



## SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN ON SOLUTION OF HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL PREDICAMENT

**M. Yesupu**

Department of Philosophy Sri Venkateswara University Tirupati – 517502, Andhra Pradesh, India

**Prof. P. Chinnaiah\***

Department of Philosophy Sri Venkateswara University Tirupati – 517502, Andhra Pradesh, India \*Corresponding Author

### ABSTRACT

The paper presents an ecological frame to change the economic and social trends now deepening the human predicament, viz. overpopulation and continuing population growth, overconsumption by rich societies, resource depletion, environmental degradation, and inequitable distribution of wealth within and between societies. Certain points often overlooked include the demographic contribution to environmental deterioration; climate disruption, global toxification, and a decay of biodiversity and ecosystem services; and economic growth of the rich, which hurts everyone in the long term. Perpetual economic growth is biophysically impossible; the culture gap impedes solutions; and all the factors are intertwined. Potential solutions include empowering women and providing family planning services to all sexually active people; reducing overconsumption and helping the poor; overhauling education systems, including universities; adapting to changes that are inevitable; and improving food production and distribution systems. Hope comes from growing worldwide grassroots movements.

**KEYWORDS :** Overpopulation; Excess consumption; Environmental deterioration; Economic growth; Culture gap; Empowerment of women

### INTRODUCTION

Civilisation immensely influences the crucially important biosphere of planet Earth. Human efforts have generated a population size and level of material consumption that are now significantly beyond the bearable capacity of the planet. As the world population has exploded, the basic human needs are denied to so many, it is folly to ignore the complex nexus of problems, including population growth, overconsumption by the rich, resource depletion, environmental degradation, and lack of equity in society. Instead of try to summarise the entire predicament, the aspects which remain generally unappreciated but must be understood if the predicament is to be resolved are discussed. Clearly, there is no single magic bullet that can save civilisation. A series of behavioural changes that in combination could lead to real solutions to the interconnected challenges that society faces today are proposed.

### ENVIRONMENTAL PREDICAMENT

#### Population growth is a major contributor to environmental deterioration

Population growth is a major contributor to environmental deterioration. For instance, climate disruption, one of the gravest threats we face, cannot be decoupled from population growth. Although it is almost never mentioned in the mass media, the flow of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere from driving cars, transporting goods, running agricultural systems, heating and lighting homes and businesses, and from deforestation increases as the number of people on this planet grows. Above all, population size multiplied with per capita consumption to produce a level of aggregate consumption whose environmental consequences are already unsupportable in the long term.

#### Population growth and human life-support systems

Human beings are smart and pick the 'low-hanging fruit' whenever possible. Therefore each person added to the population typically will end up eating food grown on more marginal land, drinking water transported farther or requiring more purification, using metals won from poorer ores. Those are examples of 'nonlinearities' (situations where input produces disproportionate results). They mean that it mostly requires more energy to get the same amount of food, water, or metal as it did when there were fewer people; thus population growth causes disproportionate environmental deterioration. Population growth and globalisation are also degrading our epidemiological environment. The hungrier people, individuals there are, the greater the chances of a novel disease transferring from an animal reservoir, establishing itself in the human population, and causing a lethal pandemic.

#### A warming atmosphere and environmental threat

Dangerous as changing the climate is, other problems may prove more catastrophic, such as the loss of biodiversity, toxification of the planet

or the ecological effects. Moreover, the effects of global toxification and a mass extinction event may prove impossible to reverse, even on a time scale of millennia. At least, if climate disruption becomes intolerable, several semi-insane geo-engineering 'solutions' have been proposed that could be deployed. But no such proposals have been put forward to deal with potentially lethal synergisms - deadly interactions among tens of thousands of toxins and hormone mimics - that now poison our planet from pole to pole.

#### Economic growth among the already rich hurts everyone

Even with a substantial portion of Earth's population living in poverty, more than one planet would be needed to sustain today's population indefinitely. Consequently, the more that consumption by the rich grows, the less there will ultimately be for others – and eventually for the rich themselves. Radhakrishnan says "wealth, power and efficiency are the appurtenances of life and not life itself".

#### Perpetual growth is biophysically impossible

The culture gap the extreme compartmentalisation of education and knowledge that keeps most people from understanding the basics of how the world works, makes finding solutions extremely difficult. Few grasp how fundamental this problem is. Even well-educated people are in a poor position to make sound political decisions if they do not understand such things as the functioning of the climate system, the decay of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and those environmental nonlinearities associated with population growth.

#### All of these factors are intertwined

The interactions among them are daunting. Agricultural production must be increased some 70-100 per cent by 2050 if humanity hopes to meet the demands of population growth, including the rising demand in emerging economies for meat-rich diets and increasing demand for bio-fuels, both of which will require a larger fossil fuel subsidy to agriculture and a takeover of more land for farming.

#### POSSIBLE SOLVING

Business as usual is an increasingly dangerous option for civilisation. What follows are some of the steps we think should be taken, starting with two important ones that target the principal drivers of environmental deterioration: overpopulation and overconsumption. Then we point out symptoms that need to be addressed and finally note the most important solution: changing the fundamentals of human behaviour and human institutions.

#### Empower women and promote family planning and child health care

Women do not have equal rights, equal job opportunities, or equal rewards in any nation, although there are large differences between countries in the status of women. Those inequities must be a top priority, both in the name of simple justice and because, in general,

liberated women have fewer children and produce many other social benefits. Indeed, no society has successfully modernised without substantial participation by women. The size of the unmet demand for contraception is controversial, but it is likely that as many as 50 million unwanted pregnancies and tens of millions of abortions (many dangerous) could be avoided. The investment would be amply repaid by lowering the costs, financial and human, of poor health and loss of life.

#### Reduce overconsumption to resources for entire poor

The super-consuming society must be brought to an end. But while solutions to overpopulation have been thoroughly examined by scholars, the issues of overconsumption have barely been discussed. How to deal successfully, efficiently, and humanely with the necessary redistribution from rich to poor needs careful consideration, which has been lacking thus far.

#### Completely overhaul educational systems

In elementary and middle school, such topics as how ecosystems and Earth's climate system function and how people interact with their environments, the difference between renewable and non-renewable resources, the laws of thermodynamics, and clarifying how human power relationships influence resource allocation, should be introduced. These could go a long way towards encouraging the needed change in norms and discouraging overconsumption. In developing countries, establishing universal education would also work towards enhancing equity, especially for women and the poor, while reducing inherited advantage of all kinds. One important step, would be to push through social media for the adoption of 'green accounting', in which the flawed indicator of gross domestic product (GDP) - which equates progress with continual increases in production and consumption - is replaced by other metrics that reflect the state of natural, human and social capital. Radhakrishnan says "The end-product of education should be a free creative man, who can battle against historical circumstances and adversities"

#### Reduce population size and levels of consumption by the rich

Dealing with these two prime drivers of environmental deterioration presents very different challenges. It is not possible to make significant changes in the population trajectory humanely. Deciding how to manage the vexed problems of overconsumption and redistribution, however, will be an unprecedented challenge. Still, societies have shown that they can change their patterns of consumption virtually overnight, given sufficient incentives. A revised discipline of economics could be put to work on finding the most feasible, efficient, and equitable ways of radically changing consumption patterns within a few decades so that the poor could consume more, the rich would consume less, and aggregate consumption could be substantially reduced.

#### ROLE OF RADHAKRISHNAN IN ENVIRONMENTAL PREDICAMENT

Radhakrishnan dealt with different states of human predicaments like psychological, social, political, science, economic and environment. He saw human beings as part of the universe, and recognized the need for the human species to live in harmony with its natural environment. Radhakrishnan's illustrious biographer and his worthy son Sarvepalli Gopal has called him a "philosopher influenced by his environment". There is something remarkable about the environment as well as the scholar which it produced. No one who holds himself aloof from the activities of the world and who is insensitive to its woes can be really wise. Human nature is fundamentally good, and the spread of enlightenment will abolish all wrong. We must recall humanity to those moral roots from which both order and freedom spring. Human life as we have it is only the raw material for Human life as it might be.

*Kavalāyākāra āhāra* – Physical nourishment, as bodily feeding, represent the natural laws of material world; natural laws, in turn, regulate seasonal changes, environmental balance (*utu-niyāma*), and reproductive functions (*bāja-niyāma*) etc. Whatever consideration brings about the arising of sensuality (*kāmāsava*), the egocentric survival-drive (*bhavāsava*), the ideological obscurantism and dogmatism (*dīñhāsava*) and mental blindness and ignorance (*avijjāsava*), by its very nature, it is wrong and unwise, in the same way as fire, by its very nature, burns, consumes and destroys. Just as industrial effluents pollute the environment – land, water, air and endanger life, so do the mental effluents – *āsavas*. An *āsava* defiles the mind by its polluting (*kilesa*), corroding (*saikilesa*) and corrupting

(*upakkilesa*) influence; it weakens the mind, keeps it under the thralldom of *kamma* and rebirth, and thereby binds a being onto the wheel of becoming (*saṃsāra-bandhana*) and impedes his spiritual progress. Just as getting out of a polluted environment and entering into a fresh and exhilarating atmosphere coincide and happen simultaneously, even so, there is an inevitable concurrence between the abandoning (*pahāna*) of the cankers and the experiencing of the Noble Truths.

The environmental issues according to Radhakrishnan are energy crisis, crunch of natural resources and grave economic conditions which are shadowing our lives. His views on education and nature or environment have received a widespread attention from scholars and academicians. Not only human beings but even the lower kinds of animals are capable of perfectly adjusting themselves with their environment. Radhakrishnan attempted to explain this point with a curious analogy. He stated that life of a personal being is possible only in relation to an environment. God, in so far he is a person requires an environment. The achievement by man of the highest glory and excellence is what it seeks. To struggle against, and overcome obstacles; to establish a healthy environment, physical and social, in which man can rise to his highest social excellence; to enjoy the delights of culture and civilisation – this constituted the true manliness of man. He discovered that the ideal of manliness was an achievement within the sphere of the physical and wanted to go beyond the body, the senses, and the environment, to a realm in which man realizes himself as the immortal Self, beyond finite time, space and causality. He saw human beings as part of the universe, and recognized the need for the human species to live in harmony with its natural environment.

#### CONCLUSION

As the world population has exploded the basic human needs are denied and it is folly to ignore the complex nexus of problems, including population growth, overconsumption by the rich, resource depletion, environmental degradation, and lack of equity in society. Population growth is a major contributor to environmental deterioration and globalisation is also degrading epidemiological environment. Radhakrishnan dealt with different states of human predicaments like psychological, social, political, science, economic and environment. *Kavalāyākāra āhāra* – Physical nourishment, as bodily feeding, represent the natural laws of material world; natural laws, in turn, regulate seasonal changes, environmental balance (*utu-niyāma*), and reproductive functions (*bāja-niyāma*) etc. Just as getting out of a polluted environment and entering into a fresh and exhilarating atmosphere coincide and happen simultaneously, even so, there is an inevitable concurrence between the abandoning (*pahāna*) of the cankers and the experiencing of the Noble Truths. He saw human beings as part of the universe, and recognized the need for the human species to live in harmony with its natural environment.

#### REFERENCES

1. Dasgupta, P. (2001), Human Well-being and the Natural Environment (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
2. Harte, L. (2007), Human population as a dynamic factor in environmental degradation, *Population and Environment*, 28, 223-236.
3. Ehrlich, P.R (2011), A personal view: environmental education - its content and delivery. *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, 1, 6-13.
4. Mind Overcoming its Cankers, Venerable Acharya Buddharakkhita, Buddha Vachana Trust, Maha Bodhi Society, Gandhinagar, Bangalore -9.
5. Radhakrishnan, S. and Muirhead, J.H. (Eds), (1958), "The Spirit in Man" (article) *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, p.443.
6. Radhakrishnan, S. (1920), *The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy*, p.410.