

## **ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT**

'Environment' and 'development' are like two sides of the same coin. Environment protection cannot be isolated from the general issues of development. We have to achieve progress in all spheres of human development- economy, technology, industrial production and health care-balanced with environmental protection, for, this alone can sustain development efforts.

We are deeply concerned about many environmental problems, whether it is the loss of forest cover, land degradation, depletion of wildlife or the pollution of air and water. These are linked to the problems of meeting human needs including the availability of drinking water, food and shelter for all. It is towards this goal that efforts are under way in India, a goal which is ultimately the true goal of development – an environmentally sound and sustainable quality of life.

This introductory pamphlet gives you a glimpse of the rich biological diversity of our country, the factors that are responsible for environmental degradation, efforts under way for reversing this trend and the ways in which you can promote and support the conservation movement in the country. We have a long tradition of love, reverence and respect for nature. This abiding faith in conservation of nature, often overshadowed by the impact of technological advancements and urbanization, needs to be rekindled in each of us. The greatest need of the day is to ensure the development of our country and the well-being of our people without destroying our rich natural heritage and environmental assets.

We hope you will find here a valuable opportunity for discovering and understanding environmental issues- leading to personal involvement and action in this area of our common concern for our common future.

### **OUR COUNTRY**

Our Country is unique in many ways. With its wide range of climate conditions, India represents almost all types of habitats of the world. The land mass of 329 million hectares is bounded on the south-west by the Arabian sea, south-east by the Bay of Bengal, south by the Indian Ocean and north by the mighty Himalayan ranges. India measures 3214 kms. from north to south and 2933 kms. from east to west with a coast line of 7516 kms. Andaman & Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal and Lakshadweep in the Arabian Sea are the two island systems of the country. The snow clad peaks of the Himalayas, the deserts of Rajasthan, the tropical evergreen forests of Kerala and the north-east, innumerable mountain ranges, plateaus, wetlands and river systems provide a wide spectrum of geographic diversity in India.

## **Biological Diversity**

India is equally rich in biological diversity. A number of biogeography realms of ecosystems can be identified in the country, with their respective flora and fauna lending a distinct character to each. These include alpine regions, coniferous forests, deciduous forest, evergreen tropical forests, deserts, wetlands, lakes, river systems, mangroves, coastal areas and the oceans.

These ecosystems of India are endowed with a fascinating variety of plants and animals- about 75,000 species of animals and over 45,000 species of plants. Among the fauna are 340 species of mammals, 1,200 of birds, 420 of reptiles, 140 of amphibians, 2,000 of fishes, 4,000 of mollusks and 50,000 of insects, apart from other invertebrates. Among the flora are about 15,000 species of flowering plants, 5,000 of algae, 1,600 of lichens, 20,000 of fungi, 2,700 of bryophytes and 600 of pteridophytes.

This diversity in the flora and fauna is also reflected in the people of the country. On the one hand we have the progressive urban population of the 20th century and on other, are the simple rural folk of agricultural India. Distinct in their life styles, yet having the same affinity with nature to a great degree, are the tribal's of India.

## **Conservation for Development**

The threat to the biological diversity due to over exploitation of resources and habitat destruction is a matter of great concern in India today. Realising the fact that many species of animals and plants have become endangered, several initiatives have been taken for their conservation. Today, India has a wide network of 75 National Parks, 421 sanctuaries and 7 Biosphere Reserve located in different parts of the country. Special projects have also been established for the protection of the Tiger, Lion, Crocodile, Kashmir Stag, Himalayan Musk Deer, Indian Swamp Deer, Brow-antlered Deer, Snow Leopard and the Elephant. Research on Indian wildlife and training in wildlife management receives special attention in India. Among the projects taken up for the protection of threatened species, 'Project Tiger' has been a phenomenal success.

One of the basic requirements for the protection of biological diversity and the conservation of endangered species is the survey, study, documentation and research on the flora and fauna of India which is being systematically done with a national network of organizational infrastructure.

The threat to the water quality of India major river systems due to industrial effluents, human waste and sewage is being tackled by well formulated river action plans. Regeneration of wastelands through forestation projects and ecodevelopment promises to color the country green in the years to come.

Environmental damages inflicted by oil exploration and mining are being assessed and the exploration agencies are involved in taking remedial action. Use of non-conventional energy sources such as biogas, solar and wind energy as well as the introduction of energy efficient cooking appliances are making slow, but steady inroads to meet the energy crisis.

The problems of air pollution are being felt in India with an accelerated tempo with the industrial growth, urbanization and increase in motor vehicles. Stringent measures are introduced for the control of industrial and automobile air pollution. Significant efforts are also being made for preventing deforestation and carrying out afforestation on a large scale.

### **Act Now !**

People are increasingly realizing the seriousness and urgency of the environmental issues. But that is where it often stops-at awareness. Most people feel that these are issues which are too complex to be tackled by anyone other than the government, or scientific institutions. Can personal action have any impact? What can an individual do about some of these issues?

These are many issues of concern in our daily lives-wastage of water, power consumption, fuel consumption, packaging and waste, garbage and sewage disposal etc. Pollution, deforestation, greenhouse effect, ozone hole-big names for big problems. But the solutions are not all that big and complex.

Small actions can make a difference to these big problems. They alone may not solve the problems, but they will help.

Show your concern, show that you care

Act Now-

To make a difference to our environment.

For more information please contact

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