



CIPRIANI COLLEGE OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES

We will all like the environment to be alive

India's great statesman and leader, Mahatma Gandhi once declared that societies must provide 'enough for people's needs, but not for their greed'. The narrative means that the earth will be able to provide for the basic needs of future generations only if humanity refrains from rapidly and thoughtlessly consuming finite resources such as oil, hardwoods and water. Further, we need to refrain from polluting the air and water, something that we have been doing with increased rapidity, which puts additional stresses on the earth to correct itself. Additionally, to add to the malady, the loss of global forests, through the cutting of trees and the destructive effects of acid rain, threatens to undermine the global climate. It can also be argued that we risk the future of the planet by adding people to the world at an alarming rate, something that has been occurring for the past few centuries.

In every part of the earth, inhabited by humanity, an environmental deficit is growing. In effect, our present way of life is borrowing against the well-being of our children and their children. And, looking at the global dimension of this process, members of rich countries who currently consume most of the earth's resources are mortgaging the future security of the majority of people who live in the poor countries of the world.

In principle, the solution to the entire range of environmental problems is living in a way that is sustainable because it does not increase the environmental deficit. A sustainable ecosystem refers to the human use of the natural environment to meet the needs of the present generation without threatening the prospects of future generations; and this is what we should be aiming towards.

Sustainable living that does not threaten the future of the planet must focus on the conservation of finite resources by balancing the desire to satisfy our present wants with our responsibility to preserve what will be needed by future generations. In essence, I am arguing that conservation involves using less resources, and in some cases, learning to live with less, even though this has proven to be a challenging proposition.

Technology, no doubt, will provide the key to household devices that are far more energy-efficient than those available at the present time, or that have existed in the past. As such, we must expand the development of alternate energy sources, which include harnessing the power of the sun, wind and tides. But while relying on help from new technology, a sustainable way of life will require the rethinking of the pro-consumption attitudes that permeate societies.

Additionally, we have to learn how to reduce the waste that we produce, as households, communities, and nations. Wherever possible, simply using less is the most effective way to reduce waste, and to assist in this re-conceptualization of how we live, we also need to get used to the idea of recycling. We have to reignite the recycling programs. To be sure, success will

depend both on educational efforts to enlist widespread support for recycling, as well as legislation to guide the process. Since most societies favour market economies, the success of any recycling program is more likely to become commercially viable if mechanisms are developed to encourage such activities and the levels of incentives are deemed attractive.

As poverty is an issue affecting all regions of the globe, the key element in any plan for a sustainable ecosystem is the need to bring population growth under control. Having accepted this position, one must also recognize that controlling population growth will require urgent steps to be taken in the poorest parts of the world, where growth rates are highest.

Finally, realizing the goal of a sustainable society demands a critical reevaluation of the logic of growth that has dominated our way of life for centuries. There is already evidence the tide is turning on the issue. In closing, I will like everyone to consider how the great dinosaurs dominated planet earth for some 160 million years and then perished forever. Humanity is far younger, having existed for a mere quarter of a million years. Compared to the dimwitted dinosaurs, our species has the gift of great intelligence. But how will we use this ability? What are the chances that our species will continue to flourish on the earth for 160 million years or even one thousand years from now?

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