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Vision for a green change

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ABSTRACT

The 1960s marked the beginning of widespread public concern over environmental degradation in the developed countries of the West. However, it took roughly a decade of persistent political agitation over such matters as pesticides, nuclear power plants, toxic waste dumps, large scale industrial developments, and pollution before an environmental crisis was officially recognized as a matter of local, national, and international concern. The mounting evidence of environmental degradation stemming from the exponential growth in resource consumption and human population was shown to pose very real threats to the earth's biological support systems. That is, the environmental crisis amounted to much more than a crisis of participation: what was at stake was the very survival of humanity. Degradation of Environment is also a cultural problem. Human beings are now endowed with the dominance of instrumental rationality. The cause of environmental degradation lies in western culture. It demands for re-evaluating the values.

Key Words : Adaptation, Anthroppogenic, Bioregionalism, Climate change, Collective action, Ecological citizenship, Eco-system, Emission, Greenhouse gases, Green economy, Kyoto Protocol, Resource conservation, Spritiual approach, Sustainable development, Values, Voluntarnism

INTRODUCTION

Environmental problems and challenges require a multidisciplinary and serious study. It needs an integrated approach on economy, politics, ecology, social stability, sustainability and spatial planning. Environmental policies are the principal means by which societies attempt to adapt to ecological constraints, and to mediate between competing demands and values. The strategies formulated by The National Environmental Assessment Agency are: a. Design and Implementation of ecological networks b. Protected Areas should be screened on their suitability under changing climatic conditions. c. Adjustment of mix of tree species. d. Artificial translocation of plants and animals. The overall strategy should be focused on developing low-carbon or no-carbon energy sources, including renewable energy, and increasing energy efficiency. Reforms at the national level would include: Leveling the playing field between renewable and fossil fuels, and internalizing the latter's costs by phasing out fossil fuel subsidies and adopting cap and trade systems as well as encouraging ecological tax reform and performance based efficiency incentives. Reforms at the international level would include: Reviewing and significantly increasing the World Bank target to increase its investment in renewable energy, arising from the extractive Industries Review. Reforming the OECD Arrangement for ECAs to improve the terms offered by ECAs for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects so that they are at least as favorable as those for fossil fuel and nuclear

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energy. Requiring multilateral banks to take the climate impact of their project financing into account by conducting energy audits on energy-intensive. projects and financing energy-saving measures, following the lead of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and to adopt minimum efficiency standards for the projects they support or portfolio-wide carbon intensity standards.[1]

Some steps towards a green change:

Adopting the practices of sustainable development :

Sustainable development is an ambiguous concept. It covers government policy, business strategy and lifestyle decision. The phrase has been continually refined to cover wider issues. It has become a complex interdisciplinary subject providing an interesting case of the constraints and pitfalls in modern living. Brundtland(1987) report define it as a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. National Strategies for sustainable development (2000) define it is economic and social development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. World Wildlife Fund define it as improving the quality of life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting systems.

Sustainable development is a huge and complex challenge at least in ethical terms. The nature of this ethical challenge may be summarized in terms of the three types of obligation to which sustainable development relates: towards people who are already living, towards people who are not yet born and towards species other than humans. Given three such different types of obligations, individuals and groups are often faced with a serious moral dilemma. There are three areas of debate in the Sustainable development- the equality- inequality theories, the techno-centered theories and theories of balance. The fundamental belief across first area of debate is that humanity is the centre of the debate. The debate probably includes positions across transformation, reform and status quo. Much of the debate is primarily concerned with the human side of sustainable development, with one view being that happy thoughtful humans look after their environment. The reformer sees the current system as fundamentally flawed and promoting more rather than less inequality. They see the manifestation of problems arising from the inequality, and many would argue that poverty and most environmental problems arise from poorly managed capitalism. Many environmentalists see social issue as equally important in the debate. Many would see a link between environmental crisis and social one. One belief is that people having control over their lives, resources and environment reduces inequality and environmental degradation.[2]

Bioregionalism and resource conservation:

Bioregionalism represents a specifically ecological rendition of the contemporary movement toward the break up of nation-states. It differs from the separatists on the ground that they demand the ecological preconditions of nationhood. This is not merely a location but the concrete ecological workings of a part of the earth: the flows of watersheds, kinds of soils, the biota that inhabit a bioregion. From this perspective, the bioregion is essential ground within which the principle of sustainability and its reliance on ecological technology and economics may be applied. The problem is who is to decide who live where? Kirkpatrick Sale simply expressed the bioregional paradigm: "We must get to know the land around us, learn its lore and its potential, and live with it and not against it. We must see that living with the land means living in, and according to the ways and rhythms of, its natural regions – its bioregions". Living bioregionally involves identifying bioregional boundaries and living (for the most part) with what those territories provide in the way of, for

example, 'given ores and minerals, woods and leathers, cloths and yarns. The bioregional community would seek to 'minimize resource-use, emphasize conservation and recycling and avoid pollution and waste' (Sale, 1984, p. 230), and all of this would be aimed at achieving sustainability through what Sale calls self-sufficiency. Bioregionalists will usually insist that land be communally owned because the fruits of nature are fruits for everyone, and they will urge that polities follow the natural world's example and abhor systems of centralized control. Consequently, they advocate 'the spreading of power to small and widely dispersed units' (Sale, 1985, p. 91). Associated with this is the idea that nature's lesson as far as social relations are concerned is one of equality, or what Sale calls complementarity. The guiding principle of bioregionalism, then, is that the natural world should determine the political, economic and social life of communities.[3]

Although the idea of conservation, in the sense of the "prudent husbanding" of nature's bounty, can be traced back as far as Plato, Mencius, Cicero, and the Old and New Testaments, its twentieth-century scientific and utilitarian manifestation is intricately bound up with the rise of modern science from the sixteenth century. Those who have inquired into the historical roots of the modern conservation doctrine have generally traced its popularization in North America to Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the United States Forest Service, described by Devall as the prototype figure in the conservation movement. Central to Pinchot's notion of conservation was the elimination of waste, an idea that the environmental historian Samuel P.Hays has dubbed the gospel of efficiency, which he sees as lying at the heart of the doctrine of conservation.[4]

The basic thrust of the Resource Conservation standpoint was to restrain the reckless exploitation of forests, soils, etc., characteristic of the pioneer stage of modern social development by imposing ethical and legal requirements that natural resources be used wisely, meaning (in Gifford Pinchot's words)that they should be used "for the greatest good of the greatest number" (of humans), as distinct from being used to profit a few, and that the good should be considered in "the long run," that is, in terms of a sustainable society. Resource conservation also includes Wilderness preservation, Moral extensionism, Ecological sensitivity. Wilderness Preservation tradition, represented in part by Fohn Muir and the Sierra Club, was also emerging a social force. Moral extensionism designates a wide range of positions whose common characteristic is that they contend that humans have duties not only concerning but also directly to nonhuman natural entities and these duties derive from rights possessed by the natural entities, and that these rights are grounded in the possession by the natural entities of an intrinsically valuable quality such as intelligence, sentience, or consciousness. Ecological sensitivity consists of three major components of it- a theory of value that recognizes intrinsic value in nature without engaging in mere extensionism ; a metaphysics that takes account of the reality and importance of relationships and systems as well as of individuals; and an ethics that includes such duties as noninterference with natural processes, resistance to human acts and policies that violate the noninterference principle, limited intervention to repair environmental damage in extreme circumstances, and a style of co-inhabitation that involves the knowledgeable, respectful, and restrained use of nature.[5]

Thinking of Green Economy :

It represents the ecological wing of mainstream economics; it speaks with an authoritative and technical voice to the entirety of economic relations with nature. Ecological economics are not interested in social transformation and accept the potentials of the present system to absorb the crisis. It means ecological economists employ a great variety of instrumental measures like incentive based regulations, ecological tariffs and natural capital depletion taxes, penalties to the polluters.

There are several schools of thought on the relationship between the environment and economic growth. They range from what O' Riordan has termed the environmental moralists who deny that the environment is a commodity at all to those who argue that environmental goods should be treated exactly like any other commodity. Economists like Pearce argue that it is possible to consider the environment within the governing economic paradigm, and that the field of bio-economic has already made substantial progress[6] .

Environmental economists start from the assumption that a good deal of economic activity today is unecological which requires serious reforms. Environmental economists did not consider it necessary to radically redefine the scope of economics. In both theory and practice it is managing the scarcity. Its prime concern is the allocation of scarce resources to alternative ends. Thus what environmental economics aims to do is to bring the economic conception more in line with the ecological values. The human values assumed by modern economics are predominantly those of individualistic and materialistic hedonism. The good life amounts to little more than the fulfillment of the immediate interests of those with something to buy or sell on the market. These values sustain the quantitative assumption of economics but not the qualitative. Environmental economics differs from conventional economics in that it does not uncritically accept the assumption that growth is an end in itself.[7]

The approach of the Ecosystem involves the restructuring of economy which demands Green market economy. The ecological measures proposed by the Greens flow from their rejection of purely quantitative growth. The Greens demand the dismantling of life-threatening industries, above all the nuclear and weapons industries, and the reorientation of production towards ecologically benign and socially necessary products. One of their slogans is 'No investments without a future! 'They propose a number of specific ecological investments in the area of energy production, recycling, water management, agriculture, housing, and traffic. Economic decentralization, utilization of existing local resources, and judicious use and recycling of raw materials are the outstanding characteristics of these ecological investments. Another significant feature of Green economic policy is its revaluation of North-South relations. The Greens demand an orientation towards a self-reliant internal economy, rather than exploitation of the Third World, and they declare their solidarity with Third World countries in their efforts to lessen their dependence on the northern hemisphere. A grassroots democratic economy, finally, according to the Greens, is one that allows for self-managed, cooperative enterprises in which those involved in the production process are able to decide themselves what is produced, as well as how and where it is produced.[8]

Energy Policy :

Sustainable energy strategies must address both the supply and demand sides of the energy equation: electricity generation must shift away from a dependency on fossil fuels, notably coal and oil, towards renewable energy sources such as hydroelectric power (HEP), wind, solar, wave and biomass, which emit low or zero carbon; energy consumption must be reduced in both industrial and domestic sectors through improved energy efficiency and conservation measures. To date, little significant progress has been made towards sustainability in either the generation or consumption of electricity. On the supply side, few countries boast a large renewable energy sector. So the development of alternative renewable sources is essential. Yet several serious obstacles make this a challenging policy goal, including powerful energy producers, competitive liberalised energy markets, discriminatory fossil fuel subsidies and technological problems. Wind is the largest renewable energy source after HEP. The total global capacity for generating electricity through wind power

was about 59.4 GW in 2005. It is unlikely that renewable energy will become a significant source of electricity generation without the imposition of a carbon tax on fossil fuels that is set sufficiently high to make the fledgling renewable sector more competitive. There are numerous ways of improving domestic and industrial energy efficiency. Some governments have set high mandatory energy efficiency standards for buildings, subsidized home conservation and low-energy light bulbs, and agreed energy efficiency classification systems for consumer goods such as washing machines.[9]

Transport Policy :

Climate change prevention requires a fundamentally different approach to transport policy. A sustainable transport policy has to address both supply and demand. On the supply side, air and road transport need to produce fewer polluting emissions; on the demand side, traffic volume must be reduced so that fewer journeys are made by car and plane. Policymakers have pinned their hopes on the supply-side objective of developing greener motor vehicles. In recent years, several major vehicle manufacturers have launched new models that use biomass products, such as ethanol and methanol, or liquefied petroleum gas or run on electricity. They are also working with oil companies, such as BP, to develop alternatives, such as hydrogen fuel-cell technology.[10]

The transport sector accounts for approximately one third of global greenhouse gas emissions. While increased investment in public transportation systems is one important strategy to reduce emissions in this sector, these emissions can also be greatly reduced through improvements in fuel efficiency. For example, hybrid gasoline/electric cars can cut fuel use by one-third. Governments could also commit to providing tax incentives for retooling manufacturing plants, and to replacing their own fleet vehicles with HEVs, thus boosting demand and reducing the costs of production and the price gap between HEVs and conventional vehicles. Transport-related emissions can also be reduced by switching away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy sources such as bio-fuels, especially those derived from cellulosic materials, which can be blended with petroleum based fuels. Appropriate safeguards would need to be adopted to ensure that increased subsidies for biofuels encourage sustainable farming methods, preserve culturally and ecologically sensitive land, and protect biodiversity.[11]

Need of a change in the lifestyle :

Most environmental problems are ultimately due to our voracious demand for new things. Making all those new cars, gadgets, clothes and so on eats up raw materials and energy. Instead, learn to reduce, reuse, recycle in that order. Reducing –living with less – is the best and simplest solution. Reuse things by repairing, adapting, swapping, borrowing, buying second-hand, etc. And if you can't reuse something, recycle it – that way, no new raw materials have to be grown or extracted. Don't forget to buy recycled products to complete the recycling loop. Reduce energy, water, chemicals, waste. Being green means using less fossil-fuel energy, water and chemicals and creating less waste. Something is green if it is natural, reusable, renewable, locally produced, Energy/water-efficient and nonpolluting. Of course, often you have to use your judgment to make choices.[12]

The general principle behind both lifestyle and community strategies are that of changes of consciousness and changes in behavior are mutually reinforcing. Lifestyle change concerns changes in the patterns of individual behavior in daily life. Typical examples of this would be: care with the things you buy, the things you say, where you invest your money, the way you treat people, the transport you use and so on. The theme is that personal transformation leads to altered behaviour; which in turn can be translated into sustainable community living: The only possible building blocks

of a Greener future are individuals moving towards a Greener way of life themselves and joining together with others who are doing the same. The positive aspect of this strategy is that more bottles and newspapers are recycled, more lead-free petrol is bought, and fewer harmful detergents are washed down the plughole. Greens often speak of change of consciousness is to bring about radical shifts in social and political life.[13]

Avoiding wastage is another strategy. The best way to avoid waste is to buy less stuff, use those things which can be reused; keep plastic bags away, use your recycling bins, drive less and use public transport, car pool with colleagues or neighbours, use cycle or electric scooter, reduce car trips and make your car fuel efficient, learn fuel efficient driving, support campaign for better public transport and cycle networks, buy fewer new clothes, learn to use second and repair the clothes, use few cosmetics, support a green organization and work for it such as Friends of the Earth, WWF or Greenpeace, vote for politicians you think will put the environment first, join a local green group, project or campaign. As one of the reason of environmental degradation is population, one should adopt family planning and support population control policy. Poverty is also one of the reasons of environmental degradation; thus one should focused on poor and work for uplifting them.[14]

Role of rituals, cultural beliefs and importance of non-human values :

Ecological restorationists such as Wlliam Jordan III attempted to show the pragmatic actions of rituals such as prairie burnings that restore the degraded environments. Australian John Seed has developed an event called the council of all beings. He and Ruth Rosenhek lead a series of re-earthing rituals and workshops, some of which include a welcoming of species and an honouring of local indigenous people, as well as mourning and bonding exercises. They believe that people will act morally and politically if they experience the depth of their own planetary despair and cultivate a felt connection with the earth and its creatures. In a culminating phase of one event, participants arrive masked as animal allies. When the event concludes, folk take off their animal selves and assume their usual, human masks, thereby learning that human is just one among many masks that animals wear. A few mainline religions too have begun constructing environmentally oriented rites. Buddhist monks in Thailand, for instance, are ordaining trees, thereby making them into Buddha and forcing land clearer to have conscience towards nature. Artists too are working in concert with some of these movements. Canadian composer Murray Schafer has been engaged in what he calls theatre of confluence. In wooded rural areas, a series of ritualized musical performance rites called Patria (homeland) began in 1966 and continues today.[15]

The non- human values are generally scaled on vertical rather than horizontal axis. Various reasons, religious and sentiments have been given for the supremacy of moral standing of human beings. Humans unlike others are considered morally superior. In recent years there is a debate on the revival of interest in the question of the values of non-human world. In the past also we find many instance of it. Plutarch, advocated a vegetarian diet and many non- western tradition recognize moral significance of natural world. The impact of the human activities on the non- human are evaluated like in Peter singer's book, animal liberation. Another group is concerned with the ethical significance of our actions affecting the environment. Their concerned is with ecosystem e.g. pollution, extinction of species. Extending humanity beyond humans and there is diversity of opinions to extend the moral universe. Now the argument arises is that there is common principles dealing with animals and human beings. Moral consideration is due to us because we have interests. But our interests are integral part of life process. Even animals, plants, species and ecosystem have

interests which have moral significance. If human interests are to have any moral weight at all, then all genuine interests must be recognized.[16]

Conclusion:

The research paper highlighted the various ways for a green change. The various steps discussed above are all important and interconnected. Adopting or choosing only one or two way cannot solve the problem of climate change. There is a need of a change in all spheres- politics, social, culture, economic and individual and a coordinated action is required for the prevention of climate change. Finally non-human values should be explored and given importance.

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