

Environmentalism in Popular Culture

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How to cite this paper: Mr. Himanshu Sharma | Mr. Rahul Jai Singh | Ms. Palak Sharma "Environmentalism in Popular Culture" Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-3 | Issue-4, June 2019, pp.350-353, URL: <https://www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd23693.pdf>



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INTRODUCTION

Rising Environmental Awareness

The Oxford dictionary defines Environment as "the surroundings or conditions in which a person, animal or plant lives or operates". The environment has become of great concern in the past decade. Environmental themes, such as change in climate, loss of biodiversity, pollution, global warming, and sustainable development and so on, have occupied a significant space in the media channels and the government policies. The population have now recognised that we have a big environmental problem. We have been polluting our planet, depleting its resources, and accumulating a ton of non-biodegradable waste.

At this point of time, although capitalism and industrialisation have helped to create the highest material standards of living but the process has depleted the quality of living as it has, at the same time increased the rate at which we pollute, deplete, and make waste. As former Vice President Al Gore concluded in his book *Earth in the Balance*, "Human civilization is now the dominant cause of change in the global environment." The environmental consequences of global climate change have become more and more obvious and of greater public concern.

'Environmentalism' Is The Concern About And Action Aimed At Protecting Environment.¹

Environmentalism has evolved as a concept over the past few years as a consequence of our ignorance towards the

ABSTRACT

The Oxford lexicon characterizes Environment as "the environment or conditions in which a man, creature or plant lives or works". The earth has happened to extraordinary worry in the previous decade. Ecological topics, for example, change in atmosphere, loss of biodiversity, contamination, an Earth-wide temperature boost, and maintainable improvement, etc, have possessed a noteworthy space in the media channels and the administration strategies. We have been contaminating our planet, draining its assets, and amassing a huge amount of non-biodegradable waste. Now of time, although private enterprise and industrialization have made the most astounding material ways of life, yet the procedure has exhausted the nature of living as it has, in the meantime expanded the rate at which we dirty, drain, and make squander. As previous Vice President Al Gore deduced in his book *Earth to be determined*, "Human development is currently the prevailing reason for change in the worldwide condition." The natural outcomes of worldwide environmental change have turned out to be increasingly evident and of more noteworthy open concern. Endeavours to spare the earth can be followed back to as ahead of schedule as the 1900's yet not until the beginning of 21st century. Individuals attempted endeavors to work overall and battle condition exhaustion. What's more, for a similar reason, Environmentalism has advanced as a progressively concrete and required idea in the pop culture. Little yet noteworthy endeavors have been taken to spare our condition.

Keywords: Environmentalism, Rising Environmental Awareness, Global Water Crisis Paris Agreement

environment. It advocates the preservation, restoration and/or improvement of the natural environment. A combined effort is made by the governments (both domestically and internationally) and the people to combat the negative impacts of depletion of environment.

Environmentalism in Popular Culture

Efforts to save the environment can be traced back to as early as the 1900's but not until the dawn of 21st century. People made efforts to work collectively and combat environment depletion. To sum it up, "environmentalism is an attempt to balance relationship between humans and the various natural systems on which they depend on in such a way that all components possess a proper degree of sustainability"². It has evolved continuously to face new issues in relation to global warming, overpopulation, waste management and sustainable developments.

Media and connectivity have contributed in raising awareness about contemporary issues amongst the people which has in turn, resulted in various changes in the lifestyle of people in order to create balance between convenience and the environment. People have now recognised that the comfort and convenience they have been provided with by the improvement in technology; commercialisation and mass production of products comes with a price. It has now been

¹ Oxford Dictionary; 'Environmentalism'

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmentalism>

recognised that the price is depletion of the naturally available resources (i.e. Water, air, fuel etc.) and increase in waste.

Strategic sustainable development and waste management including environmental pollution control is the need of the hour. And for the same reason, Environmentalism has evolved as a more concrete and needed concept in the popular culture. Small but significant efforts have been taken in order to save our environment.

Environmentalism over the past decade Contemporary Environmental Issues:

The most significant environmental issue of 2000-2009 was the environment itself. During the past 10 years, the environment played an increasingly important role in almost every aspect of modern life—from politics and business to religion and entertainment. The environment was a pivotal issue in all three of the decade's U.S. presidential elections, commanded more congressional attention than any issue except the economy and health care, and was the subject of government action and debate worldwide. During the past decade, businesses embraced green initiatives, religious leaders declared environmental stewardship a moral imperative, and stars from Hollywood to Nashville promoted the virtues of green living and environmental protection.³

Climate Change

Climate change is becoming more and more evident with the passage of time, and particularly human generated global warming has resulted in the significant climate change. It has now become a topic of more scientific research, debate, media attention and public concern than any other environmental issue over the past 10 years.

Overpopulation

The global population has doubled between the year 1959 and 1999 from 3 billion to 6 billion. According to the current projections, the world population will increase to 9 billion by the year 2040, which will lead to severe shortage of food, water, and other natural resources. Overpopulation is expected to increase other environmental problems, such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, and pollution.⁴

Global Water Crisis

As we have been taught, the earth only has 4% of fresh water contrasted to the 96% of saline water. There is already scarcity of water resources in existence, and the crisis will only get worse with the increasing population and consumption. With the advent of the 22nd century, there will be immense scarcity of water resources.⁵

Use of on Renewable Sources of Energy

As the naturally occurring and non-renewable energy sources like fuel and coal are reaching to a point of extinction, finding another renewable source and properly implement it is becoming more and more and more urgent.

Endangered Species

An animal species dies out every 20 minutes on Earth, thus becoming extinct. The rate of extinction has drastically

increased over time and at the current rate, more than 50% of all the living species will be extinct from earth.⁶

Contemporary Environmental Solutions:

Since the turn of the millennium environmental issues have come to the forefront with a marked shift toward all things green in politics, technology and perhaps most importantly, society.⁷

- 1. Early Climate Agreement:** In 1997 the Kyoto Protocol was adopted by some countries (although not the U.S). It marked an early serious attempt by world leaders to address global warming in a coordinated way.⁸
- 2. Hybrid Revolution:** In 2001, the Toyota Prius became the first mass-produced hybrid vehicle to be sold worldwide. It heralded the beginning of an era - commercially-viable and even successful green goods. Industry insiders called it a game-changer attracting buyers despite its higher-than-average cost and unique look. Buying a Pries wasn't simply about fuel efficiency; it was making a statement about the environment.⁹
- 3. Green Awareness:** With the end of the old millennium, it was seen that the environmental awareness has increased tremendously, spurred by decades of educational and activists campaign.
- 4. Protection of Road less Areas:** In January 2001, the US Forest Service adopted Road less Area Conservation rule which preserves 5.85 million acres of land from road constructions and logging.¹⁰
- 5. California Goes Solar:** In the year 2002, California passed an aggressive Renewable portfolio Standard, which aims to replace utilities in the state with at least half of their energy from renewable by 2030. ¹¹
- 6. Electric Cars:** There has been an increase in use of Electric cars in order to replace the use of fuel by electricity.
- 7. Sharing Fish:** In 2006 the U.S. started regulating the commercial fishing industry through catch shares, in an attempt to make fishermen partners in conservation instead of adversaries. The basic idea is that each fisherman is awarded a percent share of the total catch. This helps incentivize conservation measures and accelerated the recovery of many declining U.S. fish stocks.¹²

⁶http://www.theworldcounts.com/counters/degradation_and_destruction_of_ecosystems/species_extinction_facts

⁷<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/TECH/science/12/17/environmental.decade.top.ten/index.html>

⁸<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/160422-earth-day-46-facts-environment/>

⁹<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/TECH/science/12/17/environmental.decade.top.ten/index.html>

¹⁰<https://www.fs.usda.gov/roadmain/roadless/2001roadlessrule>

¹¹http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/RPS_Homepage/

¹²<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/160422-earth-day-46-facts-environment/>

³<https://www.thoughtco.com/environmental-issues-of-the-aughts-1203712>

⁴<https://ourworldindata.org/world-population-growth>

⁵<http://www.unwater.org/water-facts/scarcity/>

8. **Fuel Efficiency:** The Energy Independence and Security Act resulted in tougher new fuel economy standards, including the phase-in of standards for SUVs and even large commercial vehicles. Manufacturers had fought the standards for years but eventually worked with the government to meet the standards.¹³
9. **Rise of Walking:** There has been an increase in pedestrians with time, people have started preferring to walk over using fuel run vehicles.
10. **Protecting the Atlantic Coast:** In 2010, the Department of the Interior announced a ban on oil and gas drilling in federal waters off the Atlantic Coast until 2017. This was the latest in a series of efforts to limit development off the ecologically sensitive U.S. coasts.¹⁴
11. **Dams Come Down:** In 2012, Washington's Elwha dams were removed, restoring a wild river to Olympic National Park. This was arguably the most high profile dam removal in a growing movement that has sought to restore natural rivers and see the return of salmon runs.¹⁵
12. **Climate Agreement:** In late 2015, nations came together in Paris and agreed to a new plan to limit global warming. The deal opens for formal signatures on Earth Day, and it will require countries to reduce emissions according to their pledges. Environmentalists are cautiously optimistic that the agreement represents a global turning point.¹⁶
13. **Tougher Ozone Standards:** In August 2017, the Trump administration EPA dropped its decision to delay new Obama-era regulations on ozone, a long irritant that forms when sunlight irradiates emissions from vehicles, power plants, and other sources. In October 2015, the Obama administration tightened the ozone national standard from 75 parts per billion to 70 parts per billion, citing ozone's toll on public health. The Obama administration estimated that the reduction would yield \$2.9 to \$5.9 billion worth of health benefits in 2025, outweighing its estimated annual cost of \$1.4 billion.¹⁷
14. **Species Show Recovery:** There has been a slow and steady recovery of endangered species. For instance, Pandas, Bats and Grizzly Bears.

Paris Agreement:

World leaders on December 12, 2015, parties adopted the landmark Paris Agreement. "The agreement represents a hybrid of the "top-down" Kyoto approach and the "bottom-

up" approach of the Copenhagen and Cancun agreements".¹⁸ It establishes common binding procedural commitments for all countries, but leaves it to each to decide its nonbinding "nationally determined contribution" (NDC). The agreement establishes an enhanced transparency framework to track countries' actions, and calls on countries to strengthen their NDCs ever five years. IN June 2017, President Donald Trump announced his intent to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement. However, withdrawal cannot formally be initiated until November 4, 2019, and would not take effect until a year later. The Trump Administration has meantime indicated that it will continue negotiating the Paris rules and may remain in the agreement under revised terms.¹⁹

Initiatives by the Indian Government

In India, the environmental awareness gained momentum since the 1970s after the UN conference in Environment in Stockholm (1972). Indian government took many environment friendly activities and continues to imply in its statute various provisions with an object to preserve environment. Here are a few initiatives taken by the Indian Judiciary over the past decade in order to curb out environment depletion:

Environment Friendly Products: The government is setting stringent standard for manufacture of all products in the market.

Ban on Harmful Pesticides: Several chemical products have been banned in order to avoid soil depletion and there are now plans to replace them with safer bio-pesticides²⁰

Ban on smoking in Public Areas: A ban is proposed on smoking in public areas. The Delhi government took the first initiative in order to prevent harmful smoke from entering the environment.²¹

Ban on Fire Crackers: The Supreme Court has restricted use and sale of fire crackers in order to prevent massive air pollution which is caused due to bursting of crackers in Diwali²².

Ban on Plastic: The government has implemented a ban on plastic to reduce waste and manage it more efficiently. There has been a rise in the products which can be used as a replacement of plastic. Additionally, the government has also introduced plastic which meets the required standard in order to replace non-biodegradable plastic.²³

National Solid Waste Management Council: The main task of the National Waste management Council is to convert 40

¹³<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/160422-earth-day-46-facts-environment/>

¹⁴<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/160422-earth-day-46-facts-environment/>

¹⁵<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/160422-earth-day-46-facts-environment/>

¹⁶<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/160422-earth-day-46-facts-environment/>

¹⁷<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/160422-earth-day-46-facts-environment/>

¹⁸<https://www.c2es.org/content/history-of-un-climate-talks/>

¹⁹<https://www.c2es.org/content/history-of-un-climate-talks/>

²⁰<https://krishijagran.com/industry-news/18-pesticides-banned-by-govt-of-india/>

²¹<https://www.tobaccocontrol.org/legislation/country/india/summary>

²²<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/supreme-court-firecracker-ban-pollution-diwali-5413938/>

²³https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/single-use-plastic-ban-india_us_5b3a09b6e4b0f3c221a28a07

million ton of fly ash in to bricks, city garbage into energy and sewage into fertilizer.²⁴

Corporate Social Responsibility: Corporate social responsibility aims to ensure that the companies conduct their business in a way that is ethical and environment friendly. Section 135 of the Companies act²⁵ mandates businesses to contribute in the economic, social and environment development in India.

Pollution by Motor Vehicles: Anti-pollution measures are being strictly enforced against motor vehicles. Vehicles not adhering to the standards prescribes are heavily fined and may even be asked to be off the road. Delhi's odd-even rule is an example of such a step in order to fight rising air pollution in Delhi²⁶.

Unloading of Petrol: The presence of lead in Indian petrol is one of the major causes of air pollution through automobiles. The government has been pursuing the refineries to make their petrol lead free.

Other initiatives:

1. Burning of agricultural biomass residue or crop residue has been a major health hazard. It is also a regional source of pollution, contributing between 12 to 60 percent of PM concentration. Both Haryana and Punjab have now banned stubble burning of crops and there has been a dip in crop burning cases in the said states since the ban.
2. The Chilika lagoon is situated along the eastern coast of India is a Ramsar site. This hotspot of biodiversity had been facing multiple pressures. For the restoration, Govt. of Orissa created Chilika Development Authority (CDA). With the active participation of the local community. The lagoon has been restored now.
3. Government of Chhattisgarh has declared the state as "Herbal state" and under "Hariyar Chhattisgarh" enormous plantation of medicinal plants have been started in urban as well as rural area.
4. In Pune, thousands of scrap collectors participated in a series of protest demonstrations and Rallies demanding official recognition by issuing identity cards as their work were socially useful. The municipality agreed to their demand and thus become the 1st governmental authority in the country to issue ID cards to rag pickers. Today members of the union have a sense of pride. For the 1st time there was felling of support from outside Srinivasan 2003.

Components of Environmentalism

The period of environmentalism heightened environmental concern and subsequently the concept of environmental awareness has emerged. Apart from the local authorities and the government, these are the various components which contribute to environmentalism and thus raising environment awareness:

Environmental Organisations and Agencies: There are many international agencies and organisations which have

been actively contributing to the preservation of our environment. Some examples of such organisations are UNESCO, UNEP, CITES and Greenpeace.

Environment Education: It is believed that increase in environment education will reverse the misuse of the environment and its resources. It is concerned with teaching conceptual knowledge and skills, a process in which individuals gain awareness that will enable them to act and also develop values and attitudes which will motivate and empower individuals and groups to work and promote the sustainability to solve present and future environmental problems.

However, despite the introduction to Environmental Education, decline has shown no sign of abating.

Media: mass media like radio, TV, Newspaper, weeklies, documentaries, films, hoarding boards etc. have a great influence on people. They have a pivotal position primarily because of their immense influence on people and wide reach.

NGO's: The role of NGO's in creating environmental awareness and promoting EE is very significant. Karalla Sastra Sahitya Parishad, India, which initiated the silent Valley Movement and successfully stalled a hide project in the silent valley. One of the best bio-diversity spots in the world.

Business Houses: The business houses play an important role in preserving environment. Consumers are increasingly getting interested in the green initiatives propagated by the seller companies and are willing to pay more for them. As a result, the inorganic industry has come to a dead end and organic industry has strived. Their aim is to become 'zero waste companies'.

Groups and Individuals: Groups and individuals the fundamental role in environment preservation as they are the building blocks of the society.

Conclusion

Increase in global population, consumption, production of utilities and the imbalanced usage of limited natural resources have depleted the environment. Despite the efforts in the international and local level by various organisations and authorities, the environment is still continuing to deplete. There is a direct relation of Environmentalism with environment education and awareness. The momentum of Environmentalism will increase with Environment awareness, thus making everyone responsible to curb out the environment depletion. The environmental educators and policy makers must give more emphasis on efforts to increase environmental responsibility at the international level, state level, amongst groups and individuals; NGO's and local people considering the environmental concerns at the time.

²⁴<http://nswai.com/about.php>

²⁵ Companies (Amendment) Act, 2013, Section 135

²⁶http://delhi.gov.in/wps/wcm/connect/faec83804c6322d1be53bea086717e58/odd_even.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&Imo d=348624296