

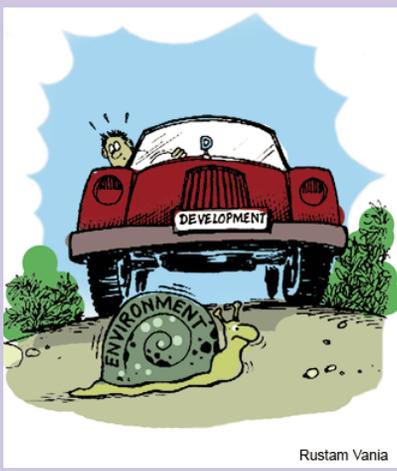


Green Schools Network

ACTIVITY SHEET

August 2012

Why talk about the Environmental Emergencies?



Rustam Vania

Because Environment has become a topic of national debate of policy making. The cause and effect of its degradation is essential. More importantly all of us play a key role in the arena of environment. Let take climate change as an example. The current global average atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide is 380 parts per millions – 36 per cent more than the 280 ppm present in the earlier era. And if we do not cut down the fuel emissions, the global average temperature would rise to 3-6° by 2100. Since human beings are a part of this carbon cycle they are affected by this drastic change. As per the WHO, 5,27,000 deaths are caused every year to unhealthy environmental conditions. All these alarming statistics can be controlled by environment management by all of us at an individual level also.

Name.....
School Name
Class..... Date

Gobar Gyan

Constitution is a living document; an instrument which makes the government system work. We all know our rights as an Indian citizen. But with rights comes responsibilities, yes we also call it "Duties". Our constitution also specifies our fundamental duties towards society and Nation. The development of constitutional rights in India was inspired by historical documents such as England's Bill of Rights and the United States Bill of Rights. The Fundamental Duties were adopted by India in January 1950 when they were made a part of the Constitution. Fundamental Duties is a section of the Constitution that prescribe the fundamental obligations of the State to its citizens and the duties of the citizens to the State.



Haven't we all mugged them up by heart as children? But do we still remember them? And even if we do remember, how many of us perform our duties towards our society or Nation?

Let's revise some of these duties again:

- (a) To abide by the Constitution and respect the National Flag and the National Anthem;
- (b) **to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life and to have compassion for living creatures;**
- (c) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform;
- (d) to safeguard public property and to abjure violence;
- (e) to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity, so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of Endeavour and achievement.



Hi! I am Pandit Gobar Ganesh. You will find me in Gobar Times—a magazine that tells you how your everyday life is linked to the world around you. Hooked, huh? If you want to know more about me and GobarTimes visit us at: www.gobartimes.org

Activity 1: Isn't it necessary to know our Fundamental Duties? Yes it is imperative.

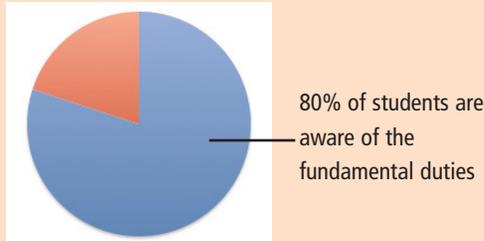
Let us take up a survey in school to find out how many of your fellow students know our fundamental duties. Prepare a short questionnaire for the survey. Below are a few questions which you can ask in your survey. You can always add more questions to make it interesting. This survey should follow the rules of Rapid Fire Round. You have to interview at least 100 students in your school.

Question 1: Are you aware of Fundamental Duties? Yes No

Question 2: If yes how many do you remember? At least one _____ More than one _____ All of them _____

Question 3: Is preserving the environment part of our fundamental duties? Yes No

Tally the total percentage of students who answered the first question. Make a pie-chart based on the results. For example if 80 students out of 100 students responded positively your pie-chart will look like this:



Observations:

1) Percentage of students who answered the Question 1 positively = _____

Segregate that further into:

2) Percentage of students who did not answer the question = _____

3) Percentage of students who were aware of the fundamental duty of preserving and improving environment = _____

Gobar Gyan

So lets open another chapter of history. But unlike what you might think, its quite interesting.

I'm sure you've heard this before that in India in the earlier days, environment with all its components were worshipped by all. In Hindu Theology, nature, trees, rivers etc were considered sacred. Do you remember Grandma telling us stories about the Vedas, Upanishads and the Puranas? Though she may have skipped these details but a detailed description of air, water, trees, and their uses and importance on this Earth was given in these scriptures. They were to be worshipped and preserved for the future generation. These traditional beliefs seemed to change after the British invaded India in 1600.

And then you all know what happened! They plundered our natural resources and took over our country. By 1860, Britain had emerged as a leader of deforestation, degradation of land, exploitation of natural resources and destruction of green lands. This was because of the increased demand for construction of roads, buildings and the railways in India. Though the railways and roads are still in use all over India, the damage done to the environment at that time has still not been undone.

From here on the British steadily started formulating policies and laws in India relating to the environment. The East India Company which was emerging as a territorial power in India had control over the teak in Madras (now Chennai) and other towns of India. All these reforms in the 19th century was for what? You guessed it correctly – it was for trying to prevent the environment from any further harm. After India became independent, in the Constitution various laws, policies and reforms were made. They became binding on us to follow. But are these laws relevant keeping in mind today's scenario? Do we need a set of new laws to protect our environment? Is our Government giving any heed to this issue of national importance?

Activity 2: So now with all this gyan on the history of law making in India, Let's see what all can we implement in our schools!

Have you ever wondered how the leaders of our country started making laws and passing judgements? They too discussed amongst peers, shared their views with each other and came to a consensus. Let us do the same. Make groups of a minimum of 4 members and have a meeting to discuss possible environmental laws which can be implemented in you school and the vicinity around it. These laws can be presented in a mock court to make things more interesting or a parliamentary debate can be held in the school for the passing of these laws in your school.

Strategy:

- Let us firstly break up into groups of four. Each member should decide their role and designation (Leader, Researcher, Surveyer etc)
- The leader can coordinate all the other members while engaging himself in his research of law making.
- The surveyors can gather information from other people like their social sciences teacher, representatives or any other aware person.

Observations:

- 1) How many laws/policies are coinciding with existing environmental laws in India. _____
- 2) How many laws/policies are relevant to the present scenario in India? _____

How are Laws passed in the parliament? Can you implement the same?

Coming back to our activity, lets try and create a Parliament like atmosphere, right here in our school. All we need is a Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition and members of both the parties.

The Bill can be introduced in the Parliament by either the ruling party or the opposition. Its pros and cons can be debated over and necessary changes can be added and a decision can be taken after coming to a consensus. Take a vote to pass the Bill and form a Law.

Gobar Gyan

Did you hear about the Vedanta Controversy or the Patel v Union of India case?

In these leading cases before the Supreme Court, the appellant was charged by the Government on account of Building their business units on government land without an Environmental Clearance.

You must be puzzled with such a heavy word and what could it mean, but do not worry the concept of Environmental Clearance is very simple.

It can be defined as the clearance chit given to private concerns by the Ministry of Environment and Forests to build their factories, hotels, office, restaurants etc on the land which otherwise is protected by the government against degradation. The process involves evaluating the upcoming project and screening whether it will cause environmental harm.

The main purpose is to assess impact of the planned project on the environment and people and to try to abate/minimise the same.

Industrial projects located in any of the following notified ecologically fragile/sensitive areas would require environmental clearance irrespective of the type of project:

- Religious and historic places – near Haridwar or Rishkesh
- Archaeological monuments – like anything near Taj Mahal or Qutub Minar
- Scenic areas – around the Nilgiri Hills
- Hill resorts – around the Eastern Ghats

Haven't we all been to a beach resort, hotel inside a wildlife sanctuary or the backwaters? Do you think these companies/factories/resorts have a Environmental Clearance?

Activity 3: So lets narrow down our search to our own state. Lets try and find out about the Environmental Clearances. You can find out about various factories, companies, hotels, resorts in your state. Make an informal report regarding its energy utilisation, water consumption, greenery around its vicinity etc. You can add various other inputs if you wish to make it more interesting. Given below are some questions you could refer to.

Question 1: Do these companies/factories require an Environmental Clearance?

Question 2: Are they conforming to the norms of this clearance given to them? If yes, which ones?

Question 3: Is there any controversy over Environmental Clearance?

Did you find that all the business entities around you have been given environmental clearance. To conclude this activity, gather as much information you can on the above topic and share it with your social studies teacher or class representative. The result of this questionnaire can be circulated to all students. This will help them become aware about this issue.



Prepared by: Urvashi Venkatraman

If you found the activity sheet interesting, E-mail us at eeu@cseindia.org or write to:

Activity Sheet, Centre for Science and Environment

41 Tughlakabad Institutional Area

New Delhi-110062 or Call 29955124 Extension 219