



In harmony with Mother Nature

This article is related to Paper-III (Environment & Ecology)

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"We need a clean environment for human empowerment, writes Prime Minister Narendra Modi"

Yesterday, the United Nations honoured me with the Champions of the Earth Award. While I was extremely humbled at receiving this honour, I do feel that this award is not for an individual. Instead, it is recognition of the Indian culture and values, which have always placed emphasis on living in harmony with Mother Nature.

A proud moment

It was a proud moment for every Indian to see India's proactive role in mitigating climate change being acknowledged and appreciated by the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, and Erik Solheim, the Executive Director of the UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme).

Human beings and nature have a very special relationship. Mother Nature has nurtured and nourished us. The first civilisations were established on the banks of rivers. Societies that live in harmony with nature flourish and prosper.

Today, human society stands at an important crossroads. The path that we take hereon will not only determine our well-being but also that of the generations who will inhabit our planet after us. The imbalances between our greed and necessities have led to grave ecological imbalances. We can either accept this, go ahead with things as if it is business as usual, or we can take corrective actions.

Three things will determine how we as a society can bring a positive change.

The first is internal consciousness. For that, there is no better place to look than our glorious past. Respect for nature is at the core of India's traditions. The Atharvaveda contains the Prithvi Sukta, which contains unparalleled knowledge about nature and the environment. It is beautifully written in Atharvaveda: Salutations to Mother Earth. In Her is woven together Ocean and River Waters; in Her is contained Food which She manifests when ploughed; In Her indeed is alive all Lives; May She bestow us with that Life.



The ancients write about the Panch Tatvas – Prithvi (Earth), Vayu (Air), Jal (Water), Agni (Fire), Akash (Sky) – and how our life systems are based on the harmonious functioning of these elements. The elements of nature are manifestations of divinity. Mahatma Gandhi wrote extensively on the environment and even practised a lifestyle where compassion towards the environment was essential. He propounded the Doctrine of Trusteeship, which places the onus on us, the present generation, to ensure that our coming generations inherit a clean planet. He called for sustainable consumption so that the world does not face a resource crunch.

Leading lifestyles that are harmonious and sustainable are a part of our ethos. Once we realise how we are flag bearers of a rich tradition, it will automatically have a positive impact on our actions.

Need for public awareness

The second aspect is public awareness. We need to talk, write, debate, discuss and deliberate as much as possible on questions relating to the environment. At the same time, it is vital to encourage research and innovation on subjects relating to the environment. This is when more people will know about the pressing challenges of our times and ways to mitigate them.

When we as a society are aware of our strong links with environmental conservation and talk about it regularly, we will automatically be proactive in working towards a sustainable environment. That is why, I will put proactiveness as the third facet of bringing a positive change.

In this context, I am delighted to state that the 130 crore people of India are proactive and at the forefront of working towards a cleaner and greener environment.

We see this proactiveness in the Swachh Bharat Mission, which is directly linked to a sustainable future. With the blessings of the people of India, over 85 million households now have access to toilets for the first time. Over 400 million Indians no longer have to defecate in the open. Sanitation coverage is up from 39% to 95%. These are landmark efforts in the quest of reducing the strain on our natural surroundings.

We see this proactiveness in the success of the Ujjwala Yojana, which has significantly reduced indoor air pollution due to unhealthy cooking practices that were causing respiratory diseases. Till date, over five crore Ujjwala connections have been distributed, thus ensuring a better and cleaner life for the women and their families.



India is moving at a quick pace in cleaning its rivers. The Ganga, which is India's lifeline, had become polluted in several parts. The Namami Gange Mission is changing this historical wrong. Emphasis is being given to proper treatment of sewage.

At the core of our urban development initiatives such as AMRUT and the Smart Cities Mission is the need to balance urban growth with environmental care. The over 13 crore soil health cards distributed to farmers are helping them make informed decisions that will boost their productivity and improve the health of our land, which helps the coming generations.

We have integrated objectives of Skill India in the environment sector and launched the schemes, including Green Skill Development Programme for skilling about seven million youth in environment, forestry, wildlife and climate change sectors by 2021. This will go a long way in creating numerous opportunities for skilled jobs and entrepreneurships in the environment sector.

Our country is devoting unparalleled attention to new and renewable sources of energy. Over the last four years, this sector has become more accessible and affordable.

The Ujala Yojana has led to the distribution of nearly 31 crore LED bulbs. The costs of LED bulbs have reduced and so have the electricity bills and the CO2 emissions.

India's proactiveness is seen internationally. It makes me proud that India remained at the forefront of the COP-21 negotiations in Paris in 2015. In March 2018, world leaders of several countries converged in New Delhi to mark the start of the International Solar Alliance, an endeavour to harness the rich potential of solar energy and bring together all nations that are blessed with solar power.

Climate justice

While the world is talking about climate change, the call for climate justice has also reverberated from India. Climate justice is about safeguarding the rights and interests of the poor and marginalised sections of society, who are often the biggest sufferers from the menace of climate change.

As I have written earlier, our actions today will have an impact on human civilisation much beyond our time. It is up to us to take on the mantle of global responsibility towards a sustainable future. The world needs to shift to a paradigm of environmental philosophy that is anchored in environmental consciousness rather than merely in government regulations. I would like to compliment all those individuals and organisations who are working assiduously in this direction. They have become the harbingers of a monumental change in our society. I assure them all possible support from the Government in their pursuits. Together, we will create a clean environment that will be the cornerstone of human empowerment.



What is the Paris Agreement?

- The Paris Agreement is an international agreement to deal with climate change.
- In 2015, representatives of 195 countries from 30 November to 11 December, discussed the possible new global agreement to deal with climate change in Paris.
- The Paris Agreement with 32 pages and 29-lined endowed with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions is recognized as a historic agreement to prevent global warming.

Fixed goals in the Paris Agreement

- The main purpose of the Paris Agreement is to not allow the global average temperature to exceed 2 degrees centigrade above the level of temperature before the end of industrialization till the end of this century.
- The Paris Agreement is basically based on limiting the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by human activities. In addition, this agreement also summarizes the need to review the contribution of each country to reduce emissions.
- Under this, the concept of national contribution at the national level has been proposed and it is expected from each nation to voluntarily determine the emissions target for itself.
- In the Paris Agreement, there is a provision that the developed countries should assist the poor countries by providing 'Climate Finance' in order to promote climate change and to promote renewable energy.
- Although there are certain compulsory elements like the need for reporting in the agreement, but the other important aspect of the agreement, such as setting emissions target, is not compulsory.

Why is Paris Agreement important?

- The current commitment regarding greenhouse gas emissions (the Kyoto Protocol) will end in 2020. Therefore, the Paris Agreement will decide what to do after the year 2020.
- India aims to reduce its emissions intensity. For this, huge investment is required on the front of agriculture, water resources, coastal areas, health and disaster management, and the agreement provides for the developed countries to give their developing counterparts \$ 100 billion annually.
- The Paris Agreement is important for India in this context that here India has been able to establish a distinction between developing and developed countries.
- "However, these are the points that the US has announced to separate US from the Paris accord while referring to it.
- Critical Party of Paris Agreement
- In a report of the United Nations Framework Convention, it has been said that even if the promised target of reduction of carbon emissions by all countries are met, it will not be possible to meet the global temperature rise within 2 ° C.
- Most of the provisions of the agreement are based on 'promises' and non-binding goals, while the need is strong commitment.
- The only way to reduce the emission reduction is only nationally-determined contribution at national level. Therefore, cutting emissions without global binding rules will be a difficult task.
- India's nationally determined contribution at the national level
- India aims at reducing its emissions intensity by 33-35 percent from 2005 to 2030, according to the India's nationally determined contribution at the national level.

- India has promised to make carbon sink of 2-5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO₂ by 2030 through plantation and increase in forest area.
- India will work as the chief of the Global Solar Alliance of all the countries located between the tropic of Cancer and the tropic of Capricorn.
- Bon Conference
- Background
- In 1992, three conferences were accepted in the 'Rio Earth Circle Conference'.
- The conventions were -the Conference on Comprehensive National Composition Convention on Climate Change, the Comprehensive National Biodiversity Convention and the Desertification.
- On March 21, 1994, the 'National Organization for Composite Conference on Climate Change' became effective.
- The main goal of the UNFCCC is to prevent humanitarian interference with climate system.
- 197 Countries who have ratified the conference are called 'party of the conference'.
- The Conference of Parties is the highest decision making body of the UNFCCC, which is organized annually.

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Expected Questions (Pre Examination)

1. Consider the following statements regarding Gandhiji's thoughts related to environment.
 1. Gandhiji emphasised on enduring conception.
 2. Values of environmental conservation is consolidated in trusteeship principles.
 3. He emphasised on a suitable lifestyle for environmental conservation.
 Which of the above statements is/are correct?
 - (a) Only 2
 - (b) Only 1
 - (c) 1 and 2
 - (d) None of the above
2. Which of the following will play an important role in environment conservation programme?
 1. Swachh Bharat Mission
 2. Ujjwala Yojana
 3. Namami Gange
 4. Soil health card
 Choose the correct answer using the code given below-
 - (a) 1 and 3
 - (b) 1, 3 and 4
 - (c) 1, 2 and 3
 - (d) All of the above
3. Consider the following statements regarding Paris Agreement-
 1. Global temperature should not be allowed to rise by 2.5°C of the pre industrial level.
 2. A National level contribution was envisaged in this conference.
 3. Determination of the level of emission is obligatory under it.
 4. Climate finance was envisaged in it.
 Which of the above statements is/are correct?
 - (a) Only 2
 - (b) 1, 2 and 4
 - (c) 1 and 3
 - (d) All of the above

Note :

The answer of the pre-examination (expected questions) on 3 Oct is 1(d), 2(d) and 3(b).

Expected Questions (Mains Examination)

- Q. "For a stable future environment philosophy model climate change should be replaced by climate justice." Describe. (250 Words)