ECOLOGY, ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: REFLECTIONS FROM TAMILNADU, INDIA

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Abstract - Ecology is the study of the relationship between organisms and their environment. Ecology enriches our world and it is crucial for human wellbeing and prosperity. It provides new knowledge of the interdependence between people and nature that is vital for food production, maintaining clean air and water and sustaining biodiversity in changing climactic condition. Environmental education is to protect, promote, preserve an environment which ensures better livelihood security with futuristic orientation to make the society of citizens socially conscious about ecology and sustainable development where environmental education plays a crucial part.

Issues: A degraded environment brings with it a set of health problems which have posed a challenge over years. Water pollution and carbon emission from vehicles have become a ritualistic phenomena today. Water shortage due to scanty rainfall and excessive extraction of ground water for irrigation as well as adverse impact of climate change caused by global warming. Therefore it is a matter of concern to deal with these issues keeping in mind sustainable development.

Methodology: This research was conducted in Sirumalai hills in Tamil Nadu, India. Qualitative methodology of focused group discussion was conducted among various caste groups in different places in the study area with knowledgeable persons who are aware of ecology, environmental education and sustainable development. Case studies were also conducted to supplement the focused discussions for deriving appropriate generalizations.

Findings: The micro reality reflected change in ecology in view of human intervention and destruction of forest lands, elimination of trees, conversion of horticulture into agriculture, change in crops, scarcity of water due to climate change, carbon emission etc. affected nature and destroyed ultimately quality of human life.

Conclusion: Therefore, we need the sustainable development strategy to handle the situation in the 21st century.

Keywords: Ecology, Environmental education, Sustainable development, Bio-diversity,Climate change.