

Man on Earth : Guest or Host !



* Dr. Jabir Hasan Khan

Since the beginning of the life on the earth, all the living organisms including man have been dependent on earth for their sustenance, and the earth, being the best host, presented a variety of endowments to its guests to fulfil their basic needs. Man, being the unique creature on the earth, evolved harmony with the various other guests (living organisms) and lived in the laps of nature without exerting any marked impact on the earth, the unique planet of the solar system. However, the variety of the guests of the earth changed again and again due to climatic and geological changes on the earth, but the man had always been the sincere chief guest of the earth.

With the passage of time the human population increased and man also developed various techniques to utilize the natural resources to fulfill his basic needs. It is estimated that world population was about 8 million in 8000 B.C., the period when man began to domesticate animals and raise the plants. After the advent of agriculture, man began to select the plants and animals from nature according to his/her need and desire and also learned to store surplus. It brought improvement in the diet and also helped man to take rest and, consequently, the births slightly exceeded the deaths. The population began to grow at a snail's rate and it reached upto 800 million by 1750 A.D. After it, industrial revolution and innovations in agriculture and medicines brought a gap between the rates of the fertility and mortality, therefore, the world population became 2.5 billion by 1950.

It doubled in the next 38 years, and reached to 5 billion in 1988. The next billion was added after the lapse of only 11 years, and it became 6 billion in 1999, another next billion has been added in 12 years when it reached 7 billion in October 2011, and it is estimated that it will be 8 billion in 2025.

The exponential human population growth, new innovations in technology and diversification in economic activities and needs of man provided a base to man to over exploit the natural resources of his host, the earth without paying any attention about the other guests (plants and animals) of the earth. Man has become extremely selfish, materialistic and greedy, and has forgotten that Almighty bestowed and decorated this earth with the variety of endowments not only for him but also for the generations which are yet to come

over the earth. In his greed, he has made him too busy in the exploitation of the natural resources that he is not having any time to hear the alarm of the danger that his very existence, itself, is in great danger.

The earth, as a host, has provided three major items, namely, land, water and air to man as well as all other organism. Man, being the superior being must have fulfilled his basic needs and must not have put any hinderance in the way of other major and minor guests of the earth to satisfy their needs, and should have also paid due significance to the various components of non-living things. But, man, in the race of meeting his wants and greed, began to use heavy doses of harmful chemicals in the form of fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides and weedicides in agriculture to get more agricultural products from the land, and recklessly cleared the forests to bring the new areas under cultivation, to expand the means of transportation and to provide raw materials to forest-based industries.

He began mining of under-ground water by installing tube-wells for multiple-cropping, and with the help of canal and tube-well irrigation he has expanded the area of rice cultivation in semi-arid and arid regions without considering its adverse environmental consequences. He has also devastated the beautiful cover of the earth in the areas having minerals.. He has converted the rivers into sludge carriers by pouring industrial wastes and human excreta into them. Man is releasing gallons of poisonous gases in the atmosphere, emitted from the chimneys of the industries, silencers of automobiles and vehicles, caused by burning of fossil fuels in them.

Moreover, man has developed the technique to use chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in refrigerators and air conditioners. These activities of man have posed the new problems in the contemporary world in the form of climate change (greenhouse effect and global warming), ozone depletion, rise in the sea level, extinction of land and marine organisms, increase in area under alkaline and saline of soils, water pollution, eutrophication, water logging, decline in underground water table, acidic rain, lack of minerals, floods and droughts, etc. The problem like poverty, hunger, unemployment, houselessness, regional disparity and vertical inequality, diseases, energy crises, agrarian and political unrest are the ramifications and repercussions of unsci-

entific use of resources, spread of materialism and declining norms of humanity.

Truly speaking, the time is shrinking and going out of the reaches of man with each passing day to rectify him, therefore, it is, now, a must for the mankind that we should develop and apply eco-friendly technology in the form of non-conventional means of energy, compost, bio-fertilizers, bio-pests, scientific methods of irrigation and mining, reuse of recycled water, interlinking of rivers, etc. Moreover, there should be control on deforestation, emission of poisonous and green house effecting gases and release of CFCs in the atmosphere, discharge of industrial wastes and sewage in the rivers. It is the need of the hour that we should revisit our eco-friendly traditions to save the earth and bring awareness among the masses regarding the ecological significance of the plants, animals, soil, water, air and micro-organisms.

Notwithstanding, the problem of over-population in some regions of the world may not be solved by only diffusion of eco-friendly technology. The world community should understand that this planet is not meant for one race, country or society. We have demarcated the earth by political boundaries for the convenience of the people for providing them efficient administration, otherwise, the whole world is a family of

mankind, therefore, it is the ripe time to spread the slogan of 'Vasudhev Kutumkum', in the world, and under an international agreement people from over-populated regions should be allowed to migrate to settle down in the under-populated regions of the world according to the desire of potential migrants and permission of respective governments of the receiving countries.

However, since the last couple of decades, the world community has awakened and realised that the earth has been seriously ill due to misdeeds of man, therefore, some steps have been taken from various forums at the national and international level in the form of agreements and acts, but, all these attempts have nearly failed in mobilizing masses to be sincere in saving the earth from the adverse impacts caused by anthropogenic factors.

It, thus, indicates that man, like the guest of the earth, should use the resources of the earth very scientifically and judiciously only upto tolerance limit, and learn to live in harmony with all the biotic and abiotic elements of the environment; it will be the best gift of man to the host, earth, and the only way out of his survival and sustenance on this blue planet, the Earth.

** Associate Professor, Department of Geography, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh*