



## Environmental Education for Biodiversity Conservation

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### Abstract

*Biodiversity is an umbrella term covering diversity at genetic, species and ecosystem level. In short it refers to the whole variety of life on earth. Biodiversity is very important everywhere. Species and habitat in any area play a role in maintaining healthy ecosystem. We need biodiversity to satisfy our needs. The whole of earth's ecosystems provides essential services to humanity. It is the need of the hour to make the whole society conscious about the ecosystem and ecological balance. Education is the powerful medium for changing our behavior. Hence, it is important to develop environment friendly behavior in everyone. This may be done with well-structured environmental education at primary, secondary and higher education level. Environmental education is a mean of creating the significant changes in everyone's behavior. It should help to discover the symptoms and real causes of environmental problems and thus to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills. It is important to develop environmental friendly attitude, environmental sensitivity, and environmental friendly behavior in everyone.*

**Key Words:** *Environmental education; Biodiversity conservation.*

### Introduction

Biodiversity is an umbrella term covering diversity at genetic, species and ecosystem level. In short it refers to the whole variety of life on earth. Ecosystem, species diversity and genetic diversity are three levels of biodiversity. Biodiversity is not only defined by scientists, it is also defined in various social contexts including legal, social, political, and cultural contexts.

Biodiversity is very important everywhere. Species and habitat in any area play a role in maintaining healthy ecosystem. Ecosystem with

their contents in biodiversity, are the platform on which our entire existence is based. We need biodiversity to satisfy our needs. The whole of earth's ecosystems provides essential services to humanity. Everyone in the world depend on natural ecosystem to provide the resources for healthy and secured life. Biodiversity has scientific, commercial, economic and aesthetic importance to mankind. It has great importance to us as it provides us ecosystem services and drugs and medicines.

### Biodiversity Crisis and Causes



But, the world is facing a biodiversity crisis. Eileen Crist (2003) concludes that "The environmental crisis is multidimensional but no facet is more urgent, nor more fundamental, than the biodiversity crisis. The idea of biodiversity has sometimes been regarded as vague and political – assessment that miss the point by a long shot. Far from being vague, 'biodiversity' is inclusive of all levels: from genes, through species (as well as sub species, varieties and hybrids) populations, ecosystems and biomes, to processes of ecological interconnectivity and evolutionary speciation. All are dimensions of biodiversity: a plurality of living states and processes, biological actuality and potential that makes the concept exquisitely versatile, encompassing, and robust. The view, moreover, that 'biodiversity' and 'biodiversity crisis' are politically motifs –skillfully constructed with the aim of crystallizing problems in order to influence policy –is narrow-minded. Only those focused exclusively on human affairs and conflicting interests therein, would mistake the intensity and mandate that infuse scientific discourse about biodiversity for politics."

Destruction of habitat and fragmentation, indiscriminate hunting introduction of exotic species is known to threaten the survival many native species, over exploitation of natural resources, disturbance in migration routes, international trade in increasing scarce animal products,

highways, lack of education and official laxity are the main cause of extinction of biodiversity (Sharma,2006).Over the last century, humans have come to dominate the planet. Ecosystems are being rapidly altered and the planet is undergoing a massive loss of biodiversity. Human activities have taken the planet to the edge of a substantial wave of species extinction, further threatening our own well-being. So, everyone has a role to play in meeting the challenges of biodiversity crisis.

### **Biodiversity Conservation: Need of the Hour**

The biodiversity is the ultimate source of humane sustenance. Biodiversity conservation is the protection, preservation, management, or restoration of wildlife and natural resources. Though, the conservation of biodiversity the survival of many species and habitats which are threatened due to human activities can be ensured. It is the science and art of managing the system and resources on which they depend. Conservation implies an attitude and understanding that involves active management of the things to be conserved.

It is the management of the biosphere in such a way that it may yield the greatest sustainable benefit to present generation while maintaining its potential to meet the need and aspirations of further generation. It is the need of the hour to make the whole society conscious



about the ecosystem and ecological balance.

Earth is the only planet in this universe which has been gifted with life supporting vital elements like water, food, land, air, and a rich bio-diversity of flora and fauna bestowed with aesthetic, commercial and medical values. But, unfortunately this planet is loosing its resources because of step motherly treatment given by human beings in the name of development. So, immediate steps are to be needed to save our bio-diversity. A concerted effort to save bio-diversity by striking a balance between the developmental process and environmental protection is the need of the hour.

### **Environmental Education**

There is a Chinese proverb, " If you plan for one year, plant rice, if you plan for ten years, plant trees and if you plan for hundred years, educate people."

Education is the powerful medium for changing our behavior. Environmental education is a process of providing learning experiences to obtain knowledge, understanding, skill and awareness with desirable attitudinal changes about man's relationship with his natural and man-made surroundings. According to a report of conference of African Education at Nairobi (1968), "Environmental Education is to create awareness and understanding of the evolving social and physical environment as a whole, its natural manmade, cultural,

spiritual resources together with the rational use and conservation of these resources for development."

Tbilisi Conference which was held at Georgia in the USSR in October 1977 under the auspices of the UNESCO and UNEP resolved that environmental education should consider the environment in its totality. It should be a continuous, lifelong process and inter-disciplinary in its approach. Relate environmental sensitivity, knowledge, problem solving skills and value-clarification to every age, but with special emphasis on environmental sensitivity to the learner's own community in early years. Purpose of environmental education is learning of environment, learning through environment and learning for environment.

Hence, environmental education plays an important role in developing environment sensitivity and environment friendly behavior which is key requirement for environment conservation.

### **Environmental Education: Ground Reality**

The National Curriculum Framework 2005 envisages that Environmental Education is to be imparted in an infusion model in the Upper Primary and Secondary stage of school education with an aim to bring sensitivity towards the environment. However, there is content of environmental education beginning from primary education to higher education. But reality is far



different from the actual aim of the environmental education. Our entire education system is linked with marks but not with remarks in general and environmental education in particular. Environmental education is taught traditionally and theoretically therefore institutions cannot raise awareness among students. Even if they have learnt the subject, they cannot show the necessary behavior in practice. Environmental education has been included suitably in social sciences, languages and science at different level. Despite these initiatives it has not succeeded to generate a concern that may lead to effective social action for conserving and further improving the environment.

### **Suggestions for Making Environmental Education Effective**

This may be done with well-structured environmental education at primary, secondary and higher education level. Environmental education is a mean of creating the significant changes in everyone's behavior. It should help to discover the symptoms and real causes of environmental problems and thus to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills. It is important to develop environmental attitude, environmental sensitivity, and environmental behavior in everyone.

- Environmental education should be experienced based.
- Making environmental education value based.

- Developing a life style in 'Harmony with Nature' among learners.
- Environmental Education should prepare the people to establish cordial relationship with their environment.
- Developing environment sensitivity through nature documentary as nature documentary has positive effect on students' sensitivity.
- Teaching learning material needs to address the ethnic and socio ecological diversity and its relationship with environment.
- Teaching module should be developed to sensitize students towards their environment.
- In service teacher training programs like orientation, refresher courses, workshops should be organized time to time for teachers.
- At college level students should assign project based activities to aware society regarding their environment.
- Policy planners, administrators and teachers should develop curriculum and its implementation in such a manner that students become judicious users, manager, protector, admirer, and respecter of environment.

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