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ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND HAPPINESS: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract:

The paper tries to explain the relationship between the environmental Justice and happiness and how the both concepts are responsible for the present and future generations to lead a healthy, wealthy, happy and sustainable life. It also highlights the objectives, different dimensions, principles, challenges and steps to achieve the environmental justice and happiness. Everybody wants to live a happy, healthy, disease free life in a clean, judicious and sustainable environment. A justiciable environment can help to reduce stress, improve the mood, enhances pleasure and peace, boost overall wellbeing. When we have a lot of money, palatial buildings, larger vehicles, great tunnels to move, we really need a healthy life to lead all the things, which is only possible in the real sense of environmental justice. So it is our prime responsibility to maintain the sustainability of the future environment. Thus the cry of the hour is to focus on the “Environmental Justice and happiness” which ultimately leads towards a Sustainable Natural Earth (SNE). Further the time has come to re-think about our environment and happiness in a practical and sustainable manner.

Keywords:

Environment, Sustainable Environment, Sustainable Natural Earth, Distributional justice, Recognition justice, Procedural justice, Capabilities.

Introduction:

Environmental justice is collective measure against the eco-injustice which occurs when poor and marginalised communities are harassed by the hazardous waste, extraction of resources, unequal distribution of land, labour and profit, injustice in public policy, ecological disunity, mutual antagonism rather than mutual respect, uses of land and renewable resources not for sustainable means, threatening fundamental rights to clean air, land, water and food, discrepancy in public participation in decision making including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation, violation of international laws etc. The movement may be traced back from the 1980's North Carolina dispute over toxic waste dumper near a neighbourhood of African –American people which later became a global issue.

In the same way if the mother earth becomes an irresistible place for the co-participants of the eco-system than what about the future of the coming generations. Further, how can we think about the happiness of the people as well as the living thing on the earth in a state of injustice? This paper tries to highlight the environmental justice which directs the happiness of the people as well as the fellow participants of the eco-system. One may focus on the architect of happiness i.e. spiritual, born of Truth and love, a state of healthy mind and healthy body, a social and public good, a framework for community development, community

governance and free from all types of environmental impacts such as air , food and water inequality . Further, a successful environmental justice program requires extensive collaboration and support from the grassroots to the topmost lawmakers, for the implementation of the inclusive happiness in today's era of environmental injustice.

Objectives:

The paper tries to understand the following learning objectives:

1. To focus on environment and happiness, this may be regarded as the two sides of the same coin.
2. To comprehend several means of happiness indicating towards environmental justice.
3. To understand the environmental issues linked with the dynamics of political decision making and global environmental negotiations for the preservation of environmental justice.

Environmental justice: from political to social

The environmental justice or distributive justice or the procedural justice or the recognition justice is a political as well as a societal issue which somehow relates to public life, public health, sustainability and the existence of our ecosystem in a happy, healthy and progressive earth. The United States Protection Agency (USPA) focuses on the fair treatment and the meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, colour, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies, which directly linked with the justice and equality in the society. Article 38 of the statute of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) interprets international laws on environmental justice. There is a cry for environmental justice as the same is based on the principle that all people have a right to be protected from environmental pollution, and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment that ultimately deals with the universal happiness of the ecosystem. The whole system deals with the increase ecological protection and safety within disadvantaged communities by promoting them environmental education. **Environment for happiness (2020).**

From the policy perspectives the countries are trying to focus on several conferences for global environmental negotiations. The United Nations conference on Human environment, Stockholm, 1972 was a landmark and a catalytic event towards environmental effect on present and future generations. From that conference the environment had become a matter of global concern. Both the developed and developing countries started focusing on international policies regarding the protection of the environment. In the meantime the United Nations Environmental Programme(UNEP) was created to handle and focus a new interest in global responses to global problems on the environment for the global community. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1986, Rio Conference in 1992, Kyoto Protocol in 1997, the Johannesburg Summit in 2002, The Earth Summit, the Agenda 21, the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1993, the Forest Principle etc., are the greatest steps so far for the protection of environmental justice in the globe.

A Bond between Environment and Happiness:

Environment is the store house of happiness. We feel happy with fresh air, clean water, healthy food, clean energy, pollution free atmosphere, disease free life. Life is also more comfortable with freedom in speech and expression, using sustainable means of development, sustainable use of resources, use environmental friendly techniques, live with nature , more and more use of the renewable sources of energy, less use of non-renewable resources etc. The World Happiness Report says social support, income, health, freedom, generosity, and absence of corruption in the earth are the six key factors of measuring happiness.

A positive environment can help to reduce stress, improve mood, and boost overall well-being. **Laura Musikanski at. El (2020).**

Factors of happiness: environmental and social

There are several factors of happiness from the individual as well as environmental. One may individually happy with family, friends, being fit physically, being sound in body and mind, living with good faith, good understanding, with a happy, healthy and disease free life etc. on the other hand it is the society where we live, which is completely based on the environment, where we are staying. Moreover, green earth, clean water, highly oxygenated air and fertile soil reach with all types of natural minerals are the real factors of the environmental happiness. The present generations needs a Sustainable Natural Environment (SNE) with quality and justice to the individual as well as community.

Principles of Environmental Justice:

The principles of Environmental Justice affirm:

- The sacredness of Mother Earth,
- Ecological unity and the interdependence of all species,
- The right to be free from ecological destruction.
- Public policy, based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.
- The right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.
- Universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.
- the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.
- The right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.
- The right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.
- Protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.
- Governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.
- The need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and provided fair access for all to the full range of resources.
- The strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color. **Smyth et al. (2008).**
- Opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.
- Opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.
- The education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.
- We, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to ensure the health of the natural world for present and future generations. **The principles of environmental justice (2020)**

Dimension of environmental Justice:

In the work 'radical environmental justice' (Svarstad and Benjaminsen 2020), the most 'mainstream' framework of Environmental Justice is that which adheres to the four dimensions:

- (1) distributional justice,
- (2) recognitional justice,
- (3) procedural justice (e.g., participation, decision-making), and
- (4) capabilities approach

Challenges and crossroads of environment and happiness

- Growing population
- End of fossil fuel era
- Lack of clean water, air, healthy soil, and arable land, for food productions. **Christen. K. (2018)**
- Deforestation.
- Mining
- Climate change
- Greenhouse emissions.
- Melting of glaciers.
- Ozone layer depletion
- Acid rain
- Human behaviour towards the environment

Roads towards environmental justice

- There should be Global acceleration of environmental rule of law
- The governments should respect, protect and fulfil the right to a clean and healthy environment, which is key for sustainable development.
- There should be Strong national legal frameworks in practical
- Strong step should be taken for equitable and sustainable management of natural resources.
- The legal frameworks should incorporate vulnerable, excluded and marginalized communities to access justice, information and participate in decision-making.
- There should be Transformation in the way we think and re-think for the present as well as the future generations.
- There should be grassroots level initiative for the protection of a healthy, happy, wealthy and sustainable environment.
- There should be to incorporate wide cross-sections of society in the design of environmental policies and decisions not only in pen and paper but also in human capital.

Concluding observation: Rethinking Environmental Justice and actual happiness

It is high time to re-think about the environmental justice now as the present situation compels us to have a safe and secure environment not only for the present generation but also the generations to come. There are so many national and international conferences, policies and programs of the government, international funding, international laws, global agendas like sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Agenda -21, Earth Summit, global environmental summit, etc., but it seems somewhere we have failed to achieve the goals of the environmental justice today. So the need of the hour is to be practical in our work towards the environmental justice. It should be our practical responsibility to manage and protect all the communities of the environment and provide a happy life with livelihood and less fear of their extinguishment. We need to focus the decision of the larger communities in a broader

manner in order to maintain a healthy balance in between the environment and the community. Further we must focus on the personal happiness and sustainable social change.

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