

Chapter 5

The Ailing Planet: The Green Movement's Role

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Q. 1 Locate the lines in the text that support the title 'The Ailing Planet'.

Answer:

The lines in the text that support the title 'The Ailing Planet' are

- a. The earth's vital signs reveal a patient in declining health.
- b. In large areas of the world, human claims on the systems of fisheries, forests, grasslands, and croplands are reaching an unsustainable level, a point where their productivity is being impaired. When this happens, fisheries collapse, forests disappear, grasslands are converted into barren wastelands, and croplands deteriorate.
- c. The world's ancient patrimony of tropical forests is now eroding at the rate of forty to fifty million acres a year, and the growing use of dung for burning deprives the soil of an important natural fertilizer
- d. There can be no doubt that the growth of world population is one of the strongest factors distorting the future of human society.

Q. 2 What does the notice 'The world's most dangerous animal' at a cage in the zoo at Lusaka, Zambia, signify?

Answer:

The notice 'The world's most dangerous animal' at a cage in the zoo at Lusaka, Zambia, signifies that man has always been an utterly self-centered being. Even though man is civilized and has come way ahead of all other animals, his sense of a world based on partnership is yet to take shape. We humans like all other beings want to rule this planet and not live in partnership with it. That is the reason why we always tend to

forget that humans alone cannot sustain. We must rather learn to live in such a way that helps the earth sustain and therefore helps us sustain.

Q. 3 How are the earth's principal biological systems being depleted?

Answer:

The earth has four principal biological systems. Namely the fisheries, forests, grasslands, and croplands. These four systems not only are the basic systems needed for livelihood but are also the root sources of raw materials for most of our needs. In short they form the main structure of the World Economy. But today, with the growing demands in things like protein, the demand for fish is constantly increasing. To fulfill this demand, the fish stock is being exhausted. In addition to supplying our food, these four systems provide virtually all the raw materials for industry except minerals and petroleum-derived synthetics. In large areas of the world, human claims on these systems are reaching an unsustainable level, a point where their productivity is being impaired. When this happens, fisheries collapse, forests disappear, grasslands are converted into barren wastelands, and croplands deteriorate. In a protein-conscious and protein-hungry world, over-fishing is common every day. In poor countries, local forests are being decimated in order to procure firewood for cooking. In some places, firewood has become so expensive that "what goes under the pot now costs more than what goes inside it

Q. 4 Why does the author aver that the growth of world population is one of the strongest factors distorting the future of human society?

Answer:

The author thinks that the growth of world population is one of the strongest factors of distorting the future human society because growing population not only increases the demand for food but also depletes the current resources at a speed that is not recoverable. Fertility falls as incomes rise, education spreads, and health improves. Thus development

is the best contraceptive. But development itself may not be possible if the present increase in numbers continues. The rich get richer, and the poor beget children which condemns them to remain poor. More children do not mean more workers, merely more people without work. It is not suggested that human beings be treated like cattle and compulsorily sterilized. But there is no alternative to voluntary family planning without introducing an element of coercion. The choice is really between control of population and perpetuation of poverty.

TALKING ABOUT THE TEXT

Q. 1 Discuss in groups of four.

Laws are never respected nor enforced in India.

Answer:

India has a well-knit constitution that focuses on every aspect of the society. Not only is the human aspect of the society taken care of, but the environmental factor too is respected. This can be seen in Article 48A of the Constitution of India provides that “the State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country”.

But what comes as a shock is that though the laws exist, there is no one to keep track of the fact which checks whether they are followed or not. This can be exemplified by the fact that the Constitution says that casteism, untouchability and bonded labor shall be abolished, but they flourish shamelessly even after forty-four years of the operation of the Constitution. A recent report of our Parliament’s Estimates Committee has highlighted the near catastrophic depletion of India’s forests over the last four decades.

India, according to reliable data, is losing its forests at the rate of 3.7 million acres a year. Large areas, officially designated as forest land,

“are already virtually treeless”. The actual loss of forests is estimated to be about eight times the rate indicated by government statistics.

Q. 2 Discuss in groups of four.

“Are we to leave our successors a scorched planet of advancing deserts, impoverished landscapes, and an ailing environment?”

Answer:

The statement is perhaps more serious than it sounds. It does not only mean that although mankind claims to be the most advanced creature on the planet, mankind is utterly failing in leaving behind a safe and secure planet for its future generations. While it must be evident that man understands its own needs very well, man has constantly been proving that it is selfish and has no concern for its future generations. This is leading to extreme depletion of all the natural resources and will apparently leave nothing behind for the future to rely upon. This is why it has been said: “Are we to leave our successors a scorched planet of advancing deserts, impoverished landscapes, and an ailing environment?”. It is a topic to ponder upon and act accordingly.

Q. 3 Discuss in groups of four.

“We have not inherited this earth from our forefathers; we have borrowed it from our children”.

Answer:

This precisely means that the planet is not something that belongs to this present generation completely. Rather it is borrowed by the present generation on lease from the future generations. This lease is not official. But it is actually an ethical obligation to realize and act upon. We, humans, love our children and younger generations much more than we love ourselves. So we badly want to protect them. But we evidently forget that the first and the most important thing to do is to leave them an earth which is worthy of residing. This is why the author wants us to

realize that the earth does not hereditarily belong to us. We are rather tenants using it on the lease.

Q. 4 Discuss in groups of four.

The problems of overpopulation that directly affect our everyday life.

Answer:

The rapidly increasing population will not only affect the culture and start occupying more and more space but will also make the world a more and more poor and unhealthy place to reside in. There can be no doubt that the growth of world population is one of the strongest factors distorting the future of human society. The present world population is estimated at 5.7 billion. Every four days the world population increases by one million. Fertility falls as incomes rise, education spreads, and health improves. Thus development is the best contraceptive. But development itself may not be possible if the present increase in numbers continues. The population of India is estimated to be 920 million today — more than the entire populations of Africa and South America put together. No one familiar with the conditions in India would doubt that the hope of the people would die in their hungry huts unless population control is given topmost priority.

THINKING ABOUT LANGUAGE

Q. 1 The phrase ‘inter alia’ meaning ‘among other things’ is one of the many Latin expressions commonly used in English.

Find out what these Latin phrases mean.

1. prima facie-
2. ad hoc-
3. in-camera-
4. ad infinitum-

5. mutatis mutandis-

6. caveat-

7. tabula rasa-

Answer:

1. prima facie- based on the first impression

2. ad hoc- created or done for a particular purpose as necessary

3. in-camera- doing something that the camera rolls.

4. ad infinitum- again and again in the same way

5. mutatis mutandis- making necessary alterations while not affecting the main point at issue.

6. caveat- a warning or proviso of specific stipulations, conditions, or limitations.

7. tabula rasa- an absence of preconceived ideas or predetermined goals

WORKING WITH WORDS

Q. 1 Locate the following phrases in the text and study their connotation.

1. gripped the imagination of

2. dawned upon

3. ushered in

4. passed into current coin

5. passport of the future

Answer:

1. Caught hold of the entire imaginative faculty

2. Understood the significance of

3. Show guidance to someone

4. have been brought into use

5. Going into future

Q. 2 The words 'grip', 'dawn', 'usher', 'coin', 'passport' has a literal as well as a figurative meaning. Write pairs of sentences using each word in the literal as well as the figurative sense.

Answer:

Literal meanings-

Grip- The grip of that bat is strong.

Dawn- The break of dawn is near.

Usher- Usher her the way to the school

Coin- This is a gold coin.

Passport- Her passport is ready.

Figurative meanings-

Grip- Her grip on English grammar is immense.

Dawn- The dawn of knowledge over the human civilization took thousands of years.

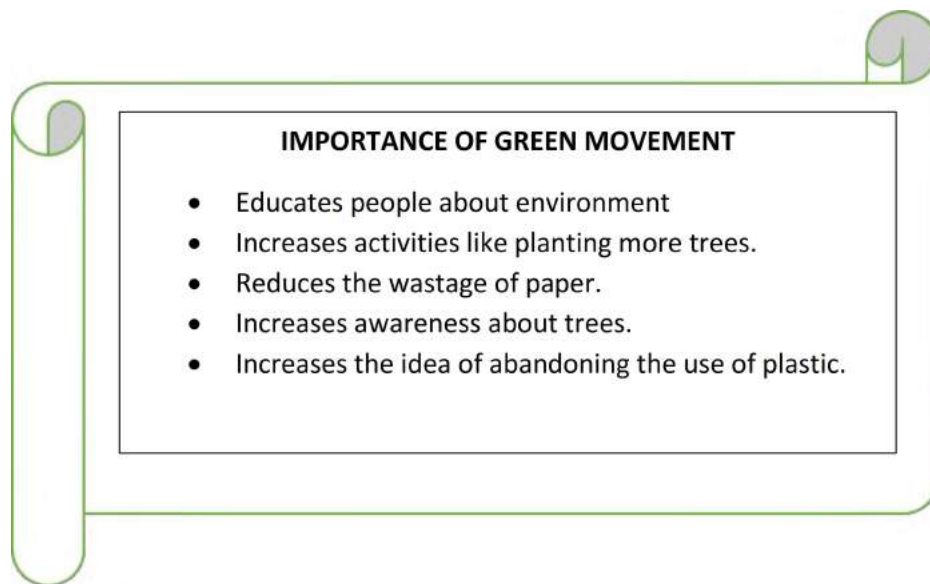
Usher- Usher her to the truth of this universe.

Coin- A poet can coin new terms

Passport- The passport to a better life is to understand the difference between education and qualification.

THINGS TO DO

Q. 1 Make posters to highlight the importance of the Green Movement.



Q. 2 Maintain a record of the trees cut down and the parks demolished in your area or any other act that violates the environment. Write to newspapers reporting on any such acts that disturb you.

Answer:

The Times of India

Kolkata-07

Subject- The unnecessary deforestation in my locality.

Sir/Ma'am

Through the columns of your esteemed Newspaper I would like to report the unnecessary cutting down of green cover in my locality. This is to inform you that I am a resident of Ram nagar Colony, Kolkata-07. From the past few days I have been keeping track of the deforestation in my area. I repeatedly noticed that the people of the Municipal Corporation are cutting down trees from the park area constantly.

Innumerable complaints have been placed but there is no response from the local authority. Therefore, I am bound to write to you. As a responsible citizen, it becomes my right to know where and why the trees are being cut. This is cause we all reside in the same environment.

Let us all pledge to protect our environment together.

Regards