

Paradigm Shift in Punjab: Perspectives and Challenges

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ENVIRONMENT DEGRADATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

Environmental problems of shortage of water, forest, fertile lands and the like are very often the cause of violent conflicts in the world. There is need to manage limited natural resources in a careful manner as human welfare ultimately depends on ecological services. Ignoring environment will increase the risk of undermining long run prospects for development. The linkage between and co-evolution of environment and socio-economic system underlines the need to consider their joint sustainability. Today there are widespread calls for a paradigm shift from wealth to sustainability. It is important to flesh out the core spirit of the SDGs—the determination to leave no one behind—by adding a further vision of building a society where all can socially and economically prosper leaving no one behind.

INTRODUCTION

Environment provides basic services essential to humanity such as supplying materials, energy and absorbing waste products, supporting life. Environmental economics deals with the issues related with excessive, unethical or immoral behavior of human with the environment. It is an application of scientific theories and general application of welfare economics. It evolves the development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. An environmentally sustainable system maintain a stable resource base, avoiding over-exploitation of renewable resource systems and depleting non-renewable resources to the extent that investment is made in adequate development and enhance the quality of life with equitable distribution and provision of social services including health and education. So these three areas economic, environmental and social are interrelated. Solution to one problem can make another problem worse. Now a days- developing countries are facing both environmental crisis and development crisis. On one side there is increase in the economic problems of poverty, unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, overcrowding of places and on the other side environmental degradation has grown further. The exuberant life style and wasteful consumption threatens the ecological balance on the earth. Cutting down of trees for fuel, ships, buildings and for other economic reasons threatens the atmosphere. It has resulted in global warming and slows down the green house effect. The increasing of CO₂ imposed damage on the economy, particularly on vulnerable sectors including agriculture, the coastal zones, the human morality and natural eco-systems. With the warmer climate, the sea level is rising and coastal areas are sinking posing threat to humanity. Warmer temperature is also damaging agriculture. Climate change is leading to decreased soil moisture, increased incidence of pests and diseases and many other global issues.

Land, rivers, even whole seas have been converted into sewer and industrial dumps. Increased industrialization leads to littering of plastics, chemicals, oil spills into the sea threatening all marine life. As a consequence lot of the world's Marine species are already extinct or are on the verge of extinction. Humans have been responsible for major habitat changes leading to genetic and more species diversity. More the species living in an ecosystem the higher the productivity and the greater is its ability to withstand drought and other kinds of environment stress. Technological advancement for the comfort of mankind is disturbing the ecological balance. The exploitation of biodiversity for life style of the industrialized world is a sure recipe for ecological disaster. Economic Growth leads to larger discharges of waste water and solid wastes per capita. Inadequate investment in waste collection and disposal mean that large quantities of waste enter both ground water and surface water. The increased demand for water for domestic, agricultural and industrial use means more interbasins transfers, lowering the ground water levels and less water for domestic use by an ever increasing population. According to UN Comprehensive Fresh Water Assessment 1997, global water use has been increasing at more than twice

rate of population increase during this century. Using water resources in an unsustainable manner can hamper economic productivity and social development in underdevelopment countries. Environmental problems of shortage of water, forest, fertile lands and the like are very often the cause of violent conflicts in the world. There is need to manage limited natural resources in a careful manner as human welfare ultimately depends on ecological services. Ignoring environment will increase the risk of undermining long run prospects for development. The linkage between and co-evolution of environment and socio-economic system, underlines the need to consider their joint sustainability. The relationship between socio-economic determinants and environmental degradation has wide implications for evaluation and formulation of policy design to improve the environmental quality. Professor Amartya Sen, calls attention to the fact that genuinely secure and stable society cannot be realized without alleviating and, to the degree possible, eliminating sources of threat and insecurity to "the vital core of all human lives." The present paper focuses on causes and impact of environment degradation that instantly rob people of their livelihood, joy and happiness, disrupt and undermine the foundations of entire society.

ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS IN 21ST CENTURY

Since the start of twenty-first century, the world has seen series of massive natural disasters, from the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami in (2004), the Kashmir Earthquake (2005), the Myanmar cyclone (2008) and to the massive earthquake in Haiti in 2010, exacting a horrific toll in human life. Japan was struck by a devastating earthquake and tsunami in 2011, while earthquakes also hit New Zealand and Turkey; Thailand and the Philippines experienced deadly flooding; and severe drought afflicted Somalia and much of East Africa. In recent years the world is under the grip of COVID-19 Pandemic, This crisis has stuck almost all nations, sectors and aspects of society. The world till now not revived from the social and economic effects of pandemic. It is painful to observe the reality of people around the world. Many of them are in challenging situation, lost jobs, lost loved ones; fighting depression and anxiety. People who are already in a vulnerable position have found their circumstances more difficult. The pandemic has brought greater financial hardship to many households; young people are also finding themselves further burdened by student debt or unable to gain opportunities to develop the skills they need for the careers they desire. Further, studies indicate that future career prospects are looking bleak for more and more students, with 40 percent expressing uncertainty and 14 percent harbouring actual fear about what the future might hold. The pandemic has placed an unprecedented burden on healthcare system, increased poverty, unemployment and disparity. The crisis has forced many women to put their careers on hold or take a leave of absence in order to care for sick family members and others close to them. Moreover there are increasing cases of domestic violence against women. In addition, a vast proportion of those who have lost jobs have been women with less paid wages that has intensified gender inequality.

The pandemic impacted the children and youth in the form of disrupted educational services and the loss of learning opportunities due to school closures. One study shows that as many as 1.6 billion students have been impacted. The loss of learning hours is not the only consequence of school closures. Because of the abrupt termination of daily interactions with friends, countless children are finding it hard to feel a tangible sense of progress and hope for the future, resulting in emotional and psychological distress as they become ensnared in an epidemic of loneliness and loss of motivation. School closures also result in suspension of the provision of school meals, a lifeline that provides children from economically distressed families and communities with a much-needed source of nutrition. There are growing concerns that there is increase in the number of children suffering from the effects of malnutrition, outcomes such as anaemia and low body weight, due to the prolonged absence of school meals. This kind of wide-ranging and long-term disruption to classroom learning being experienced simultaneously around the globe is without parallel in the history of the modern school education system. Many children were unable to access the necessary means for distance learning. Still enormous numbers of young learners stranded on the wrong side of the digital divide, it is estimated that only 5 percent of refugees across the globe have managed to find their way into university or other programs of higher education. Another problem is split of the social fabric due to social distancing. After living in isolation during novel corona virus, it has been difficult to engage in society, build trust and mutual connect

Recent threat on environment occurs with the Ukraine-Russia War. The unintended consequences of science and technology are on full display--in the large numbers of people forced to evacuate their homes, in the grave and