

## Environmental degradation- Causes and consequences

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### Abstract

Our environment is deteriorating for the last two centuries and almost every part of the planet has been touched by it in one way or the other. The primary cause of environmental degradation is human disturbance. Man's cruel behavior with environment accelerated the pace of scientific and technological advancement. The modern technological progress is actually the root cause of the environmental deterioration. The degradation has adverse impacts on humans, plants, animals and micro-organisms. To cope up with the critical situation, we need to make optimum use and management of resources, sustainable development, adoption of green concept and above all community participation in all developmental activities.

**Keywords:** environment, deteriorate, degradation

### Introduction

#### What is Environmental Degradation?

The deterioration of the environment by natural or human forces is known as environmental degradation. Natural happenings like heavy rain, floods, storms, earthquakes, volcanoes etc. are not under human control and they play havoc with environment time to time by making the land unfit for cultivation. Here man is helpless. He can do nothing except to see the havoc. But when man himself plays a vital role in degrading the environment in which he lives, and then the problem becomes more serious.

Environmental degradation refers to the deterioration of physical components of the environment brought in by human activities to such an extent that it cannot be set right by self-regulatory mechanism of environment. It may be defined as the deterioration of the environment through depletion of Earth's natural resources such as air, water and soil; the destruction of ecosystems and the extinction of wildlife.

#### How Environmental Degradation Occurs

The causes of environmental degradation are often as complex the problems that result. The primary cause is human disturbance. Environmental degradation is a result of socio-economical, technological and institutional activities. The degree of the environmental impact varies with the cause, the habitat, and the plants and animals that inhabit it. There are many causes of environmental degradation. Environmental changes are dependent on many factors including-

- Urbanization
- Population growth
- Economic growth
- Intensification of agriculture
- Increase in energy use
- Increase in transportation.
- Poverty still remains a problem at the root of several environmental problems.
- Deforestation

Environmental degradation is divided into two categories on the basis of factors responsible for lowering of environmental quality. They are Extreme Events or Hazards and Pollution.

Our population is increasing fast, which has also degraded the environment to a great extent. Man's insatiable needs and distress have disturbed the whole environmental equilibrium. The race of armament among countries is no less responsible for this global issue.

Apart from these our industries emit smoke and discharge liquids including polluted water. The smoke contains many undesirable gases such as carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide. All borne particles in solid, liquids and gaseous form. The pollution in atmosphere has tendency to form their layers and sinks in atmosphere. The chlorofluorocarbons which come from aerosol sprays nuclear weapons, refrigerators etc., have caused a hole in the ozone layer of atmosphere. This hole is allowing increased amount of ultraviolet radiation reaching our earth.

Increased and uncontrolled human activities like industries, transportation, agriculture, health care, dwelling, and energy generation are some of the causes of environmental pollution. Our land, water and soil are compromised when people exhaust resources or release harmful chemicals into the air. Deforestation, wasting resources, and pollution all add to the demise of an environmentally-sound and safe planet. For example, when trees in forests are cut down in large quantities, so that more homes can be built on the land, the birds and wildlife who lived in the forest must find a new place to live. The vegetation that once grew on the land is destroyed. Trees that absorbed carbon dioxide to help the biosphere are now unable to do so. If the wood from the trees is used to make products and those products (such as paper) are later recycled, that is one hopeful aspect for the planet. However, sometimes trees are just cut down and burned. This is what is known as *slash and burn*, a practice that only destroys forests and all that live in them.

So, Environmental Degradation is the result of developmental processes of economic and technological activities of man. It is caused by several forms of pollution, depletion of natural resources; increasing dependence on energy consuming and ecologically damaging technologies, depletion of forest cover has become a global concern. The environmental crisis is ascribed to exponential growth in human population, fast ex-

panding industries and philosophical religious outlook of society. Man's cruel behavior with environments accelerated the pace of scientific and technological advancement.

### Unfortunate Impacts of Environmental Degradation

There are innumerable issues and problems faced by the environment today. Due to rapid industrialization, heavy usage of chemicals and lack of concern for the environment, today we are facing several problems. These issues should be dealt with immediately otherwise mankind may have to face serious repercussions.

The degradation also impacts on our

- Wildlife
- Plants
- Animals
- Micro-organisms

When factories produce harmful chemicals and toxic waste into bodies of water, humans suffer. Pesticides and fertilizers can also get into a region's water system and pollute it. Drinking water is contaminated. Some residing in third-world countries are highly effected by the degradation of our planet and these unhealthy practices cause the following:

- Illnesses
- Death in children
- Death in adults
- Losing Earth's beauty

As humans dump waste products, use chemicals, and over fish in the oceans and seas, areas of beauty such as coral reefs are damaged. At times the destruction is so great that it cannot be reversed. We are killing our planet and the consequences are tremendous.

### How to stop degradation

The above mentioned factors have really degraded the environment and if ways to check it are not applied we will have face serious consequences. We must put an end to our insatiable needs and desires. There must not be indiscriminate cutting of trees because it will lead to ecological imbalances. Instead, we should know the value of tree plantation and should plant trees as many as we can in our surrounding area. Next, our ever growing population must be checked because it puts an extra burden. on our natural resources.

It is our duty to conserve the natural resources. Resources are meant not only for utilisation of present but for future generation also. So it is very necessary to maintain a balance between growth of population and utilisation of resources which will ensure the continuity of the human race.

Any imbalance in either of the two may disrupt the continuity of our economic, social and cultural environment. To consume natural resources, renewable sources must be enhanced and used and nonrenewable sources must be used as economically as possible.

Last but not the least, factories should not be allowed to emit large quantities of harmful effluents into air through their chimneys. They should discharge them into the rivers and other water bodies because this dirty water can be treated and recycled to be used again.

Some of the ways which you can help to decrease degradation in our environment are

- Purchase recycled products
- Conserve water
- Do not litter or toss waste into inappropriate places

- Conserve energy
- Join an awareness group
- Talk with others about the impacts of environmental degradation
- Be an advocate to save our planet!

### Conclusion

Needless to say that environmental degradation is one of the major global issues. The overuse of resources and the industrialization process are the major causes of this phenomenon. Man has been felling the trees for his various purposes. He never minds if this process goes on without check it will lead to soil erosion, floods, silting of irrigation canals and cultivated lands, which finally degrade our environment.

Our environment must be protected by all means. We must realise the fact that so long environment is there, our life is there. The day, when there is no environment, there will be a complete doom.

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