

In Search of Harmony Between Life and Environment

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ABSTRACT This paper discusses the problems that small societies are facing because of environmental degradation. Although they are the main sufferers, the impact of eco-spheric destruction is felt by all communities, and the developed and the developing worlds. For checking eco-despoliation, the local participation is essential, and ethno-ecological knowledge is indispensable for framing appropriate culturally-rooted plans of development. Issues of ecology and economy, it is argued here, can be reconciled through sustainable development.

'Babooji Bhim was our ancestor. About one hundred and fifty years ago, he came to this village from Jalayana. I remember when I was a child, this village had thick forest cover. In fact people of my caste have always migrated with their animals (*dhan*) in search of fodder and vegetation. At that time, the forest was very dense. If a person ran behind the trees, you could not have seen him even in broad day light. There were so many trees... Now the things have changed. There are very few trees, and that too widely dispersed. No fodder is available for the animals. There is a great scarcity of water. Our sheep invariably live away in the wastelands, forests and grazing grounds of Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh; the old people, the infirm, the women and the children cannot bear the hardship of travel, so they live in villages. The able-bodied men are always with the *dang* (the herding-migratory group)...', in these words an old herder of Pali-Marwar described the plight of his community. Another one from Jaitpura village of Pali added, 'Water is a scarce commodity. We drink water from the village ponds (*talabs*) which are annually replenished by the rain. If it does not rain, as happened three years ago, we go thirsty. We have two ponds in our village and as the things stand now, they can provide us water for the next five months. In case our women are unable to bring water from the

pond to the house, we pay twenty-five paise per pitcher (*matka*) to those who home-deliver water pitchers. The ponds are dirty—the animals are washed in it, buffaloes keep lying in it; when mourners return from cremation ground, they bathe in it; for the village urchins the ponds serve as "swimming pools" and "play grounds"... It was in 1987 that I came to Jaitpura as a school teacher. That year was worse ... there were no rains. I remember I used to get just one pitcher of water everyday, and while washing my face, I kept a brass plate on the floor in which was collected the used water. Later it could be used for washing hands or face... The pond water is contaminated. My children suffer from stomach ailments. My wife is ill these days. She is suffering from gastric problems...'

These excerpts from two interviews give a pathetic description of the acute shortage of resources that Indian villages are facing. With the passage of time that is registering ceaseless episodes of deforestation, erosion of the soil, warming of the planet, disappearance of many floral and faunal species, and depletion of resources, the problems of living and survival are multiplying. The effects of eco-degradation are being felt more by small communities—the tribals and peasants—whose dependence on their respective eco-systems is both qualitatively and quantitatively much more than is the case with

urban and town dwellers.

Field workers in tribal and rural communities know how sensitive and knowledgeable the people are about their habitat, animals, environmental changes and ecological cycle, and they regulate their habitual patterns accordingly. For example, if the hands are to be washed, the people go to a nearby plant or tree, wash their hands there, so that the used water does not go waste. Such a sensitivity to the environment is inculcated in the process of upbringing: the leaves are not wrenched, the trees are not felled, the animals are not hurt or killed, because they all have life in the same sense as we have. The world of animals and plants is modelled and speculated on the basis of human life—if we have the right to live, they also have an equal right to live and flourish, and we do not have any right to cause destruction to their living. And in case we unleash terror on them, we shall be punished by the Almighty who has created everything in this world—in traditional ethos, which is still alive in our villages, there have always been punitive sanctions safeguarding the environment against any instance of despoliation and degradation.

Now the same people who have been vanguards of their habitat and who use its resources frugally are passing through the tormenting crises of resource-scarcity. As the index of scarcity rises, the traditional occupations which hitherto were synergistic with the environment are given up, and the people *en masse* enter the city and town system in various marginal occupations. Take the case of the pastoral communities in India. An acute shortage of fodder and water close to their villages drives the pastoralists away from their homes. In western Rajasthan, they find it extremely hard to survive—in some cases, they have permanently settled down far away from their native places on some wasteland, or are on move for a period of six to nine months. Chiefly because of an acute scarcity of resources, most of these pastoral-nomads want to give up their traditional occupation of herding. They want their children to acquire modern

education, enter new professions where at least the life is secure. Once they succeed in entering urban-based professions and occupational groups, they feel that 'they will be released from the acuteness of environmental pressures'. Pastoralism has so far occupied a marginal place in India's development policy and hence problems of the pastoralists remain unalleviated.

The point we have to keep in mind at this juncture is that the relation of tribal and rural people with their environment is much more intimate than it is of the city dwellers. The tribals and peasants eke out their livelihood by coming into a direct relationship with the environment. An adverse change in it because of natural calamity or extraneously-originated non-adaptive changes is likely to thwart the basic ingredients of a people's subsistence. Intimacy with the environment that develops in tribes and peasants is absent in urban inhabitants because the latter are non-food producers; as urban sociologists often say, they are the non-agricultural consumers of the produce that is transacted from the rural societies. As a result, neither they are knowledgeable about their environment nor sensitive to it. Less they realise that it is on the harmony of the environment at the level of food-producing communities that their existence is dependent on. If the local eco-systems collapse, if the harmony between human occupation and environmental resources is jeopardised, the first sufferers will be the people who for times immemorial have been resting on the local resources using them thrifly, but the impact of this disharmony will yield unlivable consequences for the world as a whole.

It is futile to discuss the environmental problems of a community in isolation from the world system, and here one may think in terms of various levels of contradiction between poor and rich, rural and urban, developed and developing nations, and between imperialism and oppressed nations of the world. In perspective of resource scarcity and also the desire to save one's eco-system, notwithstanding if the axe falls on the poorer and the deprived, the developed world is

incessantly importing its resources from the outside, the developing world. The Chipko leader, Sunderlal Bahuguna, once said, "Affluence of the industrial world is based on plundering our resources. The Third World, which is basically in the tropics, today exports large quantities of hardwood to the three markets of Japan, America and Europe. In 1950, the tropics exported a mere 4.2 million cubic metres. In 1980, we exported 66 million cubic metres. Switzerland has its own forests, but for *coffins* they import wood from Africa!" (Bahuguna, 1985: 42-45).

Here, attention is to be drawn to a set of entwined ideas:

- i. environment is not a non-political issue;
- ii. the environmental resources are limited—either they are not-so-easily renewable or their renewability is governed by a harmony obtaining between a number of environmental factors;
- iii. an exponential increase in population has caused a decline in the carrying capacity of the eco-system;
- iv. more important than population growth is the urban-generated ethos of materialism that has become cardinal to any contemporary definition of 'style of life', which is responsible for a reckless and mindless 'exploitation' of resources;
- v. a transformation from the values of 'collectivity' to that of 'individualism', and a near disappearance of the 'communitarian' way of living, has opened up a state where the resources that at one time were collectively used are now being demanded (and monopolised) individually, for every one;
- vi. the existing resources are not only scarce, they are also polluted—the resources for which the honorific term 'life-giving system' is used, are contaminated, urgently demanding a technology that decontaminates (and de-toxifies) them, and it may be noted here that the technology to reduce pollution level has the likelihood of creating another kind of pollution whose

- impact might surface several years later;
- vii. since the resources are scarce, competition for their ownership is fast accentuated, and we witness a polarity between those who own the environmental resources and those who do not;
- viii. in a typical Marxian sense, those who have their resources geometrically multiplying also maximise their life-chances, and those deprived of them gradually depress into the impoverished category;
- ix. the limitation of these resources keeps on signalling the Doomsday, and as the unthoughtful, unfuturistic, and unaltruistic exploitation of nature and her resources continues unabated just because it has to meet the legitimate and just demands of survival and, more important, to sustain life chances of a rich minority, the 'Day of Judgement' will be sooner approachable than later, and this will be for all—the environmentally poor perishing sooner, while the environmentally rich, a little later.

We begin with the premise that environment is a political issue. There are contesting classes for the ownership of environmental resources; there are political decisions, especially in developing countries aspiring to achieve fast modernisation typically of the Western style, that support and fund various development programmes which destroy the environment of the small societies, seriously impairing their traditional modes of production, and also these development projects are detrimental to the whole eco-system in a long run; there are political decisions to reverse the trends of environmental degradation and economic confusion that come mainly because of a kind of development that is unsustainable; there are political strategies devised to free a developing nation from the never-ending patronage provided by the developed world so that the developed nation develops on its indigenous lines undetached from its historical legacy and moorings, and finally, there are political measures to ensure equitability in the

distribution of resources, to check their monopolisation by a minority.

Environment which at one time was peoples' issue, managed in light of the peoples' traditional knowledge, is now a specialised area. Its discourse is couched in scientific terminology. The procedures to handle it have been improvised on the basis of inter-disciplinary research and the movements to stop eco-degradation and restore harmony have relied—tacitly or explicitly—on one or the other political idiom. As a consequence of this nexus of politico-scientism, if you like, the people, who have locally managed the environment, made improvisations and discoveries, are gradually given a back seat: their traditional knowledge about environmental management, or their collective efforts to deal with any instance of eco-despoliation, holds no ground before the scientific research, on the one hand, and collective politics, on the other.

What type of trees are to be planted? Who decides this? Not the people, unless at all levels of a government's functioning the peoples' participation in programmes of social and agro-forestry is fully assured. The people, simply because they had been managing their environment fully without the aid of any foreign technology, *construct* their own concept of eco-system in which they live. The economic and medicinal properties of the plants and trees are known to them; they are knowledgeable about the animals and their behaviour, and in case they domesticate them, they are the local veterinarians; they have traditional methods to increase fertility of soils; variations in and nuances of climatic cycle are in their social frame; and all their knowledge regarding environment is well-knitted in a system of beliefs and practices.

We may prefer to use the term *ethno-ecology* to designate the peoples' locally created indigenous knowledge about their environment and its management. It may be distinguished from the knowledge of an eco-system that results from modern scientific investigation. These two sets of knowledge—of the peoples and of modern science—may be at variance, sometimes even

coming in conflict, and each of them is open to correction in light of the other. An imposition of the outsider's frame on the people and instructing them to follow a particular piece of advice, may be rejected because it does not have conformity with the insider's perspective. And since 'ecology is for the people' and they should be the first beneficiaries in any development project, their ethno-ecological knowledge is indispensable, if not exclusive, for reversing the escalating trend of environmental degradation.

Till now, we have tried to state that the ecological problems small communities are faced with have their genesis in exploitation (or over-exploitation) of their respective eco-systems by the outside world, the urban-industrial sector at home and developed nations at the international realm. The political economy of such relations need to be worked out in precise details with the implications of loans for development on precious environmental resources of the debtors, the Third World.

Secondly, our submission is that the transference of ecological problems from the paradigmatic axis of the people to the state management and scientific organisation always has the danger of ignoring (and also crushing) the local knowledge of forestry, agriculture, animal husbandry, etc. If the strategies of eco-amelioration have no sympathy with the local perspective and diagnosis of ecological problems, the likelihood is that they may fail to evoke full participation of the people. Thus, ethno-ecology needs to be integrated, wherever possible, with the modern scientific knowledge about the environment.

Earlier we said that no eco-system, or a concrete entity like village, can be isolated from a plexus of relations between local, regional, national and international systems. A sociological perspective, therefore, requires the study of a micro-system (a village, a community) in the macro-system (the wider level of analysis), with a proper working out (and analysis) of the interface between them. The issues at the macro-level affect all irrespective of the particular habitat people live in. Deforestation, for example,

destabilises soil and water regimes in watersheds; at the same time, it deprives a hunting and food-gathering community of its food. Disruptions in hydrological cycle or an increase in carbon dioxide in atmosphere, is a global problem; effects of deforestation on hunters and food-gatherers is a specific problem requiring special programmes of afforestation (of a particular variety of trees) and alternative economics for the affected. Keeping in view macro and micro levels of analysing environmental problems, one can identify four inter-related aspects according to which the problems have been attended to and solutions suggested and executed:

1. Reversal of eco-degradation programmes;
2. Promotion of eco-regeneration programmes;
3. Adherence to the concept of sustainable development; and
4. Micro-level planning for specific communities, tribes and villages.

One of the major issues in any discussion on ecological problems is of environmental degradation, pollution and contamination; it may emerge from the release of industrial waste and effluents in 'life-supporting systems'; it may be because of stagnant water which harbours various deadly parasites—people have no option but to drink it. My respondent from Jaitpura dreadfully feared the guinea-worm disease (locally called *nadu, bala*) he might contract by drinking the pond water.

At the macro-level, the list of items included in environmental degradation is long (see Starke, Ed. 1989)—some of them are really horrifying:

- Forests of the earth are diminishing. Tropical forests are shrinking by 11 million hectares per year. In India, it is estimated that the annual denudation of forest land is between 1.3 and 1.5 million hectares (Poffenberger, 1990:1).
- The topsoil on cropland is fast eroding annually.
- The earth's deserts are expanding: around

6 million hectares of new desert are formed annually.

- Thousands of lakes have dried up—thousands of plant and animal species are now extinct.
- Underground water tables are falling; groundwater is contaminated because of the pesticides.
- The global temperature is expected to rise at a rate of 0.1 to 0.2 degree centigrade per decade, increasing 2.4 to 5.1 degree centigrade by 2070 (Sinha, 1990).
- The sea level is estimated to rise between 4.7 feet and 7.1 feet by 2100.
- 'Greenhouse effect' has resulted from rising atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide. The production of chlorofluorocarbons is causing depletion of the ozone layer. The *State of the World-1988* report says, 'A dramatic depletion of ozone occurs over Antarctica each September, scientists have discovered, and each year since 1979 it has grown worse. By 1987, what had become known as the ozone "hole" was twice the size of the continental United States. Though the hole involves a series of as yet poorly understood chemical reactions, it could portend an unexpectedly rapid ozone depletion globally and translate into lowered crop output and rising skin cancer and eye damage as more ultraviolet radiation reaches the earth' (p.4).

What can be done in such a state of the environment? The cause of each malady—whether of pesticide poisoning, or mass extinction of species—is known, or at least tentatively known, and therefore appropriate measures to control environmental degradation may be devised. For controlling pesticide poisoning, alternative pest control methods should be discovered, industrial chemicals should be better managed; or for saving the species from becoming extinct, the biologists estimate that 'as many as 2000 species of mammals, reptiles, and birds will have to be bred in captivity to escape extinction as nat-

ural eco-systems are cleared and fragmented' (Starke, Ed. 1989: 116); or for minimising earth's warming, the buildup of carbon dioxide and the trace gases that collectively contribute to 'greenhouse effect' must be decelerated, and for energy use, the shift should be from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources. All these examples clearly state that for controlling any degree of pollution, a better pollution-control technology is needed.

Reversal of environmental degradation is firstly a pollution-curbing problem. Coupled with it are the programmes for regenerating the environment, greening the earth. Both reversal of eco-degradation programmes and promotion of eco-regeneration programmes are synergistically related: checking deforestation, for example, is essential for slowing 'greenhouse' effect. Both these programmes, rather than remaining elitistic or being confined to scientific personnel and technocrats only, must percolate to the people. They should be taught the use of pollution-free technology; their indigenous methods of safeguarding the environment need to be studied and incorporated with the scientific methods to green the earth, save its water, and help in stabilising the earth's climate.

The people have always been frugal users of their resources. They need wood for constructing their houses and implements. For fuel, they need fire-wood. These are subsistence needs, their fulfilment is imperative for survival. As the values of economic gain and maximization have not yet entered small societies—and if they have, they are of marginal importance—the resources are not seen as 'profit-generating entities'. More properly, they are visualised as 'subsistence-granting entities'. The notion of 'style of life' is qualitatively different in them as compared to urban-industrial societies. For these, only those resources indispensable for survival are to be made use of—the distinction between 'need' and 'want' on one hand, and 'survival' and 'luxury', on the other, is strictly kept. Luxury, if at all it could be called, finds expression in festal and ceremonial occasions—a death-cum-marriage

feast (*mausar*) in Western Rajasthan may require something like fifty to sixty thousand rupees, but the point is that this 'luxury' does not cause serious environmental damage. Moreover, a family is in a position to throw such a feast after three or four decades, chiefly because of the quantum of money that is required to be spent on it which generally leaves the people indebted.

If the local people use resources only for basic survival, then for whose needs are these resources marauded, over-exploited. There is no room for over-exploitation in a tribal or peasant system, but their habitats were always vulnerable to exploitation by non-producing consumers, the urban-industrial dwellers. Onset of industrialisation in the developing world required mass-scale consumption of ecological resources: ship building and construction of railway sleepers were two main developing activities which denuded the forests. Pre-industrial urbanisation was in line with the historical structure and value system of a society. In our culture, for example, where both our civilization and city were of orthogenetic origin, there was a continuation of the village-life values (*gemeinschaft* values) in the city: the ethos of frugality with respect to natural resources that characterised the villages was to be seen in pre-industrial cities. Even today, such respect can be seen in small towns and cities for resources. The people are villagers in all respects except that they live in concrete structures, are engaged in non-agricultural occupations, and mostly deal in monetised economy.

Urbanisation had an indigenous pattern which industrialisation did not have. It was on the Western model—the world that had pioneered the Industrial Revolution—that industries were installed in the colonies, almost all of them now constitute the Third World. One basic difference between pre-industrial urbanisation and industrial urbanisation is that production in the latter is on mass-scale. Household industries which dominate pre-industrial urban centres start declining with mass-scale industrialisation. With industrialisation in the erstwhile colonies, and now developing countries, it was not only that the

technological system and mode of production changed, the Western style of living, its dominant values and aspirational levels also started getting entrenched in the newly-industrialising world. Industrialisation and Westernisation, thus, went together. Industrialisation produced new wealth, and in case it went to local entrepreneurs, the riches needed for acquiring and sustaining the Western life styles were readily available. The moral axiom of Indian living, for example, 'simple living and high thinking' started getting evanescent before the glamour of the Western world.

Spiritualism and materialism are anti-thetical categories. Though not abrogating material existence, spiritualism—irrespective of the religion it is tied to—is always vehemently critical of 'reducing the existence to an enjoyment of luxuries'. Calvinism, for example, which promoted hard work, attainment of wealth and its re-investment, values of thrift and simple living, had imposed strong sanctions against using this wealth for personal enjoyment. In Protestant Ethic, materialism did not have an independent existence; it was religiously sanctioned. In other religions, a proper, just, thrifty, appropriate and relevant utilization of nature was advised (see Dwivedi, 1987). Attempts to plunder its resources were religiously condemned, to be punished super-naturally. The ethic born out of such a utilization of nature is well-summed up in Gandhiji's oft-quoted statements: 'The mind is a restless bird; the more it gets the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied. The more we indulge our passions the more unbridled they become' (Gandhi, 1938: 61). And, 'The earth can provide enough for every man's need, but not for every man's greed' (c.f. Pyarelal, 1958: 552). The idea of 'sustainable development' which is figuring in almost every writing on environment, is well imbued in this perspective, the Gandhian perspective, or what could be called the 'conserver ethic'.

Materialism which was subdued to spiritualism at one time gradually expressed its dominance. It was now free of the bridles of spiritual

sanctions and philosophies. It asserted its own values; happiness resulted not by denouncing reckless consumption, but by succumbing to it as much as possible. The life's aspirations—which at one time were salvational or of abnegation—were redefined. Every one should work hard to acquire goods and commodities because that alone gave happiness and security. And obviously once large kin-bonds dissolved because of industrialisation and urbanisation, and once kinship and neighbourhood affinity was weakened, the result was atomism, superficiality in relationships, a terrible insulation in social life, and in this state of isolation what gave security was 'money', 'accumulation of material goods and commodities'. One of the significant changes that came with urban-industrial life was the increasing dissolution of 'collective life' leading to emergence of individualism and preference for nucleated households.

Implications of both the consumeristic style of living and individualism on environment are very heavy. To sustain the values generated by consumerism and individualism, the environmental resources are carelessly 'exploited'; a minority is able to monopolize on their ownership, while a majority lives in poverty, squalor, malnutrition and hunger.

The eco-regeneration programmes form one answer to unrelenting devastation that goes on. The *State of the World-1988* report suggests three measures to overcome the crises: 'wholesale reordering of priorities', a 'fundamental restructuring of the global economy', and a 'quantum leap in inter-national cooperation on the scale that occurred after World War II' (p. 170). Along with inter-national cooperation in which the super-powers have to play an important role, change is to be introduced at the local level where the people in fact, as has been said earlier, have been managing the environment and have full knowledge about it, although wrapped up in traditional terms.

What kind of a strategy is needed for the local groups and villages? Working on Gandhian lines, Agarwal and Narain (1989) suggest that all rural

settlements must have legal control over its immediate environment and access to funds' (p. VIII), and the common property resources should be owned by the community (p. 13). Through traditional institutions, the community will be able to regulate the common property resources. This strategy needs an all-around support because environmental planning to be effective has to be micro-based, and it must envisage the village eco-system as holistic and integrated (p. vi). The eco-regeneration programmes should begin with local situation, improvising eco-specific development strategies. For formulating them, the local opinion, the ethno-ecological concepts, should have priority over anything imposed by the outsiders. Anthropologists studying the impact of development programmes note that the programmes devised by the developers are often incongruent either with the priorities of the people or come in intolerable conflict with the matrices of socio-cultural life. It is unfortunate that the developers want to meet the 'targets' set for them, and the 'targetted' ones remain unbenefitted by these programmes.

Why does it happen? Why benefits do not reach the people? Why people turn deaf ear to the developers, the foresters, and other implementors of change? The people may accept a social forestry programme, or a programme in which sewing machines are distributed on subsidy, but it is done under the threat of law. Unless the peoples' initiative crystallises and unless the people are convinced that they are the 'proud builders of their villages', to remember here what Jawahar Lal Nehru said in the context of Community Development Programmes, nothing substantial will emerge, no change will actually be heralded. As there are specificities of pollution, and there are specificities of methods—legal as well as scientific—to check pollution limits, there must be eco-specific, community-specific, integrated and holistic, culturally-rooted and culture-specific measures of development. There has to be, for example, a different programme for the camel and sheep tenders of Rajasthan and a different programme for the multi-caste village

in which they live. At some strata, these two programmes may overlap, but the specific ecological problems of the pastoralists may not be shared by the whole village, which may have full-fledged agriculturists living on their own wells and having independent methods of irrigation.

Whenever we talk of eco-regeneration programmes, the issue of development cannot be evaded. In the last decade, a lot has been written on the relationship between environment and development. Debate on this relationship has posed some inter-related questions: Does development cause destruction to the environment? If it does, should development be stopped? Can development be stopped? Can one have 'development without destruction'? Descending from the rhetoric of debate, we witness rallies against Narmada dam, and equally strong rallies for it. One set of arguments is presented in terms of 'safeguarding the environment' (intrinsically the ecological perspective). The other set gives cognizance to 'essential human survival needs for which water, wood, some industrial products are imperative' (the perspective of utility and survival). For indispensable human benefits, Narmada project may be good for one state, may not for the other (Sharma, 1990). Thus, we often come across episodes of 'environmental fanaticism' juxtaposed with 'environmental economism'.

For resolving the imminent dichotomy set by 'development' and 'ecology', or 'environmentalism' and 'utility', the middle path is 'sustainable development'. Development—measured in terms of hydro-electricity, harnessing of energy and discovering its alternative paths, installation of hand pumps, providing jobs to people in urban-industrial sector, opening up schools imparting modern education, introduction of programmes like of goatry, pisciculture, seri-culture, which strengthen the local economy, etc.—is essential and its achievements irrevocable. And so is environment. The issue is to strike balance between food self-sufficiency, potable water for all, clean and hygienic sanitation, and other developmental issues, and the urgent need to

have environmental protection. Perhaps the middle path can be succinctly expressed in the following terms:

- a. Development vs. Balance.
- b. Reckless destruction of the environment vs. Accountable environmental management.
- c. Consumeristic development vs. Sustainable development.
- d. Depletion of resources vs. Conservation for posterity.

Sustainment is essentially an ecological concept (see Khoshoo, 1986). Biologists have always been concerned with the geometrically increasing human and animal demographic pressure on forests and soils, and they have off and on predicted the horrendous outcome of animal habitation and human occupation on life-supporting systems. The natural resources are for all, the contemporary inhabitants as well as the future generations. Thus the concept of sustainment involves:

- i. the present occupants are able to satisfy their needs, thus guaranteeing their existence, on the given resources; and
- ii. ample is left for the succeeding generations so that their optimal survival is not threatened.

Taking the concept from ecology to sociology, a sustainable society is one for which the sociological phrase 'society is an ongoing, enduring entity' can be used unreservedly. It is one which consumes the available resources in such a manner that needs of all are optimally fulfilled, ensuring that the descendants—for times to come—will also have an optimum fulfilment of their needs and pass on an uncontaminated and unimpoverished habitat and system to their posterity.

If sustainment gives an inting of equilibrium, development is eternally infused with dynamism, and in a value-loaded sense, with progress. Allowed to leap untrammelled, development—in the sheer name of development, true to its

inhering idea—can cause unimaginable damage to the environment, reducing the chances of future survival to cipher. The idea of sustainment is not inherent to development—in its attempts to 'look forward', to provide consumeristic goods to all, development may help release the destructive jinn—announcing the calender of Doomsday—from the bottle!

Therefore it becomes inevitable that sustainment is inextricably linked with development; at each step of development we should look behind to see what has it caused, and if patronised, what more harms would follow. Sustainable development is one where all the development programmes are so carefully planned, with the impact of each one studied in futuristic terms, that the concept of sustainable society is not violated, so that the present inhabitants receive all that they desire for need-fulfilment without diminishing the survival chances of the posterity. An important idea in sustainable development is that it cares not only for the human rights to survive, but also of the floral and faunal worlds. It cares for the life as a whole on this planet. It cares for both ecology and economy. Environmental movements hostile to development stand every possibility of being rejected. A development programme oblivious to the issues of environmental protection will meet the same fate. Kailash Malhotra (1988) once said, 'If human needs are ignored and all development stopped in order to preserve the environment, it will be no surprise if the same hills which echoed with Chipko slogans see an anti-Chipko movement'.

Sustainable development rejects the vision of a monolithic world. It rejects the universality of a particular developmental strategy. The Western model of development is one suited to the historical and ecological reality of its context. Blindly applying it to alien situations is wrong. We have to look for plurality in eco-development programmes, each suiting a particular eco-historical reality. Diversity in terms of life styles is key to survival and to inter-dependence on which the entire world is based. A plurality of

eco-development is sensitive to the issues of priority. Only then the descendants of Babooji Bhim will have enough fodder and water for their animals, and those of Jaitpura will have clean potable water. It is in this plurality of environmental development programmes that the message of the World Environment Day is contained.

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