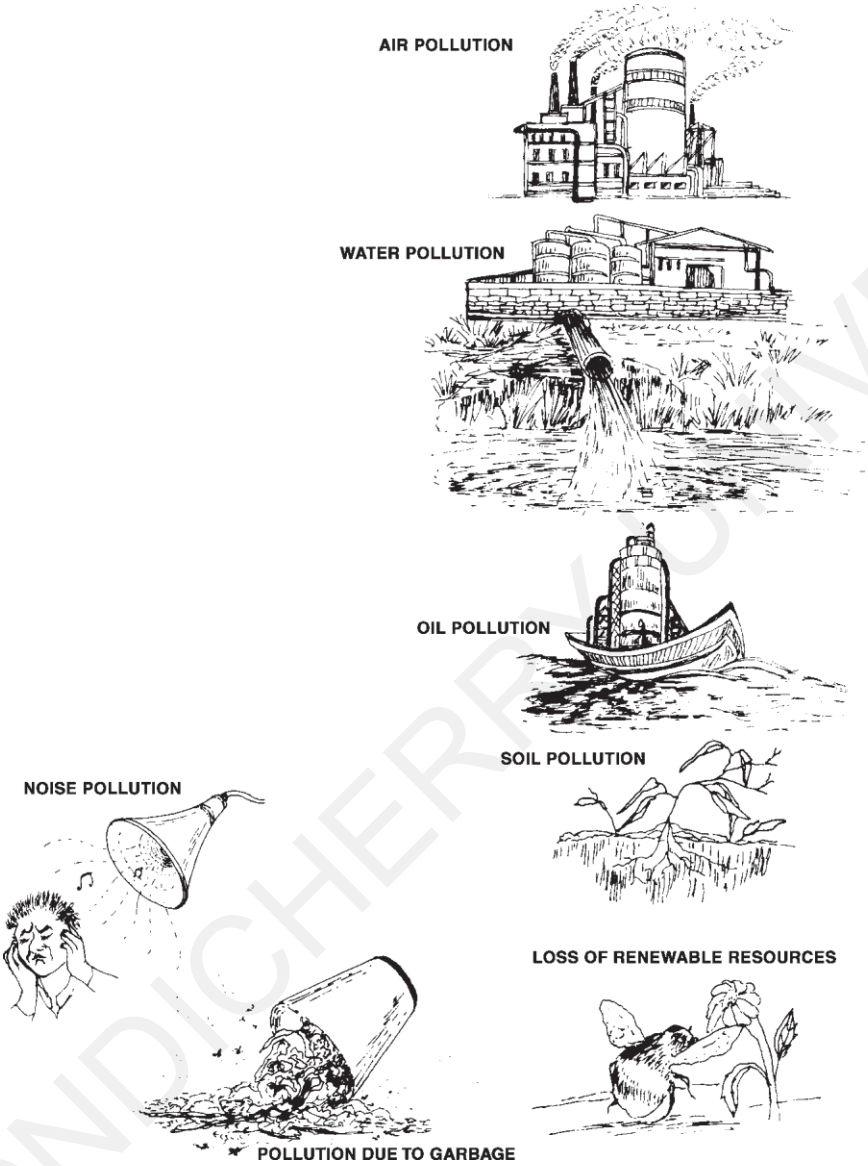

'We spray our elms, and the following spring, trees are silent of robin song, not because we sprayed the robins directly but because the poison traveled step by step through the now familiar elm-earthworm-robin cycle'

- *Rachael Carson*

This quotation appeared in Rachael Carson's book entitled Silent Spring. In the years following the publication of Silent Spring in 1962, the book has inspired controversy and has initiated a major change in thinking about the safety of using pesticides and other toxic chemicals.

5.1 DEFINITION

Pollution is the effect of undesirable changes in our surroundings that have harmful effects on plants, animals and human beings. This occurs

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when only short-term economic gains are made at the cost of the long-term ecological benefits for humanity. No natural phenomenon has led to greater ecological changes than have been made by mankind. During the last few decades we have contaminated our air, water and land on which life itself depends with a variety of waste products.

Pollutants include solid, liquid or gaseous substances present in greater than natural abundance produced due to human activity, which have a detrimental effect on our environment. The nature and concentration of a pollutant determines the severity of detrimental effects on human health. An average human requires about 12 kg of air each day, which is nearly 12 to15 times greater than the amount of food we eat. Thus even a small concentration of pollutants in the air becomes more significant in comparison to the similar levels present in food. Pollutants that enter water have the ability to spread to distant places especially in the marine ecosystem.

From an ecological perspective pollutants can be classified as follows:

Degradable or non-persistent pollutants: These can be rapidly broken down by natural processes. Eg: domestic sewage, discarded vegetables, etc.

Slowly degradable or persistent pollutants: Pollutants that remain in the environment for many years in an unchanged condition and take decades or longer to degrade. Eg: DDT and most plastics.

Non-degradable pollutants: These cannot be degraded by natural processes. Once they are released into the environment they are difficult to eradicate and continue to accumulate. Eg: toxic elements like lead or mercury.

5.2 CAUSES, EFFECTS AND CONTROL MEASURES OF POLLUTION

5.2.1 Air Pollution

History of air pollution: The origin of air pollution on the earth can be traced from the times when man started using firewood as a means of cooking and heating. Hippocrates has mentioned air pollution in 400 BC. With the discovery and increasing use of coal, air pollution became more pronounced especially in urban areas. It was recognized as a problem 700 years ago in London in the form of smoke pollution, which prompted King Edward I to make the first antipollution law to restrict people from using coal for domestic heating in the year 1273. In the year 1300 another Act banning the use of coal was passed. Defying the law led to imposition of capital punishment. In spite of this air pollution became a serious problem in London during the industrial revolution due to the use of coal in industries. The earliest recorded major disaster was the 'London Smog' that occurred in 1952 that resulted in more than 4000 deaths due to the accumulation of air pollutants over the city for five days.

In Europe, around the middle of the 19th century, a black form of the Peppered moth was noticed in industrial areas. Usually the normal Peppered moth is well camouflaged on a clean lichen covered tree. However the peppered pattern was easily spotted and picked up by birds on the smoke blackened bark of trees in the industrial area, while the black form remained well camouflaged. Thus while the peppered patterned moths were successful in surviving in clean non-industrial areas, the black coloured moths were successful in industrial areas. With the spread of industrialization, it has been observed that the black forms are not only see in Peppered moth, but also in many other moths. This is a classic case of pollution leading to adaptation.

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Air pollution began to increase in the beginning of the twentieth century with the development of the transportation systems and large-scale use of petrol and diesel. The severe air quality problems due to the formation of photochemical smog from the combustion residues of diesel and petrol engines were felt for the first time in Los Angeles. Pollution due to auto-exhaust remains a serious environmental issue in many developed and developing countries including India.

The Air Pollution Control Act in India was passed in 1981 and the Motor Vehicle Act for controlling the air pollution, very recently. These laws are intended to prevent air from being polluted.

The greatest industrial disaster leading to serious air pollution took place in Bhopal where extremely poisonous methyl isocyanide gas was accidentally released from the Union Carbide's pesticide manufacturing plant on the night of December 3rd 1984. The effects of this disaster on human health and the soil are felt even today.

Structure of the atmosphere

The atmosphere is normally composed of 79 percent nitrogen, 20 percent oxygen and one percent as a mixture of carbon dioxide, water vapour and trace amounts of several other gases such as neon, helium, methane, krypton, hydrogen and xenon. The general structure of the atmosphere has several important features that have relevance to environmental problems. The atmosphere is divided into several layers.

The innermost layer the *troposphere* extends 17 kilometers above sea level at the equator and about 8 kilometers over the poles. It contains about 75 percent of the mass of the earth's air. The fragility of this layer is obvious from the fact that if the earth were an apple this particular layer would be no thicker than an apple's skin. Temperature declines with altitude in the troposphere. At the top of the troposphere temperatures abruptly begin to rise. This boundary where this temperature reversal occurs is called the tropopause.

The tropopause marks the end of the troposphere and the beginning of the *stratosphere,* the second layer of the atmosphere. The stratosphere extends from 17 to 48 kilometers above the earth's surface. While the composition of the stratosphere is similar to that of the troposphere it has two major differences. The volume of water vapour here is about 1000 times less while the volume of ozone is about 1000 times greater. The presence of ozone in the stratosphere prevents about 99 percent of the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation from reaching the earth's surface thus protecting humans from cancer and damage to the immune system. This layer does not have clouds and hence airplanes fly in this layer as it creates less turbulence. Temperature rises with altitude in the stratosphere until there is another reversal. This point is called the stratopause and it marks the end of the stratosphere and the beginning of the atmosphere's next layer, the mesosphere.

In the *mesosphere* the temperature decreases with altitude falling up to –110 oC at the top. Above this is a layer where ionization of the gases is a major phenomenon, thus increasing the temperature. This layer is called the *thermosphere*. Only the lower troposphere is routinely involved in our weather and hence air pollution. The other layers are not significant in determining the level of air pollution.

Types and sources of Air Pollution

What is air pollution?

Air pollution occurs due to the presence of undesirable solid or gaseous particles in the air in quantities that are harmful to human health and the environment. Air may get polluted by natu-

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ral causes such as volcanoes, which release ash, dust, sulphur and other gases, or by forest fires that are occasionally naturally caused by lightning. However, unlike pollutants from human activity, naturally occurring pollutants tend to remain in the atmosphere for a short time and do not lead to permanent atmospheric change.

Pollutants that are emitted directly from identifiable sources are produced both by natural events (for example, dust storms and volcanic eruptions) and human activities (emission from vehicles, industries, etc.). These are called *primary pollutants*. There are five primary pollutants that together contribute about 90 percent of the global air pollution. These are carbon oxides (CO and CO2), nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides, volatile organic compounds (mostly hydrocarbons) and suspended particulate matter.

Pollutants that are produced in the atmosphere when certain chemical reactions take place among the primary pollutants are called *secondary pollutants*. Eg: sulfuric acid, nitric acid, carbonic acid, etc.

Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odorless and toxic gas produced when organic materials such as natural gas, coal or wood are incompletely burnt. Vehicular exhausts are the single largest source of carbon monoxide. The number of vehicles has been increasing over the years all over the world. Vehicles are also poorly maintained and several have inadequate pollution control equipment resulting in release of greater amounts of carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide is however not a persistent pollutant. Natural processes can convert carbon monoxide to other compounds that are not harmful. Therefore the air can be cleared of its carbon monoxide if no new carbon monoxide is introduced into the atmosphere.

Sulfur oxides are produced when sulfur containing fossil fuels are burnt.

Nitrogen oxides are found in vehicular exhausts. Nitrogen oxides are significant, as they are involved in the production of secondary air pollutants such as ozone.

Hydrocarbons are a group of compounds consisting of carbon and hydrogen atoms. They either evaporate from fuel supplies or are remnants of fuel that did not burn completely. Hydrocarbons are washed out of the air when it rains and run into surface water. They cause an oily film on the surface and do not as such cause a serious issue until they react to form secondary pollutants. Using higher oxygen concentrations in the fuel-air mixture and using valves to prevent the escape of gases, fitting of catalytic converters in automobiles, are some of the modifications that can reduce the release of hydrocarbons into the atmosphere.

Particulates are small pieces of solid material (for example, smoke particles from fires, bits of asbestos, dust particles and ash from industries) dispersed into the atmosphere. The effects of particulates range from soot to the carcinogenic (cancer causing) effects of asbestos, dust particles and ash from industrial plants that are dispersed into the atmosphere. Repeated exposure to particulates can cause them to accumulate in the lungs and interfere with the ability of the lungs to exchange gases.

Lead is a major air pollutant that remains largely unmonitored and is emitted by vehicles. High lead levels have been reported in the ambient air in metropolitan cities. Leaded petrol is the primary source of airborne lead emissions in Indian cities.

Pollutants are also found indoors from infiltration of polluted outside air and from various chemicals used or produced inside buildings. Both indoor and outdoor air pollution are equally harmful.

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Types of particulates

Term	Meaning	Examples
Aerosol	General term for particles suspended in air	Sprays from pressurized cans
Mist	Aerosol consisting of liquid droplets	Sulfuric acid mist
Dust	Aerosol consisting of solid particles that are blown into the air or are produced from larger particles by grinding them down	Dust storm
Smoke	Aerosol consisting of solid particles or a mixture of solid and liquid particles produced by chemical reaction such as fires	Cigarette smoke, smoke from burning garbage
Fume	Generally means the same as smoke but often applies specifically to aerosols produced by condensation of hot vapors of metals.	Zinc/lead fumes
Plume	Geometrical shape or form of the smoke coming out of a chimney	
Fog	Aerosol consisting of water droplets	
Smog	Term used to describe a mixture of smoke and fog.	

What happens to pollutants in the atmosphere?

Once pollutants enter the troposphere they are transported downwind, diluted by the large volume of air, transformed through either physical or chemical changes or are removed from the atmosphere by rain during which they are attached to water vapour that subsequently forms rain or snow that falls to the earth's surface. The atmosphere normally disperses pollutants by mixing them in the very large volume of air that covers the earth. This dilutes the pollutants to acceptable levels. The rate of dispersion however varies in relation to the following aspects:

Topography

Normally as the earth's surface becomes warmed by sunlight the layer of air in contact with the ground is also heated by convection. This warmer air is less dense than the cold air above it, so it rises. Thus pollutants produced in the surface layer are effectively dispersed.

However on a still evening, the process is reversed. An hour or two before sunset after a sunny day, the ground starts to lose heat and the air near the ground begins to cool rapidly. Due to the absence of wind, a static layer of cold air is produced as the ground cools. This in turn induces condensation of fog. The morning sun cannot initially penetrate this fog layer. The

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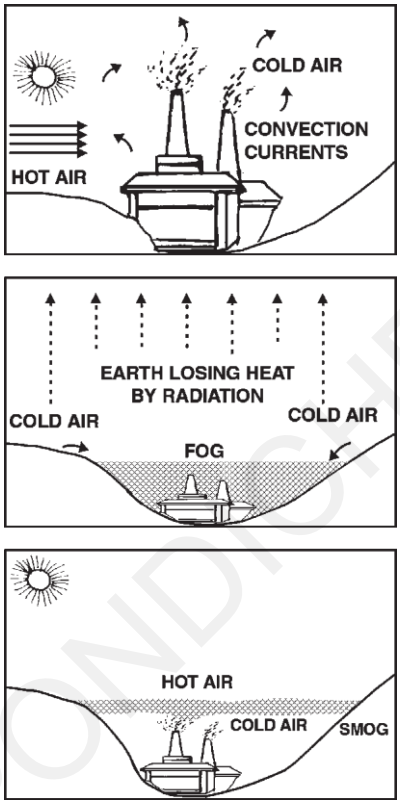
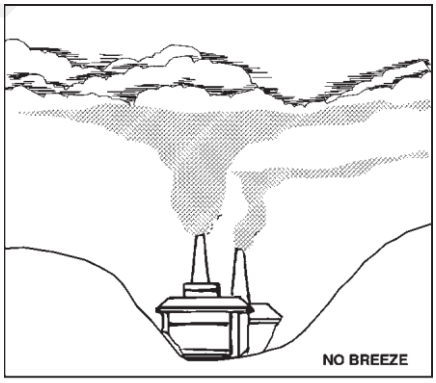
cold air being dense cannot rise and is trapped by the warm air above. It cannot move out of the area due to the surrounding hills. The topographic features resemble a closed chemical reactor in which the pollutants are trapped. This condition often continues through the cool night and reaches its maximum intensity before sunrise. When the morning sun warms the ground the air near the ground also warms up and rises within an hour or two. This may be broken up by strong winds. In cold regions this situation can persist for several days. Such a situation is known as smog (smoke + fog).

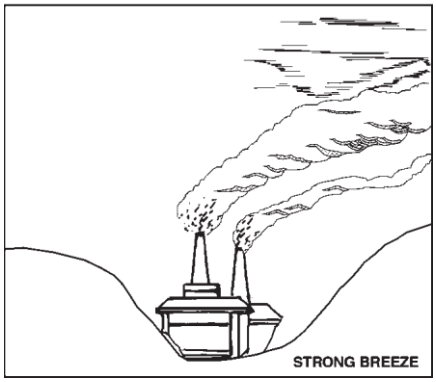


The most well known example is that of the 'London Smog' that occurred in 1952. The city used large quantities of sulphur containing coal for domestic heating that released smoke, along with smoke from thermal power plants and other industrial establishments. This used to lead to the generation of high levels of smoke containing sulphur oxides. Due to a sudden adverse meteorological condition air pollutants like smoke and sulphur oxides started to build-up in the atmosphere. The white fog accumulated over the city turned black forming a 'pea-soup' smog with almost zero visibility. Within two days of the formation of this smog, people started suffering from acute pulmonary disorders which caused irritation of bronchi, cough, nasal discharges, sore throat, vomiting and burning sensations in the eyes. This event lead to several deaths.

Meteorological conditions

The velocity of the wind affects the dispersal of pollutants. Strong winds mix polluted air more rapidly with the surrounding air diluting the pollutants rapidly. When wind velocity is low mixing takes place and the concentration of pollutants remains high.





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When sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides are transported by prevailing winds they form secondary pollutants such as nitric acid vapour, droplets of sulfuric acid and particles of sulphate and nitrate salts. These chemicals descend on the earth's surface in two forms: wet (as acidic rain, snow, fog and cloud vapour) and dry (as acidic particles). The resulting mixture is called acid deposition, commonly called *acid rain*.

Acid deposition has many harmful effects especially when the pH falls below 5.1 for terrestrial systems and below 5.5 for aquatic systems. It contributes to human respiratory diseases such as bronchitis and asthma, which can cause premature death. It also damages statues, buildings, metals and car finishes. Acid deposition can damage tree foliage directly but the most serious effect is weakening of trees so they become more susceptible to other types of damage. The nitric acid and the nitrate salts in acid deposition can lead to excessive soil nitrogen levels. This can over stimulate growth of other plants and intensify depletion of other important soil nutrients such as calcium and magnesium, which in turn can reduce tree growth and vigour.

Effects of air pollution on living organisms

Our respiratory system has a number of mechanisms that help in protecting us from air pollution. The hair in our nose filters out large particles. The sticky mucus in the lining of the upper respiratory tract captures smaller particles and dissolves some gaseous pollutants. When the upper respiratory system is irritated by pollutants sneezing and coughing expel contaminated air and mucus. Prolonged smoking or exposure to air pollutants can overload or breakdown these natural defenses causing or contributing to diseases such as lung cancer, asthma, chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Elderly people, infants, pregnant women and people with heart disease, asthma or other respiratory diseases are especially vulnerable to air pollution.

Cigarette smoking is responsible for the greatest exposure to carbon monoxide. Exposure to air containing even 0.001 percent of carbon monoxide for several hours can cause collapse, coma and even death. As carbon monoxide remains attached to hemoglobin in blood for a long time, it accumulates and reduces the oxygen carrying capacity of blood. This impairs perception and thinking, slows reflexes and causes headaches, drowsiness, dizziness and nausea. Carbon monoxide in heavy traffic causes headaches, drowsiness and blurred vision.

Sulfur dioxide irritates respiratory tissues. Chronic exposure causes a condition similar to bronchitis. It also reacts with water, oxygen and other material in the air to form sulfur-containing acids. The acids can become attached to particles which when inhaled are very corrosive to the lung.

Nitrogen oxides especially NO_2 can irritate the lungs, aggravate asthma or chronic bronchitis and also increase susceptibility to respiratory infections such as influenza or common colds.

Suspended particles aggravate bronchitis and asthma. Exposure to these particles over a long period of time damages lung tissue and contributes to the development of chronic respiratory disease and cancer.

Many volatile organic compounds such as (benzene and formaldehyde) and toxic particulates (such as lead, cadmium) can cause mutations, reproductive problems or cancer. Inhaling ozone, a component of photochemical smog causes coughing, chest pain, breathlessness and irritation of the eye, nose and the throat.

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Effects on plants

When some gaseous pollutants enter leaf pores they damage the leaves of crop plants. Chronic exposure of the leaves to air pollutants can break down the waxy coating that helps prevent excessive water loss and leads to damage from diseases, pests, drought and frost. Such exposure interferes with photosynthesis and plant growth, reduces nutrient uptake and causes leaves to turn yellow, brown or drop off altogether. At a higher concentration of sulphur dioxide majority of the flower buds become stiff and hard. They eventually fall from the plants, as they are unable to flower.

Prolonged exposure to high levels of several air pollutants from smelters, coal burning power plants and industrial units as well as from cars and trucks can damage trees and other plants.

Effects of air pollution on materials

Every year air pollutants cause damage worth billions of rupees. Air pollutants break down exterior paint on cars and houses. All around the world air pollutants have discoloured irreplaceable monuments, historic buildings, marble statues, etc.

Effects of air pollution on the stratosphere

The upper stratosphere consists of considerable amounts of ozone, which works as an effective screen for ultraviolet light. This region called the ozone layer extends up to 60 kms above the surface of the earth. Though the ozone is present upto 60 kms its greatest density remains in the region between 20 to 25 kms. The ozone layer does not consist of solely ozone but a mixture of other common atmospheric gases. In the most dense ozone layer there will be only one ozone molecule in 100,000 gas molecules. Therefore even small changes in the ozone concentration can produce dramatic effects on life on earth.

The total amount of ozone in a 'column' of air from the earth's surface upto an altitude of 50 km is the *total column ozone*. This is recorded in *Dobson Units (DU),* a measure of the thickness of the ozone layer by an equivalent layer of pure ozone gas at normal temperature and pressure at sea level. This means that 100 DU=1mm of pure ozone gas at normal temperature and pressure at sea level.

Ozone is a form of oxygen with three atoms instead of two. It is produced naturally from the photodissociation of oxygen gas molecules in the atmosphere. The ozone thus formed is constantly broken down by naturally occurring processes that maintain its balance in the ozone layer. In the absence of pollutants the creation and breakdown of ozone are purely governed by natural forces, but the presence of certain pollutants can accelerate the breakdown of ozone. Though it was known earlier that ozone shows fluctuations in its concentrations which may be accompanied sometimes with a little ozone depletion, it was only in 1985 that the large scale destruction of the ozone also called the Ozone Hole came into limelight when some British researchers published measurements about the ozone layer.

Soon after these findings a greater impetus was given to research on the ozone layer, which convincingly established that CFC's were leading to its depletion. These CFCs (chloro-fluro-carbons) are extremely stable, non-flammable, non-toxic and harmless to handle. This makes them ideal for many industrial applications like aerosols, air conditioners, refrigerators and fire extinguishers. Many cans, which give out foams and sprays, use CFCs. (eg: perfumes, room fresheners, etc.) CFCs are also used in making foams for mattresses and cushions, disposable Styrofoam cups, glasses, packaging material for insulation, cold storage etc. However their sta-

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bility also gives them a long life span in the atmosphere.

Halons are similar in structure to the CFCs but contain bromine atoms instead of chlorine. They are more dangerous to the ozone layer than CFCs. Halons are used as fire extinguishing agents as they do not pose a harm to people and equipment exposed to them during fire fighting.

The CFCs and the halons migrate into the upper atmosphere after they are released. As they are heavier than air they have to be carried by air currents up to just above the lower atmosphere and then they slowly diffuse into the upper atmosphere. This is a slow process and can take as long as five to fifteen years. In the stratosphere unfiltered UV-radiation severs the chemical bonds releasing chlorine from the rest of the CFC. This attacks the ozone molecule resulting in its splitting into an oxygen molecule and an oxygen atom.

Despite the fact that CFCs are evenly distribute over the globe, the ozone depletion is especially pronounced over the South Pole due to the extreme weather conditions in the Antarctic atmosphere. The presence of the ice crystals makes the Cl-O bonding easier. The ozone layer over countries like Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and parts of South America is also depleted.

India has signed the Montreal Protocol in 1992, which aims to control the production and consumption of Ozone Depleting Substances.

Ozone depletion-What does it do?

Changes in the ozone layer have serious implications for mankind.

Effects on human health: Sunburn, cataract, aging of the skin and skin cancer are caused by increased ultra-violet radiation. It weakens the immune system by suppressing the resistance of the whole body to certain infections like measles, chicken pox and other viral diseases that elicit rash and parasitic diseases such as malaria introduced through the skin.

Food production: Ultra violet radiation affects the ability of plants to capture light energy during the process of photosynthesis. This reduces the nutrient content and the growth of plants. This is seen especially in legumes and cabbage.

Plant and animal planktons are damaged by ultra-violet radiation. In zooplanktons (microscopic animals) the breeding period is shortened by changes in radiation. As planktons form the basis of the marine food chain a change in their number and species composition influences fish and shell fish production.

Effect on materials: Increased UV radiation damages paints and fabrics, causing them to fade faster.

Effect on climate: Atmospheric changes induced by pollution contribute to global warming, a phenomenon which is caused due to the increase in concentration of certain gases like carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, methane and CFCs. Observations of the earth have shown beyond doubt that atmospheric constituents such as water vapour, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and Chloro Fluro Carbons trap heat in the form of infra-red radiation near the earth's surface. This is known as the **'Greenhouse Effect'.** The phenomenon is similar to what happens in a greenhouse. The glass in a greenhouse allows solar radiation to enter which is absorbed by the objects inside. These objects radiate heat in the form of terrestrial radiation, which does not pass out through the glass. The heat is therefore trapped in the greenhouse increasing the temperature inside and ensuring the luxuriant growth of plants.

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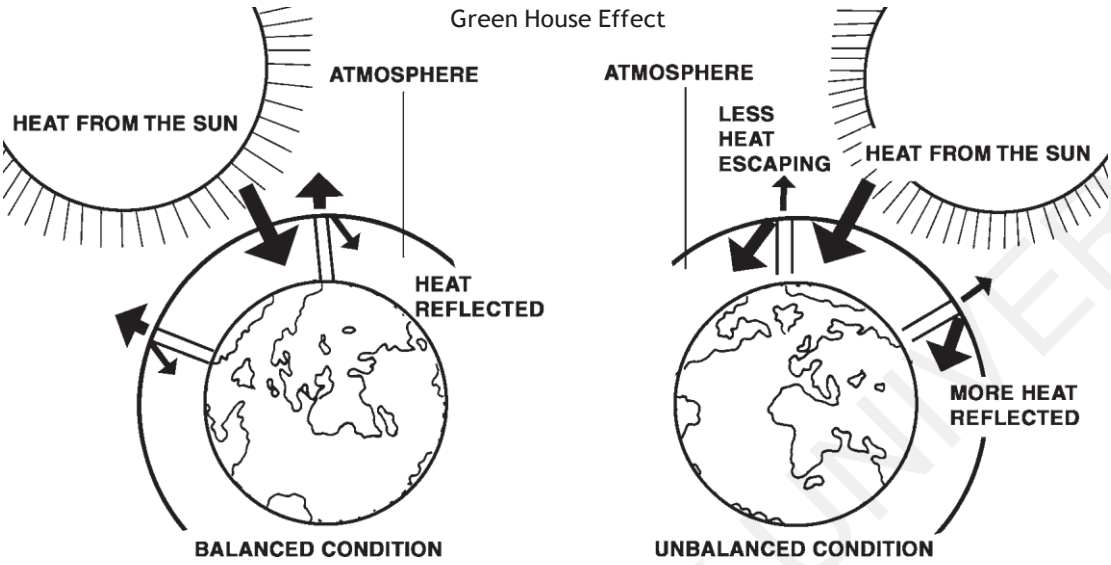

There could be several adverse effects of global warming.

- With a warmer earth the polar ice caps will melt causing a rise in ocean levels and flooding of coastal areas.
- In countries like Bangladesh or the Maldives this would be catastrophic. If the sea level rises by 3m., Maldives will disappear completely beneath the waves.
- The rise in temperature will bring about a fall in agricultural produce.
- Changes in the distribution of solar energy can bring about changes in habitats. A previously productive agricultural area will suffer severe droughts while rains will fall in locations that were once deserts. This could bring about changes in the species of natural plants, agricultural crops, insects, livestock and micro-organisms.
- In the polar regions temperature rises caused by global warming would have disastrous effects. Vast quantities of methane are trapped beneath the frozen soil of Alaska. When the permafrost melts the methane that will be released can accelerate the process of global warming.

Control measures for air pollution

Air pollution can be controlled by two fundamental approaches: preventive techniques and effluent control.

One of the effective means of controlling air pollution is to have proper equipment in place. This includes devices for removal of pollutants from the flue gases though scrubbers, closed collection recovery systems through which it is possible to collect the pollutants before they escape, use of dry and wet collectors, filters, electrostatic precipitators, etc. Providing a greater height to the stacks can help in facilitating the discharge of pollutants as far away from the ground as possible. Industries should be located in places so as to minimize the effects of pollution after considering the topography and the wind directions. Substitution of raw material that causes more

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pollution with those that cause less pollution can be done.

Air pollution in India

The World health Organization (WHO) which rates only mega cities of the world has rated Delhi the fourth most polluted city ion the world. However compared to other cities in India, Delhi is not at the top of the list of polluted cities. Our country has several pollution hotspots. The recent release from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), *Parivesh,* January 2003 states that Ahmedabad's air is most noxious flowed by Kanpur, Solapur and Lucknow with small particulate levels (PM10) 3-4 times the standard of 60 microgram per cubic meter (mg/m^3). The report has ranked 29 cities according to Respirable Particulate Matter (RSPM) levels recorded during the year 2000. This report thus confirms the fact that Indian cities show high particulate pollution with 14 cities hitting critical levels.

Nitrogen dioxide levels in most major cities are generally close to the acceptable annual standard of 60 mg/m^3. However sharp increases have been noticed in a few cities with heavy vehicular traffic and density as in a few locations in Kolkata and Delhi indicating stronger impact of traffic. The CPCB indicates vehicles as one of the predominant sources of air pollution. However the impact of hard measures implemented in Delhi over the last few years such as introduction of Euro II standards, lowering the sulphur content in fuel to 500 ppm and implementing Compressed Natural Gas program has succeeded in improving the quality of air. Rapid urbanization of smaller cities especially those situated near the big commercial centers have an enormous increase in traffic load especially in the most polluted segment such as two and three wheelers and diesel vehicles combined with poor quality fuel contribute to the deteriorating air quality in a big way.

It is alarming to note that residential locations in India are fast outpacing industrial locations in air pollution implying that vehicular fumes are responsible for this trend. The Supreme Court's order of April 5, 2002 has directed the Central Government for an action plan for other polluted cities. Absence of any local initiatives for action and delay in air pollution control measures will only make the situation worse.

The Supreme Court also played a vital role protecting the Taj Mahal. Being exposed to sulphur dioxide and suspended particulate matter, the Taj had contracted 'marble cancer', a fungal growth that corroded its surface giving it a yellowish tinge. The SPM deposits blackened it. Shri MC Mehta an environmental lawyer filed a public interest litigation in 1984 expressing concern over the havoc the polluting units in Agra were wreaking on the Taj Mahal. Twelve years later the Supreme Court ordered 292 industries in the vicinity to either adopt pollution control measures or shut down. It also made it mandatory for these units to either switch over to eco-friendly fuels like natural gas or shift out of the area.

Air quality monitoring

India does not presently have a well established system of monitoring air pollution. When air quality monitoring began in India in the late 1960s planners focused only on a few pollutants namely sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and suspended particulate matter. Other pollutants such as carbon monoxide and lead were monitored only on a limited scale. The threat from other air toxins such as benzene, ozone, other small particulates is not known as these are not monitored at all. A database on ambient air quality in Indian cities has been prepared by the monitoring networks of the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Nagpur. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) initiated its own national Ambient Air Quality Monitoring (NAAQM) program in 1985.

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Ambient air quality standards in India developed by the Central Pollution Control Board

Area Category	SPM µg/m3	SO2 µg/m3	Co µg/m3	NOx µg/m3
Industrial and mixed use	500	120	5000	120
Residential and rural	200	80	2000	80
Sensitive	100	3	1000	30

Data to the NAAQM is supplied by the respective state pollution control boards, which is then transmitted to the CPCB. Experts feel that the present air quality-monitoring network cannot capture the true profile of urban air pollution due to the lack of adequate monitoring stations. Moreover critical toxins have still not been included in the list of pollutants to be monitored.

Legal aspects of air pollution control in India

The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act was legislated in 1981. The Act provided for prevention, control and abatement of air pollution. In areas notified under this Act no industrial pollution causing activity could come up without the permission of the concerned State Pollution Control Board. But this Act was not strong enough to play a precautionary or a corrective role. After the Bhopal disaster, a more comprehensive Environment Protection Act (EPA) was passed in 1986. This Act for the first time conferred enforcement agencies with necessary punitive powers to restrict any activity that can harm the environment. To regulate vehicular pollution the Central Motor Vehicles Act of 1939 was amended in 1989. Following this amendment the exhaust emission rules for vehicle owners were notified in 1990 and the mass emission standards for vehicle manufacturers were enforced in 1991 for the first time. The mass emission norms have been further revised for 2000.

Air quality management as a well-defined program has yet to emerge in India. We need a much more strengthened air quality management with continuous monitoring of air if we are to have a better quality of air. This would also need an integrated approach with strict air pollution control laws. Some of the suggestions for doing this include:

- Putting a greater emphasis on pollution prevention rather than control
- Reducing the use of fossil fuels
- Improving the quality of vehicular fuel
- Increasing the use of renewable energy

5.2.2 Water Pollution

> Our liquid planet glows like a soft blue sapphire in the hard-edged darkness of space. There is nothing else like it in the solar system. It is because of water.
>
> *- John Todd*

Introduction: Water is the essential element that makes life on earth possible. Without water there would be no life. We usually take water for granted. It flows from our taps when they are turned on. Most of us are able to bathe when we want to, swim when we choose and water

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our gardens. Like good health we ignore water when we have it.

Although 71% of the earth's surface is covered by water only a tiny fraction of this water is available to us as fresh water. About 97% of the total water available on earth is found in oceans and is too salty for drinking or irrigation. The remaining 3% is fresh water. Of this 2.997% is locked in ice caps or glaciers. Thus only 0.003% of the earth' total volume of water is easily available to us as soil moisture, groundwater, water vapour and water in lakes, streams, rivers and wetlands.

In short if the world's water supply were only 100 litres our usable supply of fresh water would be only about 0.003 litres (one-half teaspoon). This makes water a very precious resource. The future wars in our world may well be fought over water. By the middle of this century, almost twice as many people will be trying to share the same amount of fresh water the earth has today. As freshwater becomes more scarce access to water resources will be a major factor in determining the economic growth of several countries around the world.

Water availability on the planet: Water that is found in streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands and artificial reservoirs is called surface water. Water that percolates into the ground and fills the pores in soil and rock is called groundwater. Porous water-saturated layers of sand, gravel or bedrock through which ground water flows are called aquifers. Most aquifers are replenished naturally by rainfall that percolates downward through the soil and rock. This process is called natural recharge. If the withdrawal rate of an aquifer exceeds its natural recharge rate, the water table is lowered. Any pollutant that is discharged onto the land above is also pulled into the aquifer and pollutes the groundwater resulting in polluted water in the nearby wells.

India receives most of her rainfall during the months of June to September due to the seasonal winds and the temperature differences between the land and the sea. These winds blow from the opposite directions in the different seasons. They blow into India from the surrounding oceans during the summer season and blow out from the subcontinent to the oceans during the winter. The monsoon in India is usually reasonably stable but varies geographically. In some years the commencement of the rains may be delayed considerably over the entire country or a part of it. The rains may also terminate earlier than usual. They may be heavier than usual over one part than over another. All these may cause local floods or drought. However in India even areas that receive adequate rainfall during the monsoon suffer from water shortages in the post monsoon period due to lack of storage facilities.

When the quality or composition of water changes directly or indirectly as a result of man's activities such that it becomes unfit for any purpose it is said to be polluted.

Point sources of pollution: When a source of pollution can be readily identified because it has a definite source and place where it enters the water it is said to come from a point source. Eg. Municipal and Industrial Discharge Pipes.

When a source of pollution cannot be readily identified, such as agricultural runoff, acid rain, etc, they are said to be non-point sources of pollution.

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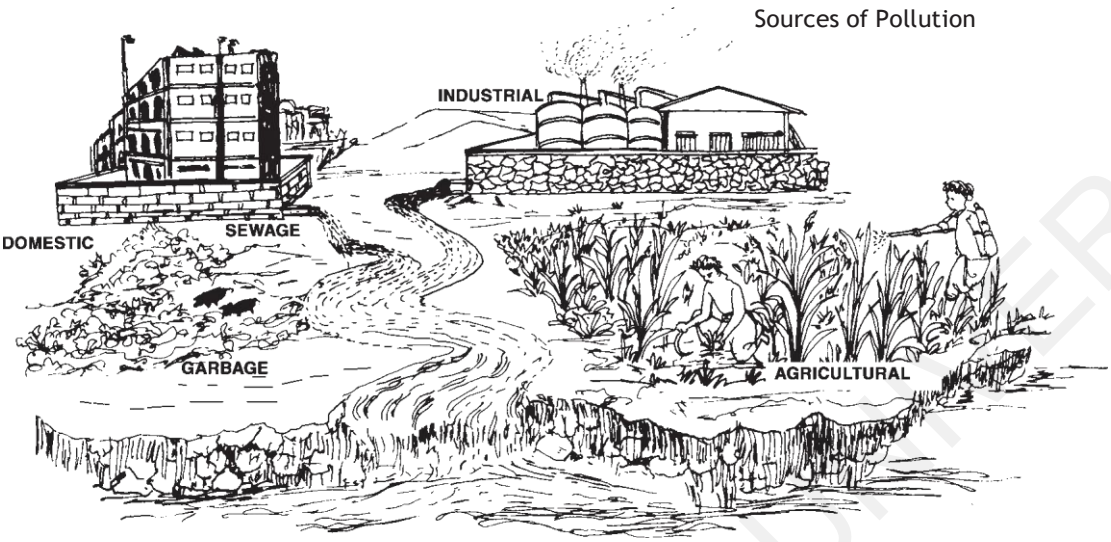
Sources of Pollution



Causes of water pollution

There are several classes of common water pollutants. These are **disease-causing agents** (pathogens) which include bacteria, viruses, protozoa and parasitic worms that enter water from domestic sewage and untreated human and animal wastes. Human wastes contain concentrated populations of coliform bacteria such as *Escherichia coli* and *Streptococcus faecalis*. These bacteria normally grow in the large intestine of humans where they are responsible for some food digestion and for the production of vitamin K. These bacteria are not harmful in low numbers. Large amounts of human waste in water, increases the number of these bacteria which cause gastrointestinal diseases. Other potentially harmful bacteria from human wastes may also be present in smaller numbers. Thus the greater the amount of wastes in the water the greater are the chances of contracting diseases from them.

Another category of water pollutants is **oxygen depleting wastes.** These are organic wastes that can be decomposed by aerobic (oxygen requiring) bacteria. Large populations of bacteria use up the oxygen present in water to degrade these wastes. In the process this degrades water quality. The amount of oxygen required to break down a certain amount of organic matter is called the biological oxygen demand (BOD). The amount of BOD in the water is an indicator of the level of pollution. If too much organic matter is added to the water all the available oxygen is used up. This causes fish and other forms of oxygen dependent aquatic life to die. Thus anaerobic bacteria (those that do not require oxygen) begin to break down the wastes. Their anaerobic respiration produces chemicals that have a foul odour and an unpleasant taste that is harmful to human health.

A third class of pollutants are **inorganic plant nutrients**. These are water soluble nitrates and phosphates that cause excessive growth of algae and other aquatic plants. The excessive growth of algae and aquatic plants due to added nutrients is called eutrophication. They may interfere with the use of the water by clogging water intake pipes, changing the taste and odour of water and cause a buildup of organic matter. As the organic matter decays, oxygen levels decrease and fish and other aquatic species die.

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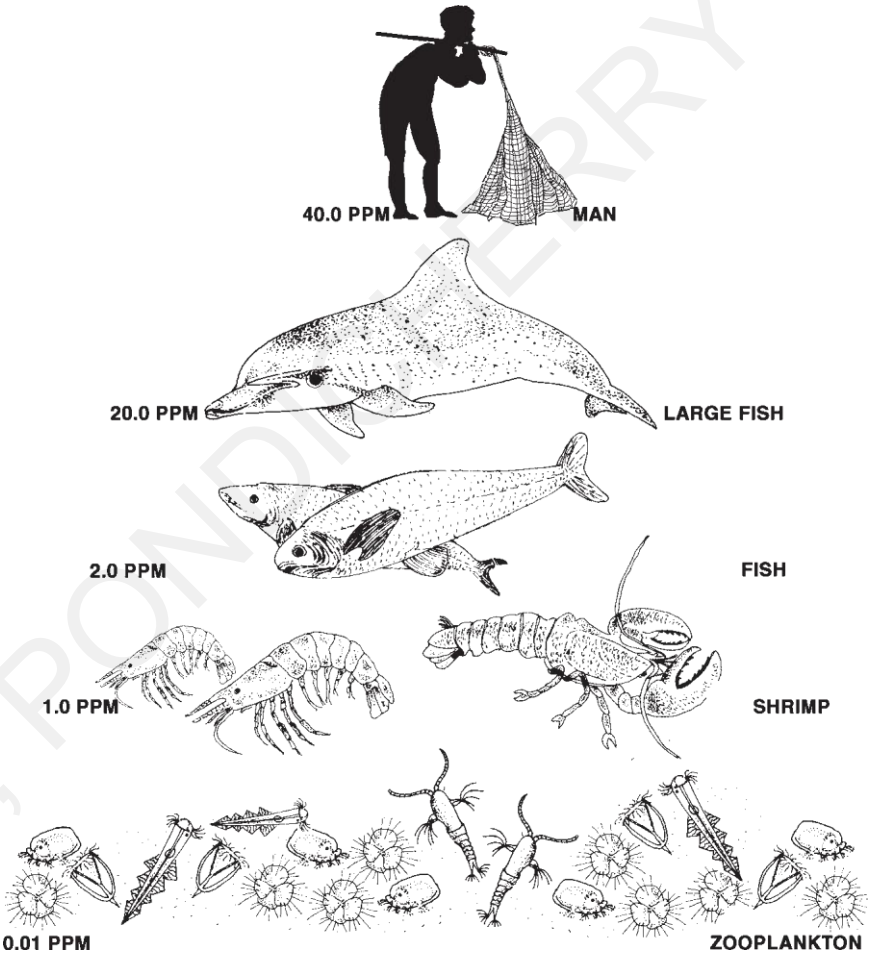
The quantity of fertilizers applied in a field is often many times more than is actually required by the plants. The chemicals in fertilizers and pesticides pollute soil and water. While excess fertilizers cause eutrophication, pesticides cause bioaccumulation and biomagnification. Pesticides which enter water bodies are introduced into the aquatic food chain. They are then absorbed by the phytoplanktons and aquatic plants. These plants are eaten by the herbivorous fish which are in turn eaten by the carnivorous fish which are in turn eaten by the water birds. At each link in the food chain these chemicals which do not pass out of the body are accumulated and increasingly concentrated resulting in biomagnification of these harmful substances.

One of the effects of accumulation of high levels of pesticides such as DDT is that birds lay eggs with shells that are much thinner than normal. This results in the premature breaking of these eggs, killing the chicks inside. Birds of prey such as hawks, eagles and other fish eating birds are affected by such pollution. Although DDT has been banned in India for agricultural use and is to be used only for malaria eradication, it is still used in the fields as it is cheap.

A fourth class of water pollutants is water soluble inorganic chemicals which are acids, salts and compounds of toxic metals such as mercury and lead. High levels of these chemicals can make the water unfit to drink, harm



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fish and other aquatic life, reduce crop yields and accelerate corrosion of equipment that use this water.

Another cause of water pollution is a variety of organic chemicals, which include oil, gasoline, plastics, pesticides, cleaning solvents, detergent and many other chemicals. These are harmful to aquatic life and human health. They get into the water directly from industrial activity either from improper handling of the chemicals in industries and more often from improper and illegal disposal of chemical wastes.

Sediment of suspended matter is another class of water pollutants. These are insoluble particles of soil and other solids that become suspended in water. This occurs when soil is eroded from the land. High levels of soil particles suspended in water, interferes with the penetration of sunlight. This reduces the photosynthetic activity of aquatic plants and algae disrupting the ecological balance of the aquatic bodies. When the velocity of water in streams and rivers decreases the suspended particles settle down at the bottom as sediments. Excessive sediments that settle down destroys feeding and spawning grounds of fish, clogs and fills lakes, artificial reservoirs etc.

Water soluble radioactive isotopes are yet another source of water pollution. These can be concentrated in various tissues and organs as they pass through food chains and food webs. Ionizing radiation emitted by such isotopes can cause birth defects, cancer and genetic damage.

Hot water let out by power plants and industries that use large volumes of water to cool the plant result in rise in temperature of the local water bodies. Thermal pollution occurs when industry returns the heated water to a water source. Power plants heat water to convert it into steam, to drive the turbines that generate electricity. For efficient functioning of the steam turbines, the steam is condensed into water after it leaves the turbines. This condensation is done by taking water from a water body to absorb the heat. This heated water, which is at least 15oC higher than the normal is discharged back into the water body. The warm water not only decreases the solubility of oxygen but changes the breeding cycles of various aquatic organisms.

Oil is washed into surface water in runoff from roads and parking lots which also pollutes groundwater. Leakage from underground tanks

CASE STUDY

One of the worst oil spill disasters that have occurred is that of the Exxon Valdez. On 24th march 1989 the Exxon Valdez, a tanker more than three football fields wide went off course in a 16 kilometer wide channel in Prince William Sound near Valdez in Alaska. It hit submerged rocks, creating an environmental disaster. The rapidly spreading oil slick coated more than 1600 kilometers of shoreline killing between 300,000 and 645,000 water birds and a large number of sea otters, harbor seals, whales and fishes. Exxon spent $ 2.2. billion directly on the clean-up operations. However some results of the cleanup effort showed that where high pressure jets of hot water were used to clean beaches coastal plants and animals that had survived the spill were killed. Thus it did more harm than good. Exxon pleaded guilty in 1991 and agreed to pay the Federal Government and the state of Alaska $ 1 billion in fines and civil damages. This $8.5 billion accident might have been prevented if Exxon had spent only $22.5 million to fit the tanker with a double hull-one inside the other. Such double hulled vessels would be less likely to rupture and spill their contents. The spill highlighted the need for marine pollution prevention.

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is another source of pollution. Accidental oil spills from large transport tankers at sea have been causing significant environmental damage.

Though accidents such as the *Exxon Valdez* get worldwide attention, much more oil is released as a result of small, regular releases from other less visible sources. Nearly two thirds of all marine oil pollution comes from three sources: run-off from streets, improper discharge of lubricating oil from machines or automobile crankcases and intentional oil discharges that occur during the loading and unloading of tankers. Oil tankers often use sea water as ballast to stabilize the ship after they have discharged their oil. This oil contaminated water is then discharged back into the sea when the tanker is refilled.

Groundwater pollution: While oil spills are highly visible and often get a lot of media attention, a much greater threat to human life comes from our groundwater being polluted which is used for drinking and irrigation. While groundwater is easy to deplete and pollute it gets renewed very slowly and hence must be used judiciously. Groundwater flows are slow and not turbulent hence the contaminants are not effectively diluted and dispersed as compared to surface water. Moreover pumping groundwater and treating it is very slow and costly. Hence it is extremely essential to prevent the pollution of groundwater in the first place. Ground water is polluted due to:

- Urban run-off of untreated or poorly treated waste water and garbage
- Industrial waste storage located above or near aquifers
- Agricultural practices such as the application of large amounts of fertilizers and pesticides, animal feeding operations, etc. in the rural sector
- Leakage from underground storage tanks containing gasoline and other hazardous substances
- Leachate from landfills
- Poorly designed and inadequately maintained septic tanks
- Mining wastes

Severe cases of arsenic poisoning from contaminated groundwater have been reported from West Bengal in what is known today as the worst case of groundwater pollution. The School of Environmental Sciences, Jadhavpur University, West Bengal has been involved in the task of surveying the magnitude of the arsenic problem in West Bengal for the last fourteen years. According to a report in the Down to Earth (Vol. 11, No.22), arsenic poisoning was first noticed by K C Saha, former professor of dermatology at the School of Tropical Medicine, Kolkata when he began to receive patients with skin lesions that resembled the symptoms of leprosy which was in reality not leprosy. Since all the patients were from the district of 24-Parganas, Saha along with others began to look for the cause and found it to be arsenic toxicity. Thus groundwater arsenic contamination in West Bengal was first reported in a local daily newspaper in December 1983 when 63 people from three villages located in different districts were identified by health officials as suffering from arsenic poisoning.

There are two theories that have been put forth to explain this unusually high content of arsenic in groundwater. One group of researchers suggested that the cause is natural while the other stated that the cause is man-made.

According to the first hypothesis, arsenic probably originates in the Himalayan headwaters of the Ganga and the Brahmaputra rivers and has been lying undisturbed beneath the surface of

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the region's deltas for thousands of years in the thick layers of fine alluvial mud across the banks of these rivers. Most of the arsenic affected areas of West Bengal lie in the alluvial plains formed in the quarternary period (last 1.6 million years).The Purulia district of West Bengal is part of the extensive area of the Precambrian era (last 570 million year) having metamorphic rocks and granites with widespread sulphide mineralisation. Researchers from the UK based British Geological Survey (BGS) suggested that their position close to where the river Ganga enters Bangladesh (geologically) may be the primary source of arsenic in the Bengal alluvium. According to David Kinniburgh project leader with BGS the main factor is time. The mud in these areas is thicker, wider and flatter than almost anywhere else on earth. It can thus take hundreds or thousands of years for underground water to percolate through the mud before reaching the sea and thus it absorbs arsenic for a long period.

Other researchers feel that the excess amount of arsenic in groundwater can be contributed to by the high rate of groundwater extraction. Their hypothesis called the pyrite oxidation thesis describes how arsenic can get mobilized in the groundwater. In this hypothesis arsenic is assumed to be present in certain minerals (pyrites) that are deposited within the aquifer sediments. Due to the lowering of the water table below the deposits, arseno-pyrite which is oxidized in a zone of the aquifer called the Vadose zone releases arsenic as arsenic adsorbed on iron hydroxide. During the subsequent recharge period, iron hydroxide releases arsenic into groundwater. This theory is supported by two arguments. The first is the intensive irrigation development in West Bengal using deep tube wells and shallow tube wells. This method of extraction, which was exactly in the 20m to 100m below ground level ensured, increased contribution of groundwater to irrigation. The other argument that supports the pyrite oxidation theory is that prior to irrigation development and drinking water supply schemes based on groundwater there were no reported cases of arsenic poisoning.

Arsenicosis or arsenic toxicity develops after two to five years of exposure to arsenic contaminated drinking water depending on the amount of water consumption and the arsenic concentration in water. Initially the skin begins to darken (called diffuse melanosis) which later leads to spotted melanosis when darkened sports begin to appear on the chest, back and limbs. At a later stage leucomelanosis sets in and the body begins to show black and white spots. In the middle stage of arsenicosis the skin in parts becomes hard and fibrous. Rough, dry skin with nodules on hands or the soles of feet indicate severe toxicity. This can lead to the formation of gangrene and cancer. Arsenic poisoning brings with it other complications such as liver and spleen enlargement, cirrhosis of the liver, diabetes, goiter and skin cancers.

The state of India's rivers

India has always had a tradition of worshipping rivers. Most of the rivers in India are named after gods, goddesses or saints. However a large majority of the Indian population including those who worship the rivers do not think twice before polluting a river. Urbanization, industrialization, excess withdrawal of water, agricultural run-off, improper agricultural practices and various religious and social practices all contribute to river pollution in India. Every single river in India be it the Ganga, Yamuna, Cauvery or the Krishna have their own share of problems due to pollution. Waters from the Ganga and the Yamuna are drawn for irrigation through the network of canals as soon as these rivers reach the plains reducing the amount of water that flows downstream. What flows in the river is water from small nalas, and streams that carry with them sewage and industrial effluents. The residual freshwater, is unable to dilute the pol-

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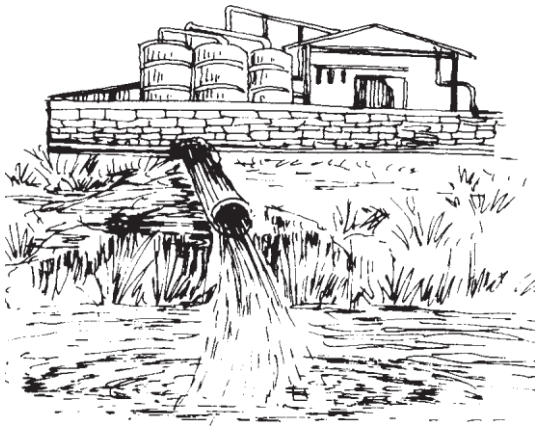
lutants and the rivers turn into stinking sewers. In spite of data from scientifically competent studies conducted by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the Government has not been able to tackle this issue. Sewage and municipal effluents account for 75% of the pollution load in rivers while the remaining 25% is from industrial effluents and non-point pollution sources.

In 1985, India launched the Ganga Action plan (GAP) the largest ever river clean-up operation in the country. The plan has been criticized for, overspending and slow progress. The GAP Phase II in 1991 included cleaning operations for the tributaries of the Ganga, ie; the Yamuna, Gomti and the Damodar. Thus the Yamuna Action Plan (YAP), Gomti Action Plan and the Damodar Action plan were added.

In 1995 the National River Conservation plan was launched. Under this all the rivers in India were taken up for clean-up operations. In most of these plans, attempts have been made to tap drains, divert sewage to sewage treatment plants before letting out the sewage into the rivers. The biggest drawback of these river cleaning programs was that they failed to pin responsibilities as to who would pay for running the treatment facilities in the long run. With the power supply being erratic and these plants being heavily dependent on power, most of these facilities lie underutilized. Moreover the problem of river pollution due to agricultural runoff has not been addressed in these programs. NRCP is scheduled to be completed by March 2005. The approved cost for the plan is Rs. 772.08 crores covering 18 rivers in 10 states including 46 towns. The cost is borne entirely by the Central Government and the Ministry of Environment and Forests is the nodal agency that co-ordinates and monitors the plan. Under this plan the major activities include treating the pollution load from sewer systems of towns and cities, setting up of Sewage treatment plants, electric crematoria, low cost sanitation facilities, riverfront development, afforestation and solid waste management.

Control measures for preventing water pollution

While the foremost necessity is prevention, setting up effluent treatment plants and treating waste through these can reduce the pollution load in the recipient water. The treated effluent can be reused for either gardening or cooling purposes wherever possible. A few years ago a new technology called the Root Zone Process has been developed by Thermax. This system involves running contaminated water through the root zones of specially designed reed beds. The reeds, which are essentially wetland plants have the capacity to absorb oxygen from the surrounding air through their stomatal openings. The oxygen is pushed through the porous stem of the reeds into the hollow roots where it enters the root zone and creates conditions suitable for the growth of numerous bacteria and fungi. These micro-organisms oxidize impurities in the wastewaters, so that the water which finally comes out is clean.



Water Pollution

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5.2.3 Soil Pollution

Introduction: We can no more manufacture a soil with a tank of chemicals than we can invent a rain forest or produce a single bird. We may enhance the soil by helping its processes along, but we can never recreate what we destroy. The soil is a resource for which there is no substitute. (Environmental historian Donald Worster reminds us that fertilizers are not a substitute for fertile soil).

Soil is a thin covering over the land consisting of a mixture of minerals, organic material, living organisms, air and water that together support the growth of plant life. Several factors contribute to the formation of soil from the parent material. This includes mechanical weathering of rocks due to temperature changes and abrasion, wind, moving water, glaciers, chemical weathering activities and lichens. Climate and time are also important in the development of soils. Extremely dry or cold climates develop soils very slowly while humid and warm climates develop them more rapidly. Under ideal climatic conditions soft parent material may develop into a centimeter of soil within 15 years. Under poor climatic conditions a hard parent material may require hundreds of years to develop into soil.

Mature soils are arranged in a series of zones called soil horizons. Each horizon has a distinct texture and composition that varies with different types of soils. A cross sectional view of the horizons in a soil is called a soil profile.

The top layer or the surface litter layer called the O horizon consists mostly of freshly fallen and partially decomposed leaves, twigs, animal waste, fungi and other organic materials. Normally it is brown or black.

The uppermost layer of the soil called the A horizon consists of partially decomposed organic matter (humus) and some inorganic mineral particles. It is usually darker and looser than the deeper layers. The roots of most plants are found in these two upper layers. As long as these layers are anchored by vegetation soil stores water and releases it in a trickle throughout the year instead of in a force like a flood. These two top layers also contain a large amount of bacteria, fungi, earthworms and other small insects that form complex food webs in the soil that help recycle soil nutrients and contribute to soil fertility.

The B horizon often called the subsoil contains less organic material and fewer organisms than the A horizon. The area below the subsoil is called the C horizon and consists of weathered parent material. This parent material does not contain any organic materials. The chemical composition of the C-horizon helps to determine the pH of the soil and also influences the soil's rate of water absorption and retention.

Soils vary in their content of clay (very fine particles), silt (fine particles), sand (medium size particles) and gravel (coarse to very coarse particles). The relative amounts of the different sizes and types of mineral particles determine soil texture. Soils with approximately equal mixtures of clay, sand, silt and humus are called loams.

Causes of soil degradation

Erosion

Soil erosion can be defined as the movement of surface litter and topsoil from one place to another. While erosion is a natural process often caused by wind and flowing water it is greatly accelerated by human activities such as farming, construction, overgrazing by livestock, burning of grass cover and deforestation.

Loss of the topsoil makes a soil less fertile and reduces its water holding capacity. The topsoil, which is washed away, also contributes to water pollution clogging lakes, increasing turbidity of the water and also leads to loss of aquatic

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life. For one inch of topsoil to be formed it normally requires 200-1000 years depending upon the climate and soil type. Thus if the topsoil erodes faster than it is formed the soil becomes a non-renewable resource.

Thus it is essential that proper soil conservation measures are used to minimize the loss of top soil. There are several techniques that can protect soil from erosion. Today both water and soil are conserved through integrated treatment methods. Some of the most commonly employed methods include the two types of treatment that are generally used.

- Area treatment which involves treating the land
- Drainage line treatment which involves treating the natural water courses (nalas)

Continuous contour trenches can be used to enhance infiltration of water reduce the run-off and check soil erosion. These are actually shallow trenches dug across the slope of the land and along the contour lines basically for the purpose of soil and water conservation. They are most effective on gentle slopes and in areas of low to medium rainfall. These bunds are stabilized by fast growing tree species and grasses. In areas of steep slopes where the bunds are not possible, continuous contour benches (CCBs) made of stones are used for the same purpose.

Gradonies can also be used to convert wastelands into agricultural lands. In this narrow trenches with bunds on the downstream side are built along contours in the upper reaches of the catchment to collect run-off and to conserve moisture from the trees or tree crops. The area between the two bunds is use for cultivation of crops after development of fertile soil cover.

Some of the ways in which this can be achieved are:

Live check dams which barriers created by planting grass, shrubs and trees across the gullies can be used for this purpose.

A bund constructed out of stones across the stream can also be used for conserving soil and water.

Area Treatment

Purpose	Treatment Measure	Effect
Reduces the impact of rain drops on the soil	Develop vegetative cover on the non arable land	Minimum disturbance and displacement of soil particles
Infiltration of water where it falls	Apply water infiltration measures on the area	In situ soil and moisture conservation
Minimum surface run off	Store surplus rain water by constructing bunds, ponds in the area	Increased soil moisture in the area, facilitate ground water recharge
Ridge to valley sequencing	Treat the upper catchment first and then proceed towards the outlet	Economically viable, less risk of damage and longer life of structures of the lower catchments

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Drainage line treatment

Purpose	Treatment measure	Effect
Stop further deepening of gullies and retain sediment run-off	Plug the gullies at formation	Stops erosion, recharges groundwater at the upper level.
Reduce run-off velocity, pass cleaner water to the downstream side	Crate temporary barriers in nalas	Delayed flow and increased groundwater recharge
Minimum sedimentation in the storage basins	Use various methods to treat the catchments	
Low construction cost	Use local material and skills for constructing the structures	Structures are locally maintained

An Earthen checkbund is constructed out of local soil across the stream to check soil erosion and flow of water.

A Gabion structure is a bund constructed of stone and wrapped in galvanized chainlink.

A Gabion structure with ferrocement impervious barrier has a one inch thick impervious wall of ferrocement at the center of the structure which goes below the ground level upto the hard strata. This ferrocement partition supported by the gabion portion is able to retain the water and withstand the force of the runoff water.

An Underground bandhara is an underground structure across a nalla bed to function as a barrier to check the ground water movement.

Excess use of fertilizers: Approximately 25 percent of the world's crop yield is estimated to be directly attributed to the use of chemical fertilizers. The use of chemical fertilizes has increased significantly over the last few decades and is expected to rise even higher. Fertilizers are very valuable as they replace the soil nutrients used up by plants. The three primary soil nutrients often in short supply are potassium, phosphorus and nitrogen compounds. These are commonly referred to as macronutrients. Certain other elements like boron, zinc and manganese are necessary in extremely small amounts and are known as micronutrients. When crops are harvested a large amount of macronutrients and a small amount of micronutrients are removed with the crops. If the same crop is grown again depleted levels of thee nutrients can result in decreased yields. These necessary nutrients can be returned to the soil through the application of fertilizers. In addition to fertilizers a large amount of pesticides (chemicals used to kill or control populations of unwanted fungi, animals or plants often called pests) are also used to ensure a good yield. Pesticides can be subdivided into several categories based on the kinds of organisms they are used to control. *Insecticides* are used to control insect populations while *fungicides* are used to control unwanted fungal growth. Mice and rats are killed by *rodenticides* while plant pests are controlled by *herbicides*.

Pollution

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Problems with pesticide use

Pesticides not only kill the pests but also a large variety of living things including humans. They may be persistent or non-persistent. Persistent pesticides once applied are effective for a long time. However as they do not break down easily they tend to accumulate in the soil and in the bodies of animals in the food chain.

For example, DDT which was one of the first synthetic organic insecticide to be used was thought to be the perfect insecticide. During the first ten years of its use (1942-1952) DDT is estimated to have saved about five million lives primarily because of its use to control disease carrying mosquitoes. However after a period of use many mosquitoes and insects became tolerant of DDT, thus making it lose its effectiveness. DDT in temperate regions of the world has a half life (the amount of time required for half of the chemical to decompose) of 10 to 15 years. This means that if 100 kilograms of DDT were to be sprayed over an area, 50 kilograms would still be present in the area 10 to 15 years later. The half-life of DDT varies according to the soil type, temperature, kind of soil organisms present and other factors. In tropical parts of the world the half life may be as short as six months. The use of DDT has been banned in some countries. India still however permits the use of DDT though for purposes of mosquito control only. Persistent pesticides become attached to small soil particles which are easily moved by wind and water to different parts thus affecting soils elsewhere. Persistent pesticides may also accumulate in the bodies of animals, and over a period of time increase in concentration if the animal is unable to flush them out of its system thus leading to the phenomenon called bioaccumulation. When an affected animal is eaten by another carnivore these pesticides are further concentrated in the body of the carnivore. This phenomenon of acquiring increasing levels of a substance in the bodies of higher trophic level organisms is known as biomagnification. This process especially in the case of insecticides like DDT have been proved to be disastrous. DDT is a well known case of biomagnification in ecosystems. DDT interferes with the production of normal eggshells in birds making them fragile.

Other problems associated with insecticides is the ability of insect populations to become resistant to them thus rendering them useless in a couple of generations. Most pesticides kill beneficial as well as pest species. They kill the predator as well as the parasitic insects that control the pests. Thus the pest species increase rapidly following the use of a pesticide as there are no natural checks to their population growth. The short term and the long-term health effects to the persons using the pesticide and the public that consumes the food grown by using the pesticides are also major concerns. Exposure to small quantities of pesticides over several years can cause mutations, produce cancers, etc.

Thus the question that comes to mind is that if pesticides have so many drawbacks then why are they used so extensively and what are the substitutes for them? There are three main reasons for the use of pesticides. Firstly the use of pesticides in the short term has increased the amount of food that can be grown in many parts of the world as the damage by pests is decreased. The second reason for its extensive use is base on an economic consideration. The increased yields more than compensates the farmer for cost of pesticides. Thirdly current health problems especially in developing countries due to mosquitoes are impossible to control without insecticides.

However more and more farmers are increasingly opting to replace chemical fertilizers and use different methods of controlling pests without affecting their yield. Thus several different approaches that have slightly varying and overlapping goals have been developed. Alternative agriculture is the broadest term that is used that includes all non-traditional agricultural methods

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and encompasses sustainable agriculture, organic agriculture, alternative uses of traditional crops, alternative methods for raising crops, etc.

Sustainable agriculture advocates the use of methods to produce adequate safe food in an economically viable manner while maintaining the state of the ecosystem. Organic agriculture advocates avoiding the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. A wide variety of techniques can be used to reduce this negative impact of agriculture. Leaving crop residue on the soil and incorporating it into the soil reduces erosion and increase soil organic matter. Introduction of organic matter into the soil also makes compaction less likely. Crop rotation is an effective way to enhance soil fertility, reduce erosion and control pests. There have been arguments both for and against organic farming. Critics argue that organic farming cannot produce the amount of food required for today's population and it is economically viable only in certain conditions. However supporters for organic farming feel that of the hidden costs of soil erosion and pollution are taken into account it is a viable approach. Besides organic farmers do not have to spend on fertilizers and pesticides and also get a premium price for their products thus making it financially viable for them.

Another way to reduce these impacts is through the use of *integrated pest management*. This is a technique that uses a complete understanding of all ecological aspects of a crop and the particular pests to which it is susceptible to establish pest control strategies that uses no or few pesticides. IPM promotes the use of biopesticides. Biopesticides are derived from three sources: microbial, botanical and biochemical. Microbial pesticides are micro-organisms such as bacteria, fungus, virus or protozoa that fight pests through a variety of ways. They produce toxins specific to the pests and produce diseases in them. Biochemical pesticides contain several chemicals that affect the reproductive and digestive mechanisms of the pests. The most commonly used biopesticides are *Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt)*, neem (*Azadirachta indica*) and trichogramma. Although they are available in the market they are yet to become market favourites.

Excess salts and water

Irrigated lands can produce crop yields much higher than those that only use rainwater. However this has its own set of ill effects. Irrigation water contains dissolved salts and in dry climates much of the water in the saline solution evaporates leaving its salts such as sodium chloride in the topsoil. The accumulation of these salts is called salinization, which can stunt plant growth, lower yields and eventually kill the crop and render the land useless for agriculture. These salts can be flushed out of the soil by using more water. This practice however increases the cost of crop production and also wastes enormous amounts of water. Flushing salts can also make the downstream irrigation water saltier.

Another problem with irrigation is water logging. This occurs when large amounts of water is used to leach the salts deeper into the soil. However if the drainage is poor this water accumulates underground gradually raising the water table. The roots of the plants then get enveloped in this saline water and eventually die.

Thus in the long run it is better for us to adopt sustainable farming practices so as to prevent the degradation of soil.

5.2.4 Marine Pollution

Marine pollution can be defined as the introduction of substances to the marine environment directly or indirectly by man resulting in adverse effects such as hazards to human health, obstruction of marine activities and lowering the quality of sea water. While the causes of ma-

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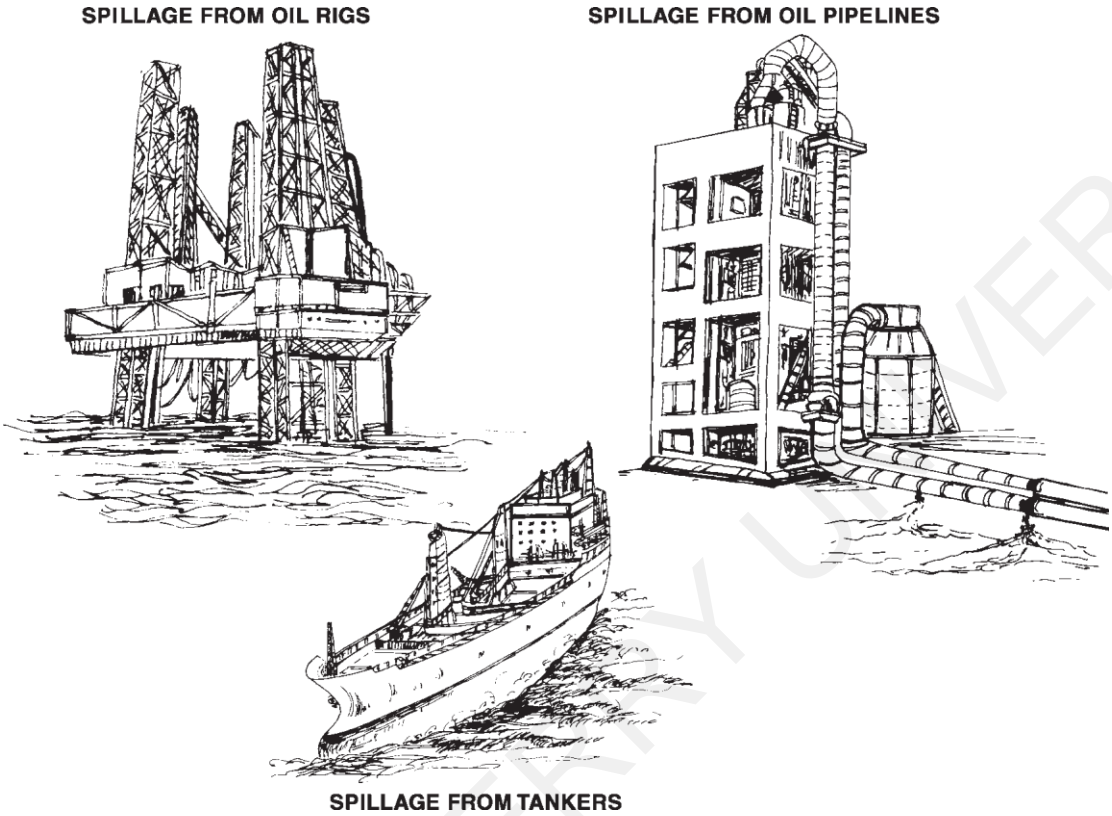

rine pollution may be similar to that of general water pollution there are some very specific causes that pollute marine waters.

- The most obvious inputs of waste is through pipes directly discharging wastes into the sea. Very often municipal waste and sewage from residences and hotels in coastal towns are directly discharged into the sea.

- Pesticides and fertilizers from agriculture which are washed off the land by rain, enter water courses and eventually reach the sea.

- Petroleum and oils washed off from the roads normally enter the sewage system but stormwater overflows carry these materials into rivers and eventually into the seas.

- Ships carry many toxic substances such as oil, liquefied natural gas, pesticides, industrial chemicals, etc. in huge quantities sometimes to the capacity of 350,000 tonnes. Ship accidents and accidental spillages at sea therefore can be very damaging to the marine environment. Shipping channels in estuaries and at the entrances to ports often require frequent dredging to keep them open. This dredged material that may contain heavy metals and other contaminants are often dumped out to sea.

- Offshore oil exploration and extraction also pollute the seawater to a large extent.

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Pollution due to organic wastes

The amount of oxygen dissolved in the water is vital for the plants and animals living in it. Wastes, which directly or indirectly affect the oxygen concentration, play an important role in determining the quality of the water. Normally the greatest volume of waste discharged to watercourses, estuaries and the sea is sewage, which is primarily organic in nature and is degraded by bacterial activity. Using the oxygen present in the water these wastes are broken down into stable inorganic compounds. However as a result of this bacterial activity the oxygen concentration in the water is reduced. When the oxygen concentration falls below 1.5 mg/lit, the rate of aerobic oxidation is reduced and their place is taken over by the anaerobic bacteria that can oxidize the organic molecules without the use of oxygen. This results in end products such as hydrogen sulphide, ammonia and methane, which are toxic to many organisms. This process results in the formation of an anoxic zone which is low in its oxygen content from which most life disappears except for anaerobic bacteria, fungi, yeasts and some protozoa. This makes the water foul smelling.

Control measures: One way of reducing the pollution load on marine waters is through the introduction of sewage treatment plants. This will reduce the biological oxygen demand (BOD) of the final product before it is discharged to the receiving waters.

Various stages of treatment such as primary, secondary or advanced can be used depending on the quality of the effluent that is required to be treated.

Primary treatment: These treatment plants use physical processes such as screening and sedimentation to remove pollutants that will settle, float or, that are too large to pass through simple screening devices. This includes, stones, sticks, rags, and all such material that can clog pipes. A *screen* consists of parallel bars spaced 2 to 7cms apart followed by a wire mesh with smaller openings. One way of avoiding the problem of disposal of materials collected on the screens is to use a device called a comminuter which grinds the coarse material into small pieces that can then be left in the waste water. After screening the wastewater passes into a *grit chamber*. The detention time is chosen to be long enough to allow lighter, organic material to settle. From the grit chamber the sewage passes into a *primary settling tank* (also called as sedimentation tank) where the flow speed is reduced sufficiently to allow most of the suspended solids to settle out by gravity. If the waste is to undergo only primary treatment it is then chlorinated to destroy bacteria and control odours after which the effluent is released. Primary treatment normally removes about 35 percent of the BOD and 60 percent of the suspended solids.

Secondary treatment: The main objective of secondary treatment is to remove most of the BOD. There are three commonly used approaches: trickling filters, activated sludge process and oxidation ponds. Secondary treatment can remove at least 85 percent of the BOD.

A *trickling filter* consists of a rotating distribution arm that sprays liquid wastewater over a circular bed of 'fist size' rocks or other coarse materials. The spaces between the rocks allow air to circulate easily so that aerobic conditions can be maintained. The individual rocks in the bed are covered with a layer of slime, which consists of bacteria, fungi, algae, etc. which degrade the waste trickling through the bed. This slime periodically slides off individual rocks and is collected at the bottom of the filter along with the treated wastewater and is then passed on to the secondary settling tank where it is removed.

In the *activated sludge process* the sewage is pumped into a large tank and mixed for several hours with bacteria rich sludge and air bubbles to facilitate degradation by micro-organisms. The water then goes into a sedimentation tank

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where most of the microorganisms settle out as sludge. This sludge is then broken down in an anaerobic digester where methane-forming bacteria slowly convert the organic matter into carbon dioxide, methane and other stable end products. The gas produced in the digester is 60 percent methane, which is a valuable fuel and can be put to many uses within the treatment plant itself. The digested sludge, which is still liquid, is normally pumped out onto sludge drying beds where evaporation and seepage remove the water. This dried sludge is potentially a good source of manure. Activated sludge tanks use less land area than trickling filters with equivalent performance. They are also less expensive to construct than trickling filters and have fewer problems with flies and odour and can also achieve higher rates of BOD removal. Thus although the operating costs are a little higher due to the expenses incurred on energy for running pumps and blowers they are preferred over trickling filters.

Oxidation ponds are large shallow ponds approximately 1 to 2 metres deep where raw or partially treated sewage is decomposed by microorganisms. They are easy to build and manage and accommodate large fluctuations in flow and can provide treatment at a much lower cost. They however require a large amount of land and hence can be used where land is not a limitation.

Advanced sewage treatment: This involves a series of chemical and physical process that removes specific pollutants left in the water after primary and secondary treatment. Sewage treatment plant effluents contain nitrates and phosphates in large amounts. These contribute to eutrophication. Thus advanced treatment plants are designed to specifically remove these contaminants. Advanced treatment plants are very expensive to build and operate and hence are rarely used.

Pollution due to oil: Oil pollution of the sea normally attracts the greatest attention because of its visibility. There are several sources though which the oil can reach the sea.

Tanker operations

Half the world production of crude oil which is close to three billion tones a year is transported by sea. After a tanker has unloaded its cargo of oil it has to take on seawater as ballast for the return journey. This ballast water is stored in the cargo compartments that previously contained the oil. During the unloading of the cargo a certain amount of oil remains clinging to the walls of the container and this may amount to 800 tonnes in a 200,000 tonne tanker. The ballast water thus becomes contaminated with this oil. When a fresh cargo of oil is to be loaded, these compartments are cleaned with water, which discharges the dirty ballast along with the oil into the sea. Two techniques have substantially reduced this oil pollution. In the *load-on-top* system, the compartments are cleaned by high pressure jets of water. The oily water is retained in the compartment until the oil floats to the top. The water underneath that contains only a little oil is then discharged into the sea and the oil is transferred to a slop tank. At the loading terminal, fresh oil is loaded on top of the oil in the tank and hence the name of the technique. In the second method called *'crude oil washing'*, the clingage is removed by jets of crude oil while the cargo is being unloaded. Some modern tankers have *segregated ballast* where the ballast water does not come in contact with the oil. Thus with the introduction of these new methods of deballasting, the amount of oil entering the sea has been considerably reduced.

Dry docking

All ships need periodic dry docking for servicing, repairs, cleaning the hull, etc. During this period when the cargo compartments are to

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completely emptied, residual oil finds its way into the sea.

Bilge and fuel oils

As ballast tanks take up valuable space, additional ballast is sometimes carried in empty fuel tanks. While being pumped overboard it carries oil into the sea. Individually the quantity of oil released may be small but it becomes a considerable amount when all the shipping operations are taken into consideration.

Tanker accidents

A large number of oil tanker accidents happen every year. Sometimes this can result in major disasters such as that of the Exxon Valdez described in the section on water pollution.

Offshore oil production

Oil that is extracted from the seabed contains some water. Even after it is passed through oil separators the water that is discharged contains some oil, which adds to marine pollution. Drilling muds which are pumped down oil wells when it is being drilled normally contain 70 to 80 percent of oil. They are dumped on the seabed beneath the platform thus heavily contaminating the water. Uncontrolled release of oil from the wells can be catastrophic events resulting in oil pollution.

Control measures for oil pollution: Cleaning oil from surface waters and contaminated beaches is a time consuming labour intensive process. The natural process of emulsification of oil in the water can be accelerated through the use of *chemical dispersants* which can be sprayed on the oil. A variety of *slick-lickers* in which a continuous belt of absorbent material dips through the oil slick and is passed through rollers to extract the oil have been designed. Rocks, harbour walls can be cleaned with high-pressure steam or dispersants after which the surface must be hosed down.

Effects of marine pollution: Apart from causing eutrophication a large amount of organic wastes can also result in the development of red tides. These are phytoplankton blooms of such intensity that the area is discolored. Many important commercially important marine species are also killed due to clogging of gills or other structures.

When liquid oil is spilled on the sea it spreads over the surface of the water to form a thin film called an *oil slick*. The rate of spreading and the thickness of the film depends on the sea temperature and the nature of the oil.

Oil slicks damage marine life to a large extent. Salt marshes, mangrove swamps are likely to trap oil and the plants, which form the basis for these ecosystems thus suffer. For salt marsh plants, oil slicks can affect the flowering, fruiting and germination.

If liquid oil contaminates a bird's plumage its water repellent properties are lost. Water thus penetrates the plumage and displaces the air trapped between the feathers and the skin. This air layer is necessary as it provides buoyancy and thermal insulation. With this loss the plumage becomes water logged and the birds may sink and drown. Even if this does not happen loss of thermal insulation results in exhaustion of food reserves in an attempt to maintain body temperature often followed by death. Birds often clean their plumage by preening and in the process consume oil which depending on its toxicity can lead to intestinal, renal or liver failure.

Drill cuttings dumped on the seabed create anoxic conditions and result in the production of toxic sulphides in the bottom sediment thus eliminating the benthic fauna.

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Fish and shellfish production facilities can also be affected by oil slicks. The most important commercial damage can however also come from tainting which imparts an unpleasant flavour to fish and seafood and is detectable at extremely low levels of contamination. This reduces the market value of seafood.

5.2.5 Noise Pollution

Noise may not seem as harmful as the contamination of air or water but it is a pollution problem that affects human health and can contribute to a general deterioration of environmental quality.

Noise is undesirable and unwanted sound. Not all sound is noise. What may be considered as music to one person may be noise to another. It is not a substance that can accumulate in the environment like most other pollutants. Sound is measured in a unit called the 'Decibel'.

Decibel levels of common sounds

dB	Environmental Condition
0	Threshold of hearing
10	Rustle of leaves
20	Broadcasting studio
30	Bedroom at night
40	Library
50	Quiet office
60	Conversational speech (at 1m)
70	Average radio
74	Light traffic noise
90	Subway train
100	Symphony orchestra
110	Rock band
120	Aircraft takeoff
146	Threshold of pain

There are several sources of noise pollution that contribute to both indoor and outdoor noise pollution. Noise emanating from factories, vehicles, playing of loudspeakers during various festivals can contribute to outdoor noise pollution while loudly played radio or music systems, and other electronic gadgets can contribute to indoor noise pollution. A study conducted by researchers from the New Delhi based National Physical Laboratory show that noise generated by firecrackers (presently available in the market) is much higher than the prescribed levels. The permitted noise level is 125 decibels, as per the Environment (Protection) (second amendment) Rules, 1999.

The differences between sound and noise is often subjective and a matter of personal opinion. There are however some very harmful effects caused by exposure to high sound levels. These effects can range in severity from being extremely annoying to being extremely painful and hazardous.

Effects of noise pollution on physical health

The most direct harmful effect of excessive noise is physical damage to the ear and the temporary or permanent hearing loss often called a temporary threshold shift (TTS). People suffering from this condition are unable to detect weak sounds. However hearing ability is usually recovered within a month of exposure. In Maharashtra people living in close vicinity of Ganesh mandals that play blaring music for ten days of the Ganesh festival are usually known to suffer from this phenomenon. Permanent loss, usually called noise induced permanent threshold shift (NIPTS) represents a loss of hearing ability from which there is no recovery.

Below a sound level of 80 dBA haring loss does not occur at all. However temporary effects are noticed at sound levels between 80 and 130 dBA. About 50 percent of the people exposed

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to 95 dBA sound levels at work will develop NIPTS and most people exposed to more than 105 dBA will experience permanent hearing loss to some degree. A sound level of 150 dBA or more can physically rupture the human eardrum.

The degree of hearing loss depends on the duration as well as the intensity of the noise. For example, 1hour of exposure to a 100 dBA sound level can produce a TTS that may last for about one day. However in factories with noisy machinery workers are subjected to high sound levels for several hours a day. Exposure to 95 dBA for 8 hours everyday for over a period of 10 years may cause about 15 dBA of NIPTS. In addition to hearing losses excessive sound levels can cause harmful effects on the circulatory system by raising blood pressure and altering pulse rates.

Effects of noise pollution on mental health:

Noise can also cause emotional or psychological effects such as irritability, anxiety and stress. Lack of concentration and mental fatigue are significant health effects of noise. It has been observed that the performance of school children is poor in comprehension tasks when schools are situated in busy areas of a city and suffer from noise pollution.

As noise interferes with normal auditory communication, it may mask auditory warning signals and hence increases the rate of accidents especially in industries. It can also lead to lowered worker efficiency and productivity and higher accident rates on the job.

Thus noise is just more than a mere nuisance or annoyance. It definitely affects the quality of life. It is thus important to ensure mitigation or control of noise pollution.

Permitted noise levels

Ambient Noise Levels dB

Zone	*Day-time*	*Night-time*
Silent Zone	50	40
Residential Zone	55	45
Commercial Zone	65	55
Industrial Zone	70	70

A standard safe time limit has been set for exposure to various noise levels. Beyond this 'safe' time continuing exposure over a period of a year will lead to hearing loss.

Duration	dBA
8 hours	90
4 hours	93
2 hours	96
1 hour	99
30 minutes	102
15 minutes	105
7 minutes	108
4 minutes	111
2 minutes	114
1 minute	117
30 seconds	120
Instantaneous rupture of membrane	150

Noise Control techniques

There are four fundamental ways in which noise can be controlled: Reduce noise at the source, block the path of noise, increase the path length and protect the recipient. In general, the best control method is to reduce noise levels at the source.

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Source reduction can be done by effectively muffling vehicles and machinery to reduce the noise. In industries noise reduction can be done by using rigid sealed enclosures around machinery lined with acoustic absorbing material. Isolating machines and their enclosures from the floor using special spring mounts or absorbent mounts and pads and using flexible couplings for interior pipelines also contribute to reducing noise pollution at the source.

However one of the best methods of noise source reduction is regular and thorough maintenance of operating machinery. Noise levels at construction sites can be controlled using proper construction planning and scheduling techniques. Locating noisy air compressors and other equipment away from the site boundary along with creation of temporary barriers to physically block the noise can help contribute to reducing noise pollution. Most of the vehicular noise comes from movement of the vehicle tires on the pavement and wind resistance. However poorly maintained vehicles can add to the noise levels. Traffic volume and speed also have significant effects on the overall sound. For example doubling the speed increases the sound levels by about 9 dBA and doubling the traffic volume (number of vehicles per hour) increases sound levels by about 3 dBA. A smooth flow of traffic also causes less noise than does a stop-and-go traffic pattern. Proper highway planning and design are essential for controlling traffic noise. Establishing lower speed limits for highways that pass through residential areas, limiting traffic volume and providing alternative routes for truck traffic are effective noise control measures. The path of traffic noise can also be blocked by construction of vertical barriers alongside the highway. Planting of trees around houses can also act as effective noise barriers. In industries different types of absorptive material can be used to control interior noise. Highly absorptive interior finish material for walls, ceilings and floors can decrease indoor noise levels significantly. Sound levels drop significantly with increasing distance from the noise source. Increasing the path length between the source and the recipient offers a passive means of control. Municipal land-use ordinances pertaining to the location of airports make use of the attenuating effect of distance on sound levels. Use of earplugs and earmuffs can protect individuals effectively from excessive noise levels. Specially designed earmuffs can reduce the sound level reaching the eardrum by as much as 40 dBA. However very often workers tend not to wear them on a regular basis despite company requirements for their use.

5.2.6 Thermal Pollution

Sources: The discharge of warm water into a river is usually called a **thermal pollution.** It occurs when an industry removes water from a source, uses the water for cooling purposes and then returns the heated water to its source. Power plants heat water to convert it into steam, to drive the turbines that generate electricity. For efficient functioning of the steam turbines, the steam is condensed into water after it leaves the turbines. This condensation is done by taking water from a water body to absorb the heat. This heated water, which is at least 15oC higher than the normal is discharged back into the water body.

Effects: The warmer temperature decreases the solubility of oxygen and increases the metabolism of fish. This changes the ecological balance of the river. Within certain limits thermal additions can promote the growth of certain fish and the fish catch may be high in the vicinity of a power plant. However sudden changes in temperature caused by periodic plant shutdowns both planned and unintentional can change result in death of these fish that are acclimatized to living in warmer waters.

Tropical marine animals are generally unable to withstand a temperature increase of 2 to 3^0C

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and most sponges, mollusks and crustaceans are eliminated at temperatures above 37^{0}C. This results in a change in the diversity of fauna as only those species that can live in warmer water survive.

Control measures: Thermal pollution can be controlled by passing the heated water through a cooling pond or a cooling tower after it leaves the condenser. The heat is dissipated into the air and the water can then be discharged into the river or pumped back to the plant for reuse as cooling water. There are several ways in which thermal pollution can be reduced. One method is to construct a large shallow pond. Hot water is pumped into one end of the pond and cooler water is removed from the other end. The heat gets dissipated from the pond into the atmosphere. A second method is to use a cooling tower. These structures take up less land area than the ponds. Here most of the heat transfer occurs through evaporation. Here warm waters coming from the condenser is sprayed downward over vertical sheets or baffles where the water flows in thin films. Cool air enters the tower through the water inlet that encircles the base of the tower and rises upwards causing evaporative cooling. A natural draft is maintained because of the density difference between the cool air outside and the warmer air inside the tower. The waste heat is dissipated into the atmosphere about 100 m above the base of the tower. The cooled water is collected at the floor of the tower and recycled back to the power plant condensers. The disadvantage in both these methods is however that large amounts of water are lost by evaporation.

5.2.7 Nuclear Hazards

Nuclear energy can be both beneficial and harmful depending on the way in which it is used. We routinely use X-rays to examine bones for fractures, treat cancer with radiation and diagnose diseases with the help of radioactive isotopes. Approximately 17 % of the electrical energy generated in the world comes from nuclear power plants. However on the other hand it is impossible to forget the destruction that nuclear bombs caused the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The radioactive wastes from nuclear energy have caused serious environmental damage.

Nuclear fission is the splitting of the nucleus of the atom. The resulting energy can be used for a variety of purposes. The first controlled fission of an atom was carried out in Germany in 1938. However the United States was the first country to develop an atomic bomb which was subsequently dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The world's first electricity generating reactor was constructed in the United States in 1951 and the Soviet Union built its first reactor in 1954. In December 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his 'Atoms for Peace' speech made the following prediction: *'Nuclear reactors will produce electricity so cheaply that it will not be necessary to meter it. The users will pay a fee and use as much electricity as they want. Atoms will provide a safe, clean and dependable source of electricity.'*

Today however though nuclear power is being used as a reliable source of electricity the above statement sounds highly optimistic. Several serious accidents have caused worldwide concern about safety and disposal of radioactive wastes.

In order to appreciate the consequences of using nuclear fuels to generate energy it is important to understand how the fuel is processed. Low-grade uranium ore, which contains 0.2 percent uranium by weight, is obtained by surface or underground mining. After it is mined the ore goes through a milling process where it is crushed and treated with a solvent to concentrate the uranium and produces yellow cake a material containing 70 to 90 percent uranium oxide. Naturally occurring uranium contains only 0.7 percent of fissionable U-235, which is not

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high enough for most types of reactors. Hence it is necessary to increase the amount of U-235 by enrichment though it is a difficult and expensive process. The enrichment process increases the U-235 content from 0.7 to 3 percent. Fuel fabrication then converts the enriched material into a powder, which is then compacted into pellets. These pellets are sealed in metal fuel rods about 4 meters in length which is then loaded into the reactor. As fission occurs the concentration of U-235 atoms decreases. After about three years, a fuel rod does not have enough radioactive material to sustain a chain reaction and hence the spent fuel rods must be replaced by new ones. The spent rods are however still very radioactive containing about one percent U-235 and one percent plutonium. These rods are a major source of radioactive waste material produced by a nuclear reactor.

Initially it was thought that spent fuel rods could be reprocessed to not only provide new fuel but also to reduce the amount of nuclear waste. However the cost of producing fuel rods by reprocessing was found to be greater than the cost of producing fuel rods from ore. Presently India does operate reprocessing plants to reprocess spent fuel as an alternative to storing them as nuclear waste. At each step in the cycle there is a danger of exposure and poses several health and environmental concerns.

Although nuclear power has significant benefits an incident which changed people's attitudes towards nuclear power plants was the Chernobyl disaster that occurred in 1986. Chernobyl is a small city in Ukraine near the border with Belarus north of Kiev. At 1.00 am April 25, 1986 a test to measure the amount of electricity that the still spinning turbine would produce if steam were shut off was being conducted at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station-4. This was important information since the emergency core cooling system required energy for its operation and the coasting turbine could provide some of that energy until another source became available. The amount of steam being produced was reduced by lowering the control rods into the reactor. But the test was delayed because of a demand for electricity and a new shift of workers came on duty. The operators failed to program the computer to maintain power at 700 megawatts and the output dropped to 30 megawatts. This presented an immediate need to rapidly increase the power and many of the control rods were withdrawn. Meanwhile an inert gas (xenon) had accumulated on the fuel rods. The gas absorbed the neutrons and slowed the rate of power increase. In an attempt to obtain more power the operators withdrew all the control rods. This was a second serious safety violation.

At 1.00am, the operators shut off most of the emergency warning signals and turned on all the eight pumps to provide adequate cooling for the reactor following the completion of the test. Just as the final stages for the test were beginning a signal indicated excessive reaction in the reactor. In spite of the warning the operators blocked the automatic reactor shutdown and began the test. As the test continued the power output of the reactor rose beyond its normal level and continued to rise. The operators activated the emergency system designed to put the control rods back into the reactor and stop the fission. But it was already too late. The core had already been deformed and the rods would not fit properly thus the reaction could not be stopped. In 4.5 seconds the energy level of the reactor increased two thousand times. The fuel rods ruptured the cooling water turned into steam and a steam explosion occurred. The lack of cooling water allowed the reactor to explode. The explosion blew the 1000 metric ton concrete roof from the reactor and the reactor caught fire. This resulted in the world's worst nuclear accident and it took ten days to bring the runaway reaction under control.

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There were of course immediate fatalities, but the long-term consequences were devastating. 116,000 people were evacuated of which 24,000 had received high doses of radiation. Even today many people suffer from illnesses they feel are related to their exposure to the fallout from Chernobyl. In 1996 ten years after the accident it was clear that one of the long-term effects was the increased frequency of thyroid cancer in children.

The degree and the kind of damage from nuclear accidents vary with the kind of radiation, the amount of radiation, the duration of exposure and the types of cells irradiated. Radiation can also cause mutations which are changes in the genetic makeup of the cells. Mutations can occur in the ovaries or the testes leading to the formation of mutated eggs or sperms which in turn can lead to abnormal offspring. Mutations can also occur in the tissues of the body ad may manifest themselves as abnormal tissue growths known as cancer. Two common cancers that are linked to increased radiation exposure are leukemia and breast cancer.

5.3 SOLID WASTE MANAGEEMNT: CAUSES, EFFECTS AND CONTROL MEASURES OF URBAN AND INDUSTRIAL WASTE

In ancient cities, food scraps and other wastes were simply thrown into the unpaved streets where they accumulated. Around 320 B.C. in Athens, the first known law forbidding this practice was established and a system of waste removal began to evolve in several eastern Mediterranean cities. Disposal methods were very crude and often were just open pits outside the city walls. As populations increased, efforts were made to transport the wastes out further thus creating city dumps. Until recently the disposal of municipal solid waste did not attract much public attention. The favoured means of disposal was to dump solid wastes outside the city or village limits.

Around most towns and cities in India the approach roads are littered with multi-coloured plastic bags and other garbage. Waste is also burnt to reduce its volume. Modern methods of disposal such as incineration and the development of sanitary landfills, etc. are now attempting to solve these problems. Lack of space for dumping solid waste has become a serious problem in several cities and towns all over the world. Dumping and burning wastes is not an acceptable practice today from either an environmental or a health perspective. Today disposal of solid waste should be part of an integrated waste management plan. The method of collection, processing, resource recovery and the final disposal should mesh with one another to achieve a common objective.

Characteristics of municipal solid waste

Solid wastes are grouped or classified in several different ways. These different classifications are necessary to address the complex challenges of solid waste management in an effective manner. The term municipal solid waste (MSW) is generally used to describe most of the non-hazardous solid waste from a city, town or village that requires routine collection and transport to a processing or disposal site. Sources of MSW include private homes, commercial establishments and institutions as well as industrial facilities. However MSW does not include wastes from industrial processes, construction and demolition debris, sewage sludge, mining wastes or agricultural wastes.

Municipal solid waste contains a wide variety of materials. It can contain food waste such as vegetable and meat material, left over food, egg shells, etc which is classified as wet garbage as well as paper, plastic, tetrapacks, plastic cans, newspaper, glass bottles, cardboard boxes, alu-

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minum foil, metal items, wood pieces, etc. which is classified as dry garbage.

Control measures of urban and industrial wastes: An integrated waste management strategy includes three main components:

1. Source reduction
2. Recycling
3. Disposal

Source reduction is one of the fundamental ways to reduce waste. This can be done by using less material when making a product, reuse of products on site, designing products or packaging to reduce their quantity. On an individual level we can reduce the use of unnecessary items while shopping, buy items with minimal packaging, avoid buying disposable items and also avoid asking for plastic carry bags.

Recycling is reusing some components of the waste that may have some economic value. Recycling has readily visible benefits such as conservation of resources reduction in energy used during manufacture and reducing pollution levels. Some materials such as aluminum and steel can be recycled many times. Metal, paper, glass and plastics are recyclable. Mining of new aluminum is expensive and hence recycled aluminum has a strong market and plays a significant role in the aluminum industry. Paper recycling can also help preserve forests as it takes about 17 trees to make one ton of paper. Crushed glass (cullet) reduces the energy required to manufacture new glass by 50 percent. Cullet lowers the temperature requirement of the glassmaking process thus conserving energy and reducing air pollution. However even if recycling is a viable alternative, it presents several problems.

The problems associated with recycling are either technical or economical. Plastics are difficult to recycle because of the different types of polymer resins used in their production. Since each type has its own chemical makeup different plastics cannot be recycled together. Thus separation of different plastics before recycling is necessary. Similarly in recycled paper the fibers are weakened and it is difficult to control the colour of the recycled product. Recycled paper is banned for use in food containers to prevent the possibility of contamination. It very often costs less to transport raw paper pulp than scrap paper. Collection, sorting and transport account for about 90 percent of the cost of paper recycling. The processes of pulping, deinking and screening wastepaper are generally more expensive than making paper from virgin wood or cellulose fibers. Very often thus recycled paper is more expensive than virgin paper. However as technology improves the cost will come down.

Disposal of solid waste is done most commonly through a sanitary landfill or through incineration. A modern sanitary landfill is a depression in an impermeable soil layer that is lined with an impermeable membrane. The three key characteristics of a municipal sanitary landfill that distinguish it from an open dump are:

- Solid waste is placed in a suitably selected and prepared landfill site in a carefully prescribed manner.
- The waste material is spread out and compacted with appropriate heavy machinery.
- The waste is covered each day with a layer of compacted soil.

The problem with older landfills are associated with groundwater pollution. Pollutants seeping out from the bottom of a sanitary landfill (leachates) very often percolate down to the groundwater aquifer no matter how thick the underlying soil layer. Today it is essential to have suitable bottom liners and leachate collection systems along with the installation of monitoring systems to detect groundwater pollution. The organic material in the buried solid waste

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will decompose due to the action of microorganisms. At first the waste decomposes aerobically until the oxygen that was present in the freshly placed fill is used up by the aerobic microorganisms. The anerobes take over producing methane which is poisonous and highly explosive when mixed with air in concentrations between 5 and 15 percent. The movement of gas can be controlled by providing impermeable barriers in the landfill. A venting system to collect the blocked gas and vent it to the surface where it can be safely diluted and dispersed into the atmosphere is thus a necessary component of the design of sanitary landfills.

Even though landfilling is an economic alternative for solid waste disposal, it has become increasingly difficult to find suitable landfilling sites that are within economic hauling distance and very often citizens do not want landfills in their vicinity. Another reason is that no matter how well engineered the design and operation may be, there is always the danger of some environmental damage in the form of leakage of leachates.

Incineration is the process of burning municipal solid waste in a properly designed furnace under suitable temperature and operating conditions. Incineration is a chemical process in which the combustible portion of the waste is combined with oxygen forming carbon dioxide and water, which are released into the atmosphere. This chemical reaction called oxidation results in the release of heat. For complete oxidation the waste must be mixed with appropriate volumes of air at a temperature of about 815o C for about one hour. Incineration can reduce the municipal solid waste by about 90 percent in volume and 75 percent in weight. The risks of incineration however involve air-quality problems and toxicity and disposal of the fly and bottom ash produced during the incineration process. Fly ash consists of finely divided particulate matter, including cinders, mineral dust and soot. Most of the incinerator ash is bottom ash while the remainder is fly ash. The possible presence of heavy metals in incinerator ash can be harmful. Thus toxic products and materials containing heavy metals (for example batteries and plastics) should be segregated. Thus extensive air pollution control equipment and high-level technical supervision and skilled employees for proper operation and maintenance is required.

Thus while sanitary landfills and incinerators have their own advantages and disadvantages, the most effective method of solid waste management is source reduction and recycling.

Vermi - Composting

Nature has perfect solutions for managing the waste it creates, if left undisturbed. The biogeochemical cycles are designed to clear the waste material produced by animals and plants. We can mimic the same methods that are present in nature. All dead and dry leaves and twigs decompose and are broken down by organisms such as worms and insects, and is finally broken down by bacteria and fungi, to form a dark rich soil-like material called compost.

These organisms in the soil use the organic material as food, which provides them with nutrients for their growth and activities. These nutrients are returned to the soil to be used again by trees and other plants. This process recycles nutrients in nature.

This soil can be used as a manure for farms and gardens.

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Steps for Vermi-Compost

- Dig a pit about half a meter square, one meter deep.
- Line it with straw or dried leaves and grass.
- Organize the disposal of organic waste into the pit as and when generated.
- Introduce a culture of worms that is now produced commercially.
- Ensure that the contents are covered with a sprinkling of dried leaves and soil everyday.
- Water the pit once or twice a week to keep it moist.
- Turn over the contents of the pit ever 15 days.
- In about 45 days the waste will be decomposed by the action of the microorganisms.
- The soil derived is fertile and rich in nutrients.

Hazardous wastes

Modern society produces large quantities of hazardous waste which are generated by chemical manufacturing companies, petroleum refineries, paper mills, smelters and other industries. Hazardous wastes are those that can cause harm to humans or the environment. Wastes are normally classified as hazardous waste when they cause or significantly contribute to an increase in mortality or an increase in serious irreversible or incapacitating reversible illness or pose a substantial present or potential hazard to human health or the environment when improperly treated, stored, transported or disposed of.

Characteristics of hazardous wastes

A waste is classified as a hazardous waste if it exhibits any of the four primary characteristics based on the physical or chemical properties of toxicity, reactivity, ignitability and corrosivity. In addition to this waste products that are either infectious or radioactive are also classified as hazardous

Toxic wastes are those substances that are poisonous even in very small or trace amounts. Some may have an acute or immediate effect on humans or animals causing death or violent illness. Others may have a chronic or long term effect slowly causing irreparable harm to exposed persons. Acute toxicity is readily apparent because organisms respond to the toxin shortly after being exposed. Chronic toxicity is much more difficult to determine because the effects may not be seen for years. Certain toxic wastes are known to be carcinogenic, causing cancer and others may be mutagenic causing biological changes in the children of exposed people and animals.

Reactive wastes are those that have a tendency to react vigorously with air or water, are unstable to shock or heat, generate toxic gases or explode during routine management. For example, gunpowder, nitroglycerine, etc.

Ignitable wastes are those that burn at relatively low temperatures (less than 60 C) and are capable of spontaneous combustion during storage, transport or disposal. For example, gasoline, paint thinners, and alcohol.

Corrosive wastes are those that destroy materials and living tissue by chemical reaction. For example, acids and bases.

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Infectious wastes include human tissue from surgery, used bandages and hypodermic needles, microbiological materials, etc.

Radioactive waste is basically an output from the nuclear power plants and can persist in the environment for thousands of years before it decays appreciably.

Environmental problems and health risks caused by hazardous wastes.

As most of the hazardous wastes are disposed of on or in land the most serious environmental effect is contaminated groundwater. Once groundwater is polluted with hazardous wastes it is very often not possible to reverse the damage.

Pesticides are used increasingly to protect and increase food production. They form residues in the soil which are washed into streams which then carry them forwards. The residues may persist in the soil or in the bottom of lakes and rivers. Exposure can occur through ingestion, inhalation and skin contact resulting in acute or chronic poisoning. Today we have an alternative to the excess use of pesticides through the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). The IPM system uses a wide variety of plants and insects to create a more natural process. The natural balance between climate, soil and insect populations can help to prevent an insect from overpopulating an area and destroying a particular crop.

Lead, mercury and arsenic are hazardous substances which are often referred to as heavy metals. Lead is an abundant heavy metal and is relatively easy to obtain. It is used in batteries, fuel, pesticides, paints, pipes and other places where resistance to corrosion is required. Most of the lead taken up by people and wildlife is stored in bones. Lead can affect red blood cells by reducing their ability to carry oxygen and shortening their life span. Lead may also damage nerve tissue which can result in brain disease.

Mercury occurs in several different forms. Mercury is used in the production of chlorine. It is also used as a catalyst in the production of some plastics. Industrial processes such as the production of chlorine and plastics are responsible for most of the environmental damage resulting from mercury. Our body has a limited ability to eliminate mercury. In the food web mercury becomes more concentrated as it is taken up by various organisms. In an aquatic environment, mercury can be absorbed by the plankton which are then consumed by fish. In addition, fish take up mercury through their gills and by eating

Minamata-An important lesson about mercury

A case of human mercury poisoning which occurred about forty years ago in the Minamata bay in Japan taught the world an important lesson about the dangers of mercury poisoning. A large plastics plant located near the Minamata bay used a mercury containing compound in a reaction to produce vinyl chloride a common plastic material. The left over mercury was dumped into the Bay along with other wastes from the plant. Though the mercury was in its less toxic inorganic state when dumped microorganisms at the bottom of the bay converted the mercury into its organic form. This organic mercury then entered into the tissues of fish which were in turn consumed by the people living in the area. The contaminated fish thus caused an outbreak of poisoning killing and affecting several people. Mothers who had eaten the contaminated fish gave birth to infants who showed signs of mercury poisoning. Mercury poisoning is thus called Minamata Disease.

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other fish contaminated with mercury. Generally older the fish greater is the mercury concentration in its body. Birds that eat the fish concentrate even more mercury in their bodies. It is a cumulative poison (it builds up in the body over long periods of time) and is known to cause brain damage.

Thousands of chemicals are used in industry everyday. When used incorrectly or inappropriately they can become health hazards. PCBs (Polychlorinated biphenyls) are resistant to fire and do not conduct electricity very well which makes them excellent materials for several industrial purposes. Rainwater can wash PCBs out of disposal areas in dumps and landfills thus contaminating water. PCBs do not break down very rapidly in the environment and thus retain their toxic characteristics. They cause long term exposure problems to both humans and wildlife. PCBs are concentrated in the kidneys and liver and thus cause damage. They cause reproductive failure in birds and mammals.

Vinyl chloride is a chemical that is widely used in the manufacture of plastic. Usually people are only exposed to high levels of vinyl chloride if they work with it or near it but exposure can also occur from vinyl chloride gas leaks. After a long continuous exposure (one to three years) in humans, vinyl chloride can cause deafness, vision problems, circulation disorders and bone deformities. Vinyl chloride can also cause birth defects.

It is essential to substitute the use of PCBs and vinyl chloride with chemicals that are less toxic. Polyvinyl chloride use can be lowered by reducing our use of plastics. Thus by reducing waste, encouraging recycling and using products that are well made and durable we can greatly reduce our consumption of these chemicals thus curtailing our exposure to these substances.

We may not realize it but many household chemicals can be quite toxic to humans as well as wildlife. Most of the dangerous substances in our homes are found in various kinds of cleaners, solvents and products used in automotive care. When these products are used incorrectly they have the potential to be harmful.

Today the most common methods for disposing off hazardous wastes are land disposal and incineration. In countries where there is abundant land available for disposal for example, North America land disposal is the most widely used method. In countries like Europe and Japan where land is not readily available and is expensive, incineration is the preferred method for disposal. In spite of strong laws however illegal dumping of these wastes continues. Hazardous waste management must move beyond burying and burning. Industries need to be encouraged to generate less hazardous waste in their manufacturing processes. Although toxic wastes cannot be entirely eliminated, technologies are available for minimizing, recycling and treating wastes. An informed public can also contribute in a big way towards this end. It is essential for us to understand the ill effects of chemical substances so that we can make informed decisions about its use. We might decide that the benefits of the use of a toxic substance do not outweigh the risks and choose not to use it at all or we may decide that it is acceptable to use a substance under certain specific circumstances where it is adequately controlled and exposure to toxic levels is prevented.

5.4 ROLE OF AN INDIVIDUAL IN PREVENTION OF POLLUTION

There are a host of environmental problems caused by human actions on the environment. If we are to respond to these problems we have to recognize that each of us is individually responsible for the quality of the environment we live in. Our personal actions can either worsen or improve our environmental quality. Several

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people may feel that environmental problems can be solved with quick technological fixes. While a majority of individuals would want a cleaner environment, not many of them want to make major changes in their lifestyle that could contribute to a cleaner environment. Decisions and actions taken by individuals to a very large extent determine the quality of life for everyone. This necessitates that individuals should not only be aware of various environmental issues and the consequences of their actions on the environment but should also make a firm resolve to develop environmentally ethical lifestyles.

With the help of solar energy, natural processes developed over billions of years can indefinitely renew the topsoil, water, air, forests, grasslands and wildlife on which all forms of life depend, but only as long as we do not use these potentially renewable resources faster than they are replenished. Some of our wastes can be diluted, decomposed and recycled by natural processes indefinitely as long as these processes are not overloaded. Natural processes also provide services of flood prevention, erosion control at no costs at all. We must therefore learn to value these resources and use them sustainably.

Concepts that help individuals contribute towards a better quality of our environment and human life.

- Develop respect or reverence for all forms of life.

- Each individual must try to answer four basic questions:
  Where do the things that I consume come from?
  What do I know about the place where I live?
  How am I connected to the earth and other living things?
  What is my purpose and responsibility as a human being?

- Try to plant trees wherever you can and more importantly take care of them. They reduce air pollution.

- Reduce the use of wood and paper products wherever possible. Manufacturing paper leads to pollution and loss of forests which releases oxygen and takes up carbon dioxide. Try to recycle paper products and use recycled paper wherever possible.

- From the mail you receive reuse as many envelopes that you can.

- Do not buy furniture, doors, window frames made from tropical hardwoods such as teak and mahogany. These are forest based.

- Help in restoring a degraded area near your home or join in an afforestation program.

- Use pesticides in your home only when absolutely necessary and use them in as small amounts as necessary. Some insect species help to keep a check on the populations of pest species.

- Advocate organic farming by asking your grocery store to stock vegetables and fruits grown by an organic method. This will automatically help to reduce the use of pesticides.

- Reduce the use of fossil fuels by either walking up a short distance using a car pool, sharing a bike or using public transport. This reduces air pollution.

- Shut off the lights and fans when not needed.

- Don't use aerosol spray products and commercial room air fresheners. They damage the ozone layer.

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- Do not pour pesticides, paints, solvents, oil or other products containing harmful chemicals down the drain or on the ground.

- Buy consumer goods that last, keep them as long as possible and have them repaired as far as possible instead of disposing them off. Such products end up in landfills that could pollute ground water.

- Buy consumer goods ages in refillable glass containers instead of cans or throwaway bottles.

- Use rechargeable batteries.

- Try to avoid asking for plastic carry bags when you buy groceries or vegetables or any other items. Use your own cloth bag instead.

- Use sponges and washable cloth napkins, dish towels and handkerchiefs instead of paper ones.

- Don't use throwaway paper and plastic plates and cups when reusable versions are available.

- Recycle all newspaper, glass, aluminum and other items accepted for recycling in your area. You might have to take a little trouble to locate such dealers.

- Set up a compost bin in your garden or terrace and use it to produce manure for your plants to reduce use of fertilizers.

- Try to lobby and push for setting up garbage separation and recycling programs in your localities.

- Choose items that have the least packaging or no packaging.

- Start individual or community composting or vemicomposting plants in your neighborhood and motivate people to join in.

- Do not litter the roads and surroundings just because the sweeper from the Municipal Corporation will clean it up. Take care to put trash into dustbins or bring it back home with you where it can be appropriately disposed.

- You must realize that you cannot do everything and have solutions for every problem in the world. You can however concentrate on issues that you feel strongly about and can do something about. Focusing your energy on a particular issue will help you get better results.

- You could join any of the several NGOs that exist in our country or become volunteers. Organize small local community meetings to discuss positive approaches of pollution prevention.

- Learn about the biodiversity of your own area. Understand the natural and cultural assets. This would help you to develop a sense of pride in your city/town/village and will also help you understand the problems facing their survival.

- You cannot improve your world by not voting. You have the option to make a choice rather than complain later on.

- It is important that you do not get discouraged at the first sign of trouble. Do not dwell on the negative aspects. But take positive actions wherever you can to make the world a better place to live in.

- When talking to elected officials always be courteous and reasonable. You may disagree with a particular position but be re-

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spectful in doing so as you will gain little by being hostile and brash.

- Take care to put into practice what you preach. Remember environment protection begins with YOU.

5.5 POLLUTION CASE STUDIES

A case study of groundwater pollution in India

An example of groundwater pollution caused by excessive extraction is that fluoride contamination. Fluorisis is not a localized problem. It has spread across 19 states and across a variety of ecological regions ranging from the Thar desert, the Gangetic plains and the Deccan plateau. Each of these regions are distinct in terms of rainfall, soil type, groundwater recharge regime, climatic conditions and hydrology. High fluoride concentration in groundwater is a natural phenomenon in several countries such as China, Sri Lanka, West Indies, Spain, Holland, Italy and Mexico. Experts claim that a fluoride belt stretches across the Middle East across Pakistan and India and then into Southeast Asia and the South of China. According to a report of the Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water mission, the bedrock of the Indian peninsula consists of a number of fluoride bearing minerals. When the bedrock weathers the fluoride leaches into water and the soil. Although the Indian peninsular bedrock has always been the same, this problem has only surfaced during the last three decades. This is related to the over extraction of groundwater which has resulted in the tapping of aquifers with high fluoride concentrations.

The beginnings of this phenomenon can be traced back to the 1970s and the 1980s when there was massive state investment in rural water development for irrigation as well as for drinking. Encouraged by state subsidies on diesel and electricity, people invested in diesel and submersible pumps in a bid to extract groundwater through borewells. This policy aggravated the fluoride problem.

Fluoride mainly enters the human body through drinking water where 96 to 99 percent of it combines with the bones as it has an affinity for calcium phosphate in the bones. Excess intake of fluoride can lead to dental fluorosis, skeletal fluorosis or non-skeletal fluorosis. Dental fluorosis is characterized by discoloured, blackened, mottled or chalky white teeth. Skeletal fluorosis leads to severe and permanent bone and joint deformities. Non-skeletal fluorosis leads to gastro-intestinal problems and neurological disorders. Fluoride can damage the foetus and adversely affect the IQ of children.

Once fluoride is detected in water, the only solution is to deflouridate it. Various technologies are available for this process. However the type of technology to be selected depends upon the fluoride levels in the water and the volume of water to be deflouridated. None of the Indian technologies are however fool-proof. Deflouridation plants and household water treatment kits are stop-gap solutions.

A case study of pesticide pollution in India

One of the most terrifying effects of pesticide contamination of ground water came to light when pesticide residues were found in bottled water. Between July and December 2002, the Pollution Monitoring Laboratory of the New Delhi based Center for Science and Environment (CSE) analysed 17 brands of bottled water both packaged drinking water and packaged natural mineral water commonly sold in areas that fall within the national capital region of Delhi. Pesticide residues of organochlorine and organophosphorus pesticides which are most commonly used in India were found in all the samples. Among organochlorines, gamma-hexachlorocyclohexane (lindane) and DDT were

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prevalent while among organophosphorus pesticides, Malathion and Chlorpyrifos were most common. All these were present above permissible limits specified by the European Economic Community, which is the norm, used all over Europe.

One may wonder as to how these pesticide residues get into bottled water that is manufactured by several big companies. This can be traced to several facts. There is no regulation that the bottled water industry must be located in 'clean' zones. Currently the manufacturing plants of most brands are situated in the dirtiest industrial estates or in the midst of agricultural fields. Most companies use bore wells to pump out water from the ground from depths varying from 24m to even 152 m below the ground. The raw water samples collected from the plants also reveled the presence of pesticide residues. This clearly indicated that the source of pesticide residues in the polluted groundwater are used to manufacture the bottled water. This is despite the fact that all bottled water plants use a range of purification methods. Thus obviously the fault lies in the treatment methods used.

These plants use the membrane technology where the water is filtered using membranes with ultra-small pores to remove fine suspended solids and all bacteria and protozoa and even viruses. While nanofiltration can remove insecticides and herbicides it is expensive and thus rarely used. Most industries also use an activated charcoal adsorption process, which is effective in removing organic pesticides but not heavy metals. To remove pesticides the plants use reverse osmosis and granular activated charcoal methods. Thus even though manufacturers claim to use these process the presence of pesticide residues points to the fact that either manufacturers do not use the treatment process effectively or only treat a part of the raw water.

The low concentration of pesticide residues in bottled water do not cause acute or immediate effect. However repeated exposure even to extremely miniscule amounts can result in chronic effects like cancer, liver and kidney damage, disorders of the nervous system, damage to the immune system and birth defects.

Similarly six months after CSE reported pesticide residues in bottled water it also found these pesticides in popular cold drink brands sold across the country. This is because the main ingredient in a cold drink or a carbonated non-alcoholic beverage is water and there are no standards specified for water to be used in these beverages in India.

There were no standards for bottled water in India till on September 29, 2000 the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issued a notification (no759(E)) amending the Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules, 1954. The BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) certification mark became mandatory for bottled water from March 29, 2001. However the parameters for pesticide residues remained ambiguous. Following the report published by CSE in Down to Earth, Vol 11, no. 18, a series of Committees were established and eventually on 18th July 2003 amendments were made in the Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules stating that pesticide residues considered individually should not exceed 0.0001mg.lit and the total pesticide residues will not be more than 0.0005 mg/lit that the analysis shall be conducted by using internationally established test methods meeting the residue limits specified herein. This notification came into force from January 1, 2004.

A case study of river pollution in India

Almost all the rivers in India are polluted. The causes of pollution may also be more or less similar. This is a case study of the river Damodar as reported in *Down to Earth*. The 563 km long

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Damodar river originates near Chandwa village in the Chhotanagpur hills in Bihar's Palamau district. It flows through one of the richest mineral belts in the world before draining into the Hooghly, about 50 km south of Calcutta. Indian industry depends heavily on this region as 60 percent of the coal consumed in our country comes from the Chhotanagpur belt. Coal based industries of all types dot the area because of locational advantages and the easy availability of water and power. In addition various industries such as the steel, cement, fertilizer and explosive plants are also located here. The river Damodar is polluted with minerals, mine rejects and toxic effluents. Both its water and its sand are infested by coal dust and waste from these industries. There are seven thermal power plants in the Damodar valley. The states of Bihar and West Bengal depend almost entirely on this area for their power requirements. These power plants not only consume a lot of water but also dump ash in the valley.

Mining

As underground mines cannot keep pace with the rising demand, 60 percent of the coal extracted from the area comes from open cast mines which are responsible for serious land degradation. The disposal of rock and soil extracted along with the coal only adds to the problem.

Industries

The industries in the area do not have proper effluent treatment plants. Among the big coal based industries the washeries account for the bulk of the pollution in terms of the total suspended solids (TSS), oil and grease. About 20 percent of the coal handled goes out in the form of slurry which is deposited in the ponds outside. After the slurry settles, coalfine (the sediment) is collected manually. Due to inadequate retrieval methods very often the water discharges into the river from the pond carries high amounts of fine coal particles and oil thus polluting the river. The other major coal based polluters are the coke oven plants that heat coal to temperatures as high as 1100°C in the absence of oxygen to prepare it for use in blast furnaces and foundries. The volatile components in the coal are removed, leaving hot, non-volatile coke in the oven which is washed with huge quantities of water. This water that contains oil and suspended particles is then discharged into the river.

Flyash from the thermal power plants

Only one of the thermal power plants has an electrostatic precipitator to collect the fly ash while the other just make do with mechanical dust collectors. As most of these plants are located on the banks of the river the fly ash eventually finds its way into the river. The bottom ash from the boilers is mixed with water to form a slurry which is then drained into ash ponds. Most of the ponds are full and in several cases the drainage pipes are choked. The slurry is therefore directly discharged into the river.

Effects

The river and its tributaries are the largest source of drinking water for the huge population that lives in the valley. On April 2, 1990 about 200,000 litres of furnace oil spilled into the river from the Bokaro Steel Plant. This oil traveled 150 km downstream to Durgapur. For a week after the incident five million people drank contaminated water in which the oil levels were 40 to 80 times higher than the permissible value of 0.03 mg/l.

The Damodar Action Plan an end-of-the pipe pollution treatment scheme seeks to tackle effluents. One viable option could be to switch to less polluting industries and cleaner technology. This would need strong Government initiative and also a mass movement by people.

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5.6 DISASTER MANAGEMENT: FLOODS, EARTHQUAKES, CYCLONES, LANDSLIDES

The Indian subcontinent is very vulnerable to droughts, floods, cyclones, earthquakes, landslides, avalanches and forest fires. Among the 36 states and Union territories in the country, 22 are prone to disasters.

Among all the disasters that occur in the country, floods are the most frequently occurring natural disasters, due to the irregularities of the Indian monsoon. About 75 percent of the annual rainfall in India is concentrated in three to four months of the monsoon season. As a result there is a very heavy discharge from the rivers during this period causing widespread floods. Approximately 40 million hectares of land in the country has been identified as being prone to floods. Major floods are mainly caused in the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin which carries 60 percent of the total river flow of our country.

India has a long coastline of 5700 kms, which is exposed to tropical cyclones arising in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian sea. The Indian Ocean is one of the six major cyclone prone regions of the world. In India, cyclones occur usually between April and May and also between October and December. The eastern coastline is more prone to cyclones as it is hit by about 80 percent of the total cyclones generated in the region.

Droughts are a perennial feature in some states of India. Sixteen percent of the country's total area is drought prone. Drought is a significant environmental problem as it is caused by a lower than average rainfall over a long period of time. Most of the drought prone areas identified by the Government lie in the arid and semi-arid areas of the country.

Earthquakes are considered to be one of the most destructive natural hazards. The impact of this phenomenon occurs with so little warning that it is almost impossible to make preparations against damages and collapse of buildings. About 50 to 60 percent of India is vulnerable to seismic activity of varying intensities. Most of the vulnerable areas are located in the Himalayan and sub-Himalayan regions.

From management to mitigation of disasters

Till very recently the approach towards dealing with natural disasters has been post disaster management involving problems such as evacuation, warnings, communications, search and rescue, fire-fighting, medical and psychiatric assistance, provision of relief, shelter, etc. After the initial trauma and the occurrence of the natural disaster is over and reconstruction and rehabilitation is done by people, NGOs and the Government, its memories are relegated to history.

It is evident today that human activities are responsible for accelerating the frequency and severity of natural disasters. Natural occurrences such as floods, earthquakes, cyclones, etc. will always occur. They are a part of the environment that we live in. However destruction from natural hazards can be minimized by the presence of a well functioning warning system combined with preparedness on part of the community that will be affected. Thus though traditionally disaster management consisted primarily of reactive mechanisms, the past few years have witnessed a gradual shift towards a more proactive, mitigation based approach.

Disaster management is a multidisciplinary area in which a wide range of issues that range from forecasting, warning, evacuation, search and rescue, relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation are included. It is also multi-sectoral as it involves administrators, scientists, planners, volunteers and communities. These roles and activities span

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the pre-disaster, during disaster and post disaster plans. Since their activities are complementary as well as supplementary to each other there is a critical need for coordinating these activities.

In order to transfer the benefits of scientific research and development to the communities links must be developed between scientific communities and field agencies. Coordination between Government agencies and NGOs needs to be built up so that overlap of activities may be avoided and linkages between the Government and communities are established.

Today we have a range of early warning systems for a range of natural hazards. Although they are more accurate than before and can help in prediction it is not enough to ensure communities are safe from disasters. This is where disaster mitigation can play an important role. Mitigation means lessening the negative impact of the natural hazards. It is defined as sustained action taken to reduce long term vulnerability of human life and property to natural hazards. While the preparatory, response and the recovery phases of emergency management relate to specific events, mitigation activities have the potential to produce repetitive benefits over time.

Certain guidelines if followed can result in an effective mitigation program.

- Pre-disaster mitigation can help in ensuring faster recovery from the impacts of disasters.
- Mitigation measures must ensure protection of the natural and cultural assets of the community.
- Hazard reduction methods must take into account the various hazards faced by the affected community and their desires and priorities.
- Any mitigation program must also ensure effective partnership between Government, scientific, private sector, NGOs and the community.

The main elements of a mitigation strategy are as follows:

Risk assessment and Vulnerability analysis

This involves identification of hot spot areas of prime concern, collection of information on past natural hazards, information of the natural ecosystems and information on the population and infrastructure. Once this information is collected a risk assessment should be done to determine the frequency, intensity, impact and the time taken to return to normalcy after the disaster. The assessment of risk and vulnerabilities will need to be revised periodically. A regular mechanism will therefore have to be established for this. The use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) a computer program can be a valuable tool in this process as the primary data can be easily updated and the corresponding assessments can be made.

Applied research and technology transfer

There is a need to establish or upgrade observation equipment and networks, monitor the hazards properly, improve the quality of forecasting and warning, disseminate information quickly through the warning systems and undertake disaster simulation exercises.

Thus space technologies such as remote sensing, satellite communications and Global Positioning Systems have a very important role to play. Government organizations like ISRO (Indian Space Research Organization) can play a vital role. Similarly Government organizations the National Building Research Organization, the Meteorological Department, Irrigation Department, etc. can undertake applied research for devising locale specific mitigation strategies in

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collaboration with educational institutions or Universities.

Such steps could lead to the formulation of locale specific mitigation measures. A combination of scientific knowledge and expertise with the community based mitigation measures would not only enhance the database but would also form the basis of a successful mitigation strategy.

Public awareness and training

One of the most critical components of a mitigation strategy is the training to be imparted to the officials and staff of the various departments involved at the state and the district level. This enables sharing of information and methodology. The success of a mitigation strategy will depend to a large extent on the inter-sectional, inter-departmental coordination and efficient teamwork. Thus a training program that is designed after assessment of gaps in knowledge, skills and attitude with respect to the various tasks that need to be undertaken is a vital component.

Institutional mechanisms

The most important need at the National level is to strengthen or develop the capacity to undertake disaster mitigation strategies. There is a need to emphasize on proactive and pre-disaster measures rather than post disaster response. It is thus essential to have a permanent administrative structure which can monitor the developmental activities across departments and provides suggestions for necessary mitigation measures. The National Disaster Management Center (NDMC) can perform such a task. Professionals like architects, structural engineers, doctors, chemical engineers who are involved with management of hazardous chemicals can be asked to form groups that can design specific mitigation measures.

Incentives and resources for mitigation

To a very large extent the success of mitigation programs will depend upon the availability of continued funding. There is thus a need to develop mechanisms to provide stable sources of funding for all mitigation programs. This will include incentives for relocation of commercial and residential activities outside the disaster prone areas. Housing finance companies should make it mandatory for structures in such hazard prone areas to follow special building specifications. The introduction of disaster linked insurance should be explored and should cover not only life but also household goods, cattle, structures and crops.

Landuse planning and regulations

Long term disaster reduction efforts should aim at promoting appropriate land-use in the disaster prone areas. Separation of industrial areas from residential areas, maintaining wetlands as buffer zones for floods, creation of public awareness of proper land practices and formation of land-use policies for long term sustainable development is imperative.

Hazard resistant design and construction

In areas that are prone to disasters protection can be enhanced by careful selection of sites and the way the buildings are built. Thus it is essential to promote the knowledge of disaster resistant construction techniques and practices among engineers, architects and technical personnel.

Structural and Constructional reinforcement of existing buildings

It is also possible to reduce the vulnerability of existing buildings through minor adaptations or alterations thereby ensuring their safety. This can be done by insertion of walls on the outside of the building, buttresses, walls in the interior of the building, portico fill-in-walls, specially an-

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chored frames, covering of columns and beams, construction of new frame system, placing residential electrical equipment above flood level, designing water storage tanks to be able to withstand cyclonic winds, earthquakes and floods, etc.

Floods and mitigation measures

The lower plain regions of India in particular Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal in respect of the Ganga and Assam in respect of the Brahmaputra suffer from the adverse effects of floods every year. The Ganga Brahmaputra basin receives maximum run off within the three monsoon months. Based on hydrological studies carried out, it is estimated that only 18 percent of the rainwater can be stored in dams, reservoirs, etc. while 82 percent of the rainwater flows through rivers ultimately into the sea. Floods are therefore a recurring phenomenon in our country.

Floods can be caused by natural, ecological or anthropogenic factors either individually or as a combined result. Anthropogenic activities such as deforestation and shifting cultivation can also contribute to floods. Forests on the hill slopes normally exert a sponge effect soaking up the abundant rainfall and storing it before releasing it in small amounts over a period of time. However when the forests are cleared the rivers turn muddy and swollen during the wet monsoon season and run dry later on in the year during the drier periods. An increasing proportion of the rainfall is therefore released shortly after precipitation in the form of floods.

The mitigation measures for floods include both structural and non-structural measures. The structural measures include:

- Reservoirs for impounding monsoon flows to be released in a regulated manner after the peak flood flow passes.
- Prevention of over-bank spilling by the construction of embankments and floodwalls.
- Improvement of flow conditions in the channel and anti-erosion measures.
- Improved drainage.

The non-structural measures include:

- Flood plain management such as Flood Plain Zoning and Flood Proofing including Disaster Preparedness
- Maintaining wetlands
- Flood forecasting and warning services
- Disaster relief, flood fighting and public health measures
- Flood insurance

Earthquakes and mitigation measures

It has been several years since the earthquake struck Gujarat on January 26, 2001. In these years rehabilitation has been done on a massive scale. Gujarat's experience has taught that building shelters with less vulnerability to earthquakes should also take into consideration the specific needs of the victims instead of being a top down approach. The role of NGOs in this is very important. Their strength lies in their manpower, informality in operations and valuable human resources. Their ability to reach out to the community and sensitivity to local traditions is an asset in such situations. A report on the various initiatives in Gujarat reported in Down to Earth (Vol 12, No. 2) by Mihir Bhatt throws light on the various developments that have taken place after the earthquake. According to the report the initiatives of the International Fund for

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Agriculture Development in supporting the Self Employed Women's Association and the Government's initiative in community based livelihood security for earthquakes and drought victims have the potential to shape future disaster response and development projects in Gujarat. Similarly the Gujarat Woman's Economic Development Corporation initiative in reviving women's businesses after the calamity also provides many practical lessons in regenerating local economies and artisan markets. This project supported by the Asian Development Bank, puts premium on investments in income generation and asset building after a natural disaster. The farming kits provided to affected farmers by Gujarat's agriculture ministry is also showing promising results after two seasons. The author however states that coordination between Government, local NGOs and local community initiatives both for rescue as well as rehabilitation needs to be strengthened as this can cause delays, overlaps and waste of relief material and efforts.

Cyclones and mitigation measures

Tropical cyclones are the worst natural hazards in the tropics. They are large revolving vortices in the atmosphere extending horizontally from 150 to1000 km and vertically from the surface to 12 to 14 km. These are intense low-pressure areas. Strong winds spiraling anti clockwise in the Northern Hemisphere blow around the cyclone center at the lower level. At the higher levels the sense of rotation is just opposite to that at the lower level. They generally move 300 to 5000 km per day over the ocean. While moving over the ocean they pick up energy from the warm water of the ocean and some of them grow into a devastating intensity. On an average about 5 to 6 tropical cyclones form in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea every year out of which 2 to 3 may be severe. More cyclones form in the Bay of Bengal than in the Arabian Sea. The main dangers from cyclones are very strong winds, torrential rains and high storm tides. Most of the causalities are caused by coastal inundation by storm tides. This is often followed by heavy rainfall and floods. Storm surges cause the greatest destruction.

Although one cannot control cyclones, the effects of cyclones can be mitigated through effective and efficient mitigation policies and strategies. A brief description of the same is given below.

Installation of early warning systems: Such systems fitted along the coastlines can greatly assist forecasting techniques thus helping in early evacuation of people in the storm surge areas.

Developing communication infrastructure: Communication plays a vital role in cyclone disaster mitigation and yet this is one of the first services that gets disrupted during cyclones. Amateur Radio has today emerged as a second line unconventional communications systems and is an important tool for disaster mitigation.

Developing shelter belts: Shelter belts with plantations of trees can act as effective wind and tide breakers. Apart from acting as effective windbreakers and protecting soil crops from being damaged they prevent soil erosion.

Developing community cyclone shelters: Cyclone shelters at strategic locations can help minimizing the loss of human life. In the normal course these shelters can be used as public utility buildings.

Construction of permanent houses: There is a need to build appropriately designed concrete houses that can withstand high winds and tidal waves.

Training and education: Public awareness programs that inform the population about their response to cyclone warnings and preparedness can go a long way in reducing causalities.

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Landuse control and settlement planning: No residential and industrial units should be ideally permitted in the coastal belt of 5 km from the sea as it is the most vulnerable belt. No further growth of settlements in this region should allowed. Major settlements and other important establishments should be located beyond 10 km from the sea.

Landslides and mitigation measures

Landslides are recurring phenomena in the Himalayan region. In the recent years however intensive construction activity and the destabilizing forces of nature have aggravated the problem. Landslides occur as a result of changes on a slope, sudden or gradual, either in its composition, structure, hydrology or vegetation. The changes can be due to geology, climate, weathering, land-use and earthquakes.

A significant reduction in the hazards caused by landslides can be achieved by preventing the exposure of population and facilities to landslides and by physically controlling the landslides. Developmental programs that involve modification of the topography, exploitation of natural resources and change in the balance load on the ground should not be permitted. Some critical measures that could be undertaken to prevent further landslides are drainage measures, erosion control measures such a bamboo check dams, terracing, jute and coir netting and rockfall control measures such as grass plantation, vegetated dry masonry wall, retaining wall and most importantly preventing deforestation and improving afforestation.

Disasters cannot be totally prevented. However early warning systems, careful planning and preparedness on part of the vulnerable community would help in minimizing the loss of life and property due to these disasters.

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