

GENERAL ENGLISH

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Content Developed by-

Ms. KRISHA DAS
Department of English
Handique Girls' College,
Guwahati, Assam



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**The Ailing Planet: the Green
Movement's Role**

CONTENTS

Sl No	Content	Page No
1	About the Author	1
2	Word Meanings	1
3	Summary	4
4	Very short Question and Answers	6
5	Short Question and Answers	7
6	Long Question and Answers	9

About the Author

Nanabhoy (Nani) Palkhivala (1920-2002) was an Indian jurist and economist of great repute. He belonged to a Parsi middle class family. Educated at St. Xavier's College, he was a dedicated scholar. After studying law when he joined as a barrister, he quickly gained reputation as being very eloquent and articulate. The culmination of his success before the Supreme Court came in the famous *Keshavananda Bharati vs. The State of Kerala* case. He co-authored the authoritative book *The Law and Practice of Income Tax* (1950), with his mentor Sir Jamshedji Behramji Kanga. It not only serves as a primary reference to the Indian tax code but also served as a tax law draft guide at the International Monetary Fund.

Word-meanings:

Recall: recollect

Movement: a mass campaign

Gripped: controlled

Rapidly: fast

Irrevocably: unchangeably

Holistic: complete and comprehensive view

Ecology: the relation of plants and living creatures to each other and to their environment

Ecological: interested in and concerned about the ecology of a place

Consciousness: small balls of wood

Organism: a string of beads used for counting prayers as they say them

Metabolic: a chemical process in living things that change food into energy and materials for growth

Ethical: connected with beliefs and principles about what is right and wrong

Steward: care-taker

Trustee: a member of a group of people that look after the affairs of a charity or any other organisation

Legacy: property or money that is given to someone by somebody when they die

Species: variety; class

Catalogued: classified; listed

Languish: fade away; reduced

Ignominious: disgraceful

Scorched: burnt

Impoverished: poor; deprived

Ailing: sick

Synthetics: chemical compounds

Unsustainable: weak; flawed

Impaired: harmed

Barren: infertile

Decimated: destroyed

Procure: get

Tropical: hot and humid land

Evolution: development

Extinction: disappearance

Precede: come before

Patrimony: property which is given to somebody when their father dies

Eroding: reducing

Catastrophic: disastrous

Depletion: exhaustion; reduction

Satellites: an electronic device that is sent into space and moves around the earth or another planet

Aerial: in the air

Contraceptive: birth control method

Beget: give birth to

Coercion: use of force

Transcending: going beyond narrow limits

Dissociated: isolated

Transformation: change

Excel: show excellence

Felicitous: fortunate; lucky

Freehold: permanent occupancy of land

Tenancy: living like a tenant

Lease: to let out; to give for hire

Meanings of expressions in the text:

- **a holistic and ecological view:** a complete and comprehensive view of ecology which takes into account all things.
- **sustainable development:** development that takes care of the present needs and ensures at the same time that there are enough resources for the future generation.
- **languish:** to become weaker or fail to make progress or even to remain unnoticed
- **ignominious darkness:** to remain in the dark in a humiliating or disappointing manner
- **inter alia:** among other things

- **decimated:** killed in large numbers or to reduce drastically in number
- **catastrophic depletion:** disastrous or terrible reduction in the number of something
- **transcending concern:** main anxiety or worry that surpasses boundaries of generations etc.

Summary:

The lesson was originally an article written by Nani Palkhivala and published in The Indian Express on 24 November 1994. The Green Movement, which started nearly twenty-five years ago, is one of the environment's most important and relevant movements. The Green Movement is an ecology movement, including conservation and green policies, which seeks to address significant environmental issues. In 1972, the world's first nationwide Green party was founded in New Zealand. Since then, the movement has moved ahead and there is no looking back. Today, the Green Movement includes everything related to environment, its protection and maintenance of the ecology of the world.

The Green Movement approaches the issue of environment, not in a mechanical manner but from a completely new perspective, which is futuristic and more complete. The earth came to be recognised as a huge living organism of which we are mere parts. This organism has its own metabolic needs and fundamental processes, which need to be respected and preserved. The realisation has finally dawned upon a section of the people that the earth needs to be taken care of like a sick patient, its ailments need to be treated and it should be adequately prepared to cater to the needs of the future generation.

The World Commission on Environment and Development popularized the concept of using natural resources while maintaining an ecological balance and while not destroying the hopes of the future generations. In 1987, they introduced the concept of sustainable development, which may be defined as “development that meets the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs.” In a zoo in Zambia, there is a cage with the notice ‘The world's most dangerous animal.’ Inside the cage is a mirror where one can see himself/herself. Human beings have to realize that he should not exploit the planet mindlessly. The planet does not belong to him alone. It also belongs to the 1.4 million living species that are known as well as three to a hundred million other that are still unknown.

Mr. L. K Jha in the Brandt Commission Report raised the question if we wanted to leave a barren planet with a sick environment for our coming generations. Mr. Lester R. Brown in his book, *The Global Economic Prospect*, pointed out that the earth's main biological systems are fisheries, forests, grasslands, and croplands. They not only supply our food but also provide all the raw materials for some of the major industries. However, human population are encroaching into the spaces of these systems and leaving them unproductive and deplete. Unjustified actions by humans have threatened these systems and are gradually destroying each of these principal biological systems. Fisheries have been ruined; forests are fast disappearing; grasslands are being converted into wastelands and croplands are lacking in fertility. Tropical forests that are the powerhouses of evolution are on the verge of extinction.

Forests precede humankind and deserts follow is an old saying, which is extremely true. Mentioning the latest statistics available, the writer shows concern about the manner in which forests are fast disappearing from the face of earth. One of the reasons why trees are excessively cut down is to make more fuelwood available for human use. In India too, the statistics indicating the loss of forests is highly alarming. Not only that, the use of dung for burning and cooking purposes has also reduced its use as a valuable natural fertilizer thereby reducing the fertility of the soil.

Satellites and aerial surveys conducted by the U.N.O warn that the environment has deteriorated so badly that it can be termed as critical. The rise in world population may be regarded as one of the reasons for this. The writer mentions that the twentieth century has added 3.7 billion to the already existing number. In 1994 according to him, the world population was around 5.7 billion. In every four days, the world population increases by one million. Population control using various means is therefore the need of the hour. In India too the alarming rise in population needs to be curbed otherwise the rich will get richer and the poor poorer. People should be encouraged to go for voluntary family planning.

The survival of the people is at present secondary to the survival of the planet, which needs to be protected so that it can be handed over to the future generation in a good condition. The very fact that environmental problem is a matter of utmost concern proves that our future is secured as steps are being taken gradually to address these problems. This according to the writer is an Era of Responsibility where the world is viewed as a complete system, which needs to be cured of its environmental and ecological ailments. Sighting the example of the C.E.O of Du Pont who regarded himself as the Company's "Chief

Environmental Officer” the writer hopes that others will also follow him and work towards the protection of the world environment.

Margaret Thatcher has summed this issue in a brilliant way by declaring that this planet belongs not to any one generation and we are given a lease to use it for a limited time. Lester Brown further adds to this by saying that the planet is something we have borrowed from our children and we should be able to return it to them in a good condition.

Very short answer type questions:

1. What is Green Movement?

Ans: The Green Movement is an ecology movement, including conservation and green policies, which seeks to address significant environmental issues.

2. When and where was the first Green party founded?

Ans: The world’s first Green party was founded in 1972 in New Zealand.

3. Who may be regarded as the “world’s most dangerous animal”?

Ans: The “world’s most dangerous animal” is none other than human being who have destroyed the environment through their thoughtless action.

4. What are the principal biological systems of the earth?

Ans: The earth’s main biological systems are fisheries, forests, grasslands, and croplands.

5. What do you mean by sustainable development?

Ans: Development that meets the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs is regarded as sustainable development.

6. What is the chief reason for the depletion of forests?

Ans: The chief reason for the depletion of forests is to make more fuelwood available for human use.

7. What does the Article 48A of the constitution of India say?

Ans: the Article 48A of the constitution of India states that the State shall make an effort to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of India.

8. What is the strongest factor distorting the future of the human society?

Ans: The strongest factor distorting the future of the human society is the alarming growth of human population.

9. Who wrote the book *The Global Economic Prospect*?

Ans: Lester Brown is the author of the book *The Global Economic Prospect*.

10. Who was Margaret Thatcher?

Ans: Margaret Thatcher was the Prime Minister of England from

11. How can industry play a crucial role in the new Era of Responsibility?

Ans: Industry can play a crucial role in the new Era of Responsibility by developing a complete vision of our planet and its ecosystem and by excelling in a performance which does the least harm to the environment.

12. What is the present world population?

Ans: The present world population is 7.3 billion in 2015 and still counting.

13. What is the present population of India?

Ans: The present population of India is 1.28 billion in 2015 and still counting.

Short answer type questions:

1. What was the significance of placing a mirror in the zoo at Zambia?

Ans: The mirror is placed inside a cage of a zoo in Zambia where one can see oneself. By placing a mirror the authorities want to stress on the fact that human beings are solely responsible for the deteriorating condition of the environment, the depletion of natural resources leading to an imbalance in the ecology of the earth which in turn is bound to affect us and our flourishing civilization.

2. Explain the statement “forests precede mankind; deserts follow”?

Ans: The forests, which were full of trees and dense plantations, was one of the principal biological systems which nurtured abundant life within it. However, in order to fulfil various human needs including space to live and firewood for cooking etc, forests were cleared and trees were cut down leading vast areas of forests to turn into deserts. Thus it may be said that “forests precede mankind” that is to say that at the beginning of civilization when men appeared on the face of earth they found it full of forests but “deserts follow” that is with the rise in human activities these forests turned into deserts.

3. What is the status of the earth's forest systems?

Ans: The earth's forests system has been hugely affected by inconsiderate human activities. Deforestation is on the rise and the concern regarding afforestation is not wide spread. James Speth the president of the World Resources Institute said that every second we are losing an acre of forests, which is very critical and needs immediate intervention. The same is the case with India where large areas have already become treeless. Even though the Constitution of India has provisions for the protection of the environment in the form of a law under Article 48A, steps are yet to be taken for the proper implementation of this law by the Indian State. Forest areas are fast converting into deserts, which will affect the survival of the planet and our future generations as well.

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

Ans: The principal biological systems according to Mr. Lester R. Brown are the foundation of the global economic system. They supply the maximum amount of food for human consumption and raw materials for industry. However, with rise in human population and the ever-increasing human need these systems are reaching an unsustainable level. Fisheries are being over exploited; forests are disappearing and making way for deserts in order to meet the demand for firewood and other necessary items; grasslands are being converted into wasteland and croplands are insufficient and mostly lacking in fertility.

5. Why does the author say that the planet Earth is 'ailing'?

Ans: The earth's resources are in a state of depletion. After the launch of the Green Movement there began an era of conscious realization that the earth's health is in a declining mode and that planet Earth is ailing.

6. What is the plight of forests in India? Why is it so?

Ans: Forests in India are in a pathetic condition as deforestation is on the rise. The actual statistics is worse than what is shown on the government records. Some forests are literally treeless and the situation is getting worse every day. It is because of the rise in population and the ever-increasing demand for wood, firewood and other raw materials for human consumption and use.

7. How can the growth of population be checked or controlled?

Ans: The growth of population can be checked by spreading education and awareness among the masses. The people especially the ones below the poverty line think that if they have more children they will have a larger income which is false. In order to stop the people from thinking in this manner, development by means of education is the only solution. This will lead to a larger income among the masses and indirectly will contribute towards curbing the population explosion.

8. What do you mean by the Era of Responsibility?

Ans: The Era of Responsibility signifies a new vision of looking at our planet and its problems keeping in mind the needs of our children and their children, which is becoming a matter of concern for the world. The Green Movement is actually a part of this Era of Responsibility, which has recognised the critical state in which planet Earth is at present.

9. What do you mean by the concept of sustainable development as discussed in “The Ailing Planet”? (HS I Examination, 2015)

Ans: Development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs is sustainable development. It means that we have the responsibility of keeping the earth’s resources intact for our children and their children.

Long answer type questions:

1. Why does the author call the earth “The Ailing Planet”? How can the ailing planet survive?

Ans: According to the author, the planet Earth is going through a difficult phase. Human beings are solely responsible for the deteriorating condition of the environment, the depletion of natural resources leading to an imbalance in the ecology

of the earth, which in turn is bound to affect our flourishing civilization and us. The earth's main biological systems - fisheries, forests, grasslands, and croplands - are all adversely affected by such developments. They supply the maximum amount of food for human consumption and raw materials for industry. However, with the rise in human population and the ever-increasing human need these systems are reaching an unsustainable level. Fisheries are being over exploited; forests are disappearing and making way for deserts in order to meet the demand for firewood and other necessary items; grasslands are being converted into wasteland and croplands are insufficient and mostly lacking in fertility. These are referred to as ailments of the planet Earth. The ailing planet can survive only with human intervention. A holistic approach towards the environmental and its related ecological issues is the need of the hour. In fact, it is essential to see and examine the world as an integrated whole rather than a collection of parts. This according to the writer is an Era of Responsibility where the world is to be viewed as a complete system, which needs to be cured of its environmental and ecological ailments. Sighting the example of the C.E.O of Du Pont who regarded himself as the Company's "Chief Environmental Officer" the writer hopes that others will also follow him and work towards the protection of the world environment. Thus, the author concludes that The Green Movement, which started nearly twenty-five years ago, is one of the environment's most important and relevant movements.

2. "Laws are never respected nor enforced in India". Discuss

Ans: Nani Palkhivala makes this statement in his article "The Ailing Planet". According to him, laws are mere part of our Constitution, which remains so, and there is no effort made to implement them in the right way. The Constitution of India has made provisions for enforcement of girls' education, abolition of caste system and untouchability, eradication of child marriage and bonded labour, yet after all these years of independence these social evils are still practiced in many parts of India. In remote parts of India, girls are yet to receive education, which means that laws remain as laws but steps are not taken to enforce them.

Similarly Article 48A of the Constitution of India, which mentions that the State shall make an effort to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of India, is not implemented. The Indian state has not until

now taken proper steps to enforce this law, protect the environment and punish the wrongdoers. In India, forests are disappearing at an alarming rate, which is hazardous for the environment and its ecological balance. Government statistics, according to the author are incorrect and the actual loss of forests is more than estimated on paper records. For all these reasons, the author says, “laws are not respected nor enforced in India”.

3. What was the question raised by the Brandt Commission? What is the significance of this question?

Ans: The question raised by the First Brandt Commission was “Are we to leave our successors a scorched planet of advancing deserts, impoverished landscapes and ailing environment?” This question throws ample light on the condition of the planet Earth due to the activities of ‘the world’s most dangerous animal’ that is human beings.

This question in the Brandt Report brings to light the deteriorating condition of our planet. Over population has led to the depletion of the world’s major biological systems; it has contributed largely to global warming due to deforestation and other adverse activities; the excessive demand on the Earth’s resources have left this planet in an ailing condition. The question posed above is significant because it questions our responsibility towards our planet and more importantly towards our children and their children. In this condition, they have a bleak future on this planet, which will perhaps not survive for long if its problems are not addressed.

4. What are the four principal biological systems of the world? How do they form the foundation of the global economic system?

Ans: The principal biological systems of the world are – fisheries, forests, croplands, and grasslands. These together contribute almost the entire amount of raw materials for human consumption and use in industries except for minerals and petroleum derived synthetics. Industries get almost everything from these systems of the world. The global economy therefore is dependent on these vital biological systems.

5. How has the growth of world population affected the environment? Support your answer with suitable arguments?

Ans: The world population is tremendously on the rise. With this ever increasing population, development of the human civilization and the well-being of the planet seems almost next to impossible. Over population not only leads to under development but also to unemployment and poverty, which are related to one another.

In fact, it is the rise in population, which has posed numerous environmental problems because of the ever-increasing demands. More and more grasslands are converted into wastelands; croplands have lost their fertility due to over utilization; fisheries are in a poor condition due to over fishing; number of trees in forests is dwindling because of the excess need of fuelwood and other products for human consumption. All these are in a poor state only because of the rise in population. Another adverse affect of population rise on the environment is global warming which also needs to be addressed.

6. “We have not inherited this earth from our forefathers; we have borrowed it from our children”. Discuss (HS I Examination, 2015)

Ans: The author while discussing the ailments of the planet Earth makes it clear that a newer way of looking at the world and its problems is required. This is the central theme of “The Ailing Planet” which was originally an article published in The Indian Express on 24 November 1994. This new way has ushered in an Era of Responsibility, which ensures that we take up responsibility for our successors that is our children and their children. It is important for us to understand that the Earth’s resources are not for the fulfilment of our immediate needs. It is necessary that we keep resources intact for future use as well. The need of the hour is ‘sustainable development’, which propounds the necessity of meeting the needs of the future generation without compromising those of the future generations.
