

DETERIORATING IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENT ON SOUTH ASIAN NATIONS

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Abstract: *Saarc, an association for regional cooperation represents almost one-fifth of population of the World with a sizeable number of people deprived of the basic necessities of life. Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives and North Eastern states of India are continuously combating with the adverse effects of the climate change and depleting biodiversity. Frequent disasters in Himalayan and low-lying areas, coastal and island regions threaten lives, livelihoods and their sustainability. The loss of biodiversity has been raised above the limit which threatens the existence of some of Member states. The intensity of natural disasters would negatively affect primary economic structure of these states. Depletion of resources, droughts, cyclones and floods, extreme climatic variations threatens the agrarian structure of the SAARC nations. In this paper I would like to study the factors and investigate the process how the format of development by global leaders is a failure in supporting SAARC and the Member states.*

Key words: *Environment, vulnerability, Saarc, Disaster, Biodiversity, Ecology, Economy.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

South Asian nations are one of the most disaster prone countries and are extremely vulnerable to climate change. Although the extreme weather events in Nepal include droughts, earthquakes, riverbank erosion, and landslides, floods and cyclonic storm surges are the major killers that cause the most direct and indirect damage in the country. Due to climate change, these events are becoming increasingly frequent and intense, resulting in significant human and economic losses. There is a dilemma of selection and understanding in between economy and ecology. Third world countries are by choice or by disciplinary proceedings going for economic growth and welfare. Growth and development are the combined perspective for economic and political analysis. The process of growth deteriorated into DE growth. Degrowth became a lucrative word within critics of sustainable economy. If the increasing level of production in terms of goods and services is improving our living condition and on-going process of growth is calculated as better living standards and wellbeing, then the question is at what cost? In this process of development we calculate negative externalities in the end of the whole process. The consequences of such pattern of growth and development brought up the SAARC and its Member states on the verge of irreversible environmental loss. Environmental surplus is the basis of whole economic structure in the world(IPCC, 2007) Overall in the world different cartels, tacit agreements, emerging regional cooperation are either in rescue of or takeover of individual environmental surplus. The rational behaviour behind this pile of agreements demands prudence and emotional movement, actually absent at global level. Behind this a simple economic law works, law of demand. Notwithstanding here that, this law is inspiring north as well as south but inspiring negatively. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) glossary definition is: Climate in a narrow sense is usually defined as the "average weather," or more rigorously, as the statistical description in terms of the mean and variability of relevant quantities over a period ranging from months to thousands or millions of years. The classical period is 30 years, as defined by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). These quantities are most often surface variables such as temperature, precipitation, and wind. Climate in a wider sense is the state, including a statistical description, of the climate system (Climate, 2013). Despite all follow up agreements and cooperation globally achievement is nothing because false institutions. Because within institutions they have law of profit. At global diaspora north countries ask for resources from south and at the same time ask also for market to dump those processed resources in the south countries. The developed countries provide different models of sustainable development and inclusion to developing countries or third world nations. The third world countries are regular victim of environmental degradation, resource depletion, natural disasters, earthquake etc. (Araujo & Quesada-Aguilar, 2007). Now the question arises if developed countries provide the models of development, growth and welfare then where is the model for rescue from such irreversible consequences? Regional cooperation needs a global joint effort to combat this mass disasters and it's after effects. SAARC states are lacking in basic amenities, the urgent need of the hour is to ensure the potential steps of developed countries. The greater effort of developed countries must assure the sustainability and a better future of SAARC states. It is important to decide priorities and join the hands for integrated plan for preservation of biodiversity and minimize the intensity and give better efforts to postpone/reduce the frequency of natural disasters.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

This paper will primarily explore vulnerability of south Asian nations as the context of natural disaster caused by climate change and it is induced by the governing process of development by global leaders. In this paper try to sketch some questions which arise from a concern to understand the tripartite interaction of SAARC, livelihood and climate change induced disasters in the broader context of social change. This paper therefore raises two questions with the potential to extend the literature on disaster and climate change:

- To analyze the impact of deteriorating environmental status on South Asian Nations.
- To analyze existing global interventions to address the issues relating to climate change during disaster.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study completed mainly on the basis of Content Analysis, where secondary data were the predominant source of information. Data were drawn from relevant books journal, articles, archival records, formal studies and reports, public documents, newspapers, internet websites etc. Besides, selected papers based on the study of household samples and case studies (for in-depth analysis), selected major disaster prone divisions (the south east Asian part where cyclone, tidal surge, water logging, flood and river erosion are prevalent). The above study areas are selected following purposive sampling from the disaster prone areas. I have gone through in depth literature review. My whole paper divided into: introduction, which establishes the importance of SAARC nations and their ecological diversity. Further that has been supported with the literature review. Other parts discussing the unique physical structure and climate change induced disasters. It includes climate change occurring social vulnerability which further resultant into depleting environmental diversity. The resource depletion is the purpose of the study that has been majorly addressed. At last, concluded with the undeniable fact of social responsibility that should be globally accepted against social responsibility.

Literature Review include in depth analysis as: IPCC report on climate change. Environmental surplus is the basis of whole economic structure in the world(IPCC, 2007). The third world countries are regular victim of environmental degradation, resource depletion, natural disasters, earthquake etc. (Araujo & Quesada-Aguilar, 2007). Climate in a wider sense is the state, including a statistical description, of the climate system (Climate, 2013). Further defined the concept of vulnerability as, Vulnerability is defined as ‘the characteristics of a person or group and their situation that influence their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural hazard’ (Blaikei et al, 1994; Fordham, 1998). According to Turner (1978) in his book Man Made Disasters ‘disaster may also be viewed as a significant departure from normal experience for a particular time and place’.

4. PHYSICAL SETTINGS AND DISASTERS:

Pollution needs millions of years to recoup and the repercussions of these natural disasters are irreversible. There are 15 major environmental challenges primarily facing by SAARC and its Member states as global warming, overpopulation, natural resource depletion, waste disposal, and climate change, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, ocean acidification, ozone layer depletion, acid rain, water pollution, urban sprawl, public health issues and genetic engineering. South Asia is one of the most densely populated regions of the world with amazing diverse physical features. The current territories of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka form the countries of South Asia. It is home to well over one fifth of the world's population, making it both the most populous and the most densely populated geographical region in the world. South Asia is largely divided into broad climate zones as:

- The northern Indian edge and northern Pakistani uplands have a dry subtropical continental climate
- The far south of India and southwest Sri Lanka have a equatorial climate
- Most of the peninsula have a tropical climate with variations
- Hot subtropical climate in northwest India
- Cool winter hot tropical climate in Bangladesh
- Tropical semi-arid climate in the centre
- The Himalayas have an Alpine climate

It comprises of lofty mountains of the Himalayas, vast plateaus and valleys, tributaries, islands, lakes and wetlands, barren and deserts and 10,000km.long coastline. But intensive techniques of development, exponentially growing population, unplanned and uncontrolled urbanisation have led to shrinking and deteriorating of these amazing features of South Asia.

5. VULNERABILITY:

The term vulnerability is defined as ‘the characteristics of a person or group and their situation that influence their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural hazard’ (Blaikei et al, 1994; Fordham, 1998). Here the vulnerable people does not belong to a group instead belongs to a region. According to

Blaikie et al (1994: 10) disasters are produced by the complex mix of social, political, and economic forces that produced vulnerability of people to hazardous environments. Therefore, while hazards are natural, disasters only strike when it has an effect on vulnerable people (Cannon, 2004). The vulnerability of women and children to the disaster and post disaster casualties is 14 times greater than those of men (Araujo & Quesada-Aguilar, 2007). A case in point is the cyclone and flood of 1991 in Bangladesh when the mortality rate of women increased fivefold compare to that of men (Rohr, 2005). Three times more women were killed compared to men in the Asian tsunami of 2004 (Revathi, 2007; UNEP, 2005; Dasgupta et al., 2010: 79).

6. DISASTERS AND DEPLETING BIODIVERSITY:

Disaster is a 'cumulative concept' or an 'umbrella word'. Ian Burton et al. (1978) have defined in their book 'The Environment as Hazard' that disaster is a 'collective stress situation', while Quarantelli, and Dynes (1977) identified it with 'social crisis period' in their writings 'Response to Social Crisis and disaster' (Annual Review of Sociology' 3: 23:49).

Disaster is defined as 'catastrophic situation in which the normal pattern of life or ecosystem has been disrupted and extraordinary emergency interventions are required to save and preserve lives and or the environment'(Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011). It is one of the largest concerns for most of the developing nations because natural disasters directly or indirectly impact economies, agriculture, water, sanitation and environment. According to Turner (1978) in his book Man Made Disasters 'disaster may also be viewed as a significant departure from normal experience for a particular time and place'. Manmade disasters are more severe in the fast pace of growth and economic expansion in the name of development. It has brought forth a range of issues that seek urgent attention at all levels.

Loss of biodiversity is a result of influence of human beings on world's ecosystem and economy. Women's health is a factor to sustain in climate induced changes. Women of all ages are more calorie-deficient than men, and the prevalence of chronic energy deficiency among women is the highest in the world (del Ninno et al., 2001). Women of south Asian countries are the particular sufferers in this climate change. As Enarson, has determined four type of economic impacts of the disaster on the women's participation in economic life. First, women become economically insecure after a disaster. Second, women's responsibility and workload increase. Third, women's working conditions deteriorate. Fourth, women take considerably more time to compensate for the economic losses caused by the disaster compare to that of men (Enarson, 2000; Dasgupta et al 2010, p.141).

Excess use of natural resources results into alteration and the loss of habitats, changing biogeochemical cycles and transferring species from one area to another, such changes are severe threat to biodiversity. According to Turner (1978) in his book that disaster is also viewed as a mental construct imposed upon experience. Today climate change is a buzzword, everyone is more aware of hazards of climate change. But this problem of biodiversity depletion is created by humans itself. Global warming has significantly increased temperature in our world. Sometimes this global warming melts the glaciers of Himalayan and the low lying countries like Bangladesh, Maldives, and Myanmar etc. faces flash floods. South Asian countries are extremely vulnerable to climate change impacts because of its geographical location, high population density, high levels of poverty, and the reliance of many livelihoods on climate-sensitive sectors, particularly rural agriculture and fisheries.

7. BIODIVERSITY: WHY WE SHOULD CARE?

Why the biodiversity is important? What are the consequences of ignoring biological diversity? Why we should care? An example, suppose in Srilanka farmers used to depend on a single variety of rice. But in 1954 and 1955 this variety of rice was suddenly attacked by a new rice sheath blight disease. The consequence of such attack lead to horrific famine, killing more than million people and those who survived migrated to another places.

Now the question is why it is important more in terms of SAARC and its Member states, primarily they are producers of agriculture products, not only producers their maximum livelihood is generated from agriculture produce. Development models and massive industrialization are giving result into crop failure, death of wild beauties, serious genetic erosion, habitat loss, reproductive constraints etc. an agricultural loss.

8. LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY AND HANDICAPPED ECONOMY:

India without Himalaya and its lofty mountains, lush green valleys, mighty rivers, beautiful lakes, and amazing wildlife. Pakistan without the Paradise on Earth 'Neelum Valley' Mini Switzerland. Srilanka without waterfalls, wildlife and beautiful beaches. Tragedy of Maldives, the nation of 2000 island is sinking in the sea. The entire above are assumed pictures of depleted nations. Economic values are important for conservation because they force us to consider all of the benefits which we obtain from wildlife. The emerging economies of SAARC are gradually become handicapped if the causes of biodiversity degeneration remains same. Some fundamental causes of biodiversity degeneration are as:

- Steadily narrowing spectrum of traded products from agriculture and forestry and introduction of exotic species associated with agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

- Economic systems and policies that fail to value the environment and its resources
- Inequity in ownership and access to natural resources, including the benefits from use and conservation of biodiversity.
- Lastly, legal and institutional systems that promote unsustainable exploitation.

9. CONCLUSION:

Coordination of macro-economic policies is the fundamentals in view of global interdependence. But it cannot be effective in achieving sustained global economy unless it encompasses the developing countries. An urge from global leaders, to change the circumstance in the world economy by inviting the North – South Dialogue. That dialogue must include a process of reform for environment development and process of preserving and strengthening the green economy. It is undeniable fact that children, the marginalized, and the minorities group of south Asian nations are the worst victims. Marginalized inequalities with respect to enjoyment of human rights, political and economic status, land ownership, housing conditions, and exposure to violence, education and health (in particular female reproductive and female sexual health) -- make them more vulnerable before, during and after climate change-induced disasters.

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