

irrespective of race and language, which were within the ambit of all-India contacts, with their armies, gathered in the Punjab to participate in this fratricidal war between the members of the most influential royal house in Madhyadesa. In a battle lasting for eighteen days, they mingled their blood and created for the first time an all-India consciousness. At the end, Yudhishtira was acclaimed by the whole of the then organised India as a *Chakravartin*.

This struggle left a tremendous impression on the collective consciousness of the people. Racial memory, through text, sermon, story and epic recital, was focused on two great personalities of the time who became shining lights illuminating the Indian mind for all time: Vyasa, the learned and venerable seer and ascetic, the saviour of the *Vedas*, and Sri Krishna, the warrior and statesman, the ever-triumphant Superman. One taught *Dharma*, the other upheld it.

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## From the Bhavan's President Need for Ecological Balance

R. Venkataraman



Man has not understood Nature and its secrets and realises it only after destroying its bounties.

Problems of human ecology have become extremely important for us because as a developing nation, we have to reconcile modern scientific and technological development within the framework of socio-economic systems. Any slip can lead us to the holocaust that we witnessed in Bhopal. We have to constantly remind ourselves that it is the people who matter and it is for them that we have to work for. It is not always easy to foresee the impact of the technological revolution on the social well-being of men, women and children. But we have to

make a conscious effort to do so, otherwise the cost will be high in terms of health and well-being.

Man always seeks to improve. Better quality of life comes through the way we organize our social and economic activities. Policies for economic development have serious consequences on our social life and it is being realised that ecological balance has to be maintained if quality of life has to be improved. Programmes for economic development have to take into consideration not only problems of environment but also the need to harmonize the

interests of the rich and the poor. Environmental problems have attracted attention only recently since technological advancement and economic development have resulted in the depletion of natural resources. There is increasing pollution of our rivers and there is a deterioration of other traditional resource systems throughout the world. In our own country we have seen how the Ganga has been polluted and the forests have been denuded. Such pollution and destruction have seriously affected life dependent on these resources apart from causing ecological havoc. Such development regardless of ecological costs only fosters accelerated ecological and cultural resource depletion and degradation through ever increasing levels of consumption.

No one can say that economic development is unnecessary or that scientific and technological advancement has not brought benefits to mankind. Indeed many problems like poverty,

hunger, disease and destitution have been mitigated only by the application of science and technology. At the same time, it has been truly said that technology causes as many problems as it solves. Modern civilization has brought in its train many ill-effects caused by our failure to respect and preserve the balance of ecological factors in the human environment. More often than not, we have in our decision-making allowed economic and material considerations to outweigh human and spiritual ones. Much of this has happened in the developing nations because we have attempted to develop along Western models forgetting that the West is already suffering from the consequences of indiscriminate use of modern technology. It is this failure to understand the Western experience of development that has all too often led us to adopt policies that are ecologically disastrous. There has been haphazard growth of our large cities where

inhabitants are condemned to psychological and social effects of over-crowding; slums have come up in the periphery where the poor live without basic civic amenities; crime has increased; family as a cohesive unit and as a part of a small community is breaking up and the individual lacks security and a sense of belonging. In the rural areas the very sources of livelihood of the people are being threatened. There is pollution of the soil, of lakes, of rivers and the sea. I have already mentioned some of the glaring examples of these effects.

We have now to make great efforts to see that requirements of development are harmonized as much as possible with those of human ecology. Governments, policy makers, academics and leaders of public opinion have a special responsibility in this regard. They have to offer ecologically viable alternatives to the dead-end development models widely prevalent today. Needs of development and those of human

ecology demand synthesis. The key to such synthesis requires in-depth understanding of national, regional and international economic and political systems. This can be done by promoting human ecological education and the search for hybrid development strategies which will provide some of the more humanizing advances of the scientific industrial age while at the same time using more ecologically sound practices. The touchstone of development has to be human well-being in all its ramifications.

Some endeavours have been made to preserve ecology by organizing battalions of ex-servicemen to promote afforestation of desert areas in a number of States but the effort is too small to make an impact. The study of the flora and fauna of each region and its importance in maintaining ecological balance is all too rudimentary. In fact, Man has not understood Nature and its secrets and realises it only after destroying its bounties.