

WESTERN GHATS

The World Heritage



WESTERN GHATS : THE WORLD HERITAGE

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF WESTERN GHATS A NEED FOR THE FUTURE

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Abstract

Western Ghats is one of the 33 recognised ecologically sensitive zone in the world. India has four such sensitive zones. They are the Western Ghats, the Eastern Himalayas, the Himalayan Range between Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh and the Andaman Islands. The significance of the Western Ghats is that along with its rich biodiversity, it also supports a rich environment dependant civilization for several thousand years. The area is one of the worlds ten "Hottest biodiversity hotspots" and has over 7,400 species of flowering plants, 139 normal species, 508 bird species, 179 amphibian species; it is likely that many undiscovered species live in the Western Ghats. During the past 40 to 50 years the plant and animal life as a whole have suffered due to so called development and urbanization which has led to the extinction of species and more are in danger of becoming extinct.

If we accept the current model of development the rich Biodiversity in Western Ghats will be collapsed. Biodiversity suffers through over consumption and unsustainable development practices. Due to modern trend of development, so many varieties of plants and animals are suffering today. Therefore, for the survival of our failure generation, we have to take review of our current model of modern day's development. We have to accept such type of development model, which will help to protect the varied and rich Biodiversity in Western Ghats.

Introduction

In the reference of survival of Biodiversity in Western Ghats, we have to think about the concept of sustainable development. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development can be interpreted in many different ways, but in its core is an approach to development that looks to balance different and often competing, needs against an awareness of the environmental, social and economic limitations we face as society. Living within our environmental limits is one of the central principles of sustainable development. The focus of sustainable development is for broader than just an environment. It's also about ensuring a strong, healthy and just society. This means meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion, and creating equal opportunity.

Sustainable development is an approach to development that takes the finite resources of the earth into consideration. This can mean a lot of different things to different people, but it most commonly refers to the use of renewable energy resources and sustainable agriculture or forestry practices. It also entails the use of sustainable mineral use along with many other things. The idea is to create a system that is "sustainable" meaning one that can keep young indefinitely into the future.

Conventional and Alternate Energy

Renewable energy sources like wind power and solar power are excellent examples of development strategies that are sustainable. Their sustainability is defined by their reliance upon infinitely available resources that are naturally occurring, constant and free to access. These factors mean that these resources will be indefinitely accessible by humans, which makes them sustainable resources.

Resourceful Western Ghats

The Western Ghats are a chain of hills that run along the Western edge of peninsular India. Their proximity to the ocean and through orographic effect, they receive high rainfall. These regions have moist deciduous forest and rain forest. The region

shows high species of diversity as well as high levels of endemism. Nearly 77% of the amphibians and 62% of the reptile species found here are found nowhere else. Sri Lanka, which lies to the south of India, is also a country rich in species diversity. Along with Sri Lanka, this region also shows some faunal similarities with the Madagascar region especially in the reptiles and amphibians. Numerous floral links to the Madagascar region also exist.

There are over 6000 vascular plants belonging to over 2500 genera in this hotspot, of which over 3000 are endemic. Much of the world's species such as black pepper and cardamom have their origin in the Western Ghats. The highest concentration of species in the Western Ghats is believed to be the Agasthyamali Hills in the extreme south. The region also harbors over 450 bird species, about 140 mammalian species, 260 reptiles and 175 amphibians. Over 60% of the reptiles and amphibians are completely endemic to the hotspot.

Challenges to Western Ghats

Though this diversity is remarkable, it is severely threatened today. The vegetation in this hotspot originally extended over 1,90,000 square kms. Today it has been reduced to just 43,000 sq.kms. According to the 1994 IUCN assessment, India contained 172 of IUCN – designated threatened species. These include the Asiatic Lion, the Bengal tiger, and the Indian white rumped vulture, which suffered a near extinction from ingesting the dead of diclofenac treated cattle. In recent decades, human encroachment has posed a threat to India's wildlife.

The need for conservation of wildlife in India is often questioned because of the apparently incorrect priority in the face of direct poverty of the people. If we accept the current model of development the rich biodiversity in Western Ghats will be collapsed. Bio-diversity suffers through overconsumption and unsustainable development practices. Due to modern concept of development, so many varieties of plants and animals are suffering today. So to protect the varied and rich biodiversity of Western Ghats, we will have to develop a unique model of development.

Before developing this unique model, we have to ask ourselves the question as to what kind of world do we live in? What is the nature of the world order which currently prevails? Liberalization and globalization process was the cause of economic and social progress. Extraordinary advances in the fields of science and technology boosted this progress. This evolution resulted in better standard of living, better access to health care, longer life expectancy, as well as improved access to professional training, information and culture.

Lopsided Development

Though this progress is irrefutable, it has not benefited equally. We also know that in spite of economic progress, inequalities have continued to increase, and the financial, economic, environmental and food crises we are facing will only intensify the unacceptable trend towards greater inequalities, as evidenced by greater unemployment, poverty as well as exclusion from access to vital resources. We are also witnessing in the last few decades and erosion of the humanist and democratic ideals. Such erosion is the result a number of factors such as market economy, competition, consumerism, democracy, confidence and responsibility.

Market economy has become a key organizing concept in both economic theory and practice and now it clearly dominates the organization of modern societies with ideological support of neo-liberal thought. Competition when free and undistorted is the twin companion of the market system. It is supposed to regulate it, by balancing supply and demand and protecting consumer's rights. But it is not always the case. The rise of consumerism is one of the consequences of the twin domination of market economy and competition. Strongly stimulated by an overabundant supply, as well as all pervasive marketing and advertising, consumerism ends up becoming a way of life which takes over every aspect of how individuals operate, at the expense of citizenship sentiments and community commitments.

Democracy must be the foundation of any evolved society, because it is what generates the organization of a free and egalitarian society that respects the dignity of human beings. In contrast the absence of democracy is a painful experience for numerous countries in the world. Yet how is democracy practiced today in societies that are supposed to be democratic?

The financial crisis has worsened the confidence crisis between individuals and institutions. Average citizens who have grown super consumers are clearly disappointed by the services they had bought from these institutions. They are feeling betrayed by

the attitude of banks and fund managers. People's sense of trust has eroded as inequalities have increased, and governments are powerless to stem growing crises and injustices, regardless of the nature of the government in charge. This trend is of greatest concern when it comes to democratic practice.

Social Accountability

The concept of responsibility also guarantees the healthy functioning of our societies. And yet peoples' sense of responsibility is eroding with growing inequalities, the rise of individualism and self-interest the rejection of all forms of institutionalism. People increasingly believe that the one who ought to be responsible is 'the other' and that they are entitled to rights and privileges without any duties. The financial crisis is indicative of a deep societal crisis, which is actually a crisis of civilization our world has sown the seeds of its own destruction because it has lost track of its primary purpose, which is to serve human beings. We live in a system that does not know how to redistribute its resources and wealth fairly, nor how to protect its environment.

Individual Contribution to Sustainable Development

We must regulate our financial system. What we must actually regulate is human greed, which provides self-interested behaviors, lead to injustice and inequalities and causes our many social ills.

The social economy can serve as a promising model, because it is based on the right kinds of values and ethical concepts and it places human beings at the heart of its purpose. The social economy can in principle be a good model for sustainable development. The world is facing the ethical crisis, indicative of a deep societal crisis. We live in a society, dominated by materialist interests and a society in which people have lost their bearing. The rising inequalities characterizing our world call upon us to advocate with conviction and determination for social economy model.

