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**Need for Redefining the Attitude towards Natural Resources in Kerala****Mohammed Shafeer.K.P.**

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Kerala is rich with elegant flora and fauna and abundant human and natural resources. The captivating climatic conditions and greenery bestowed the title of 'Gods Own Country' for the state. The flow of forty four rivers through the heart of the state helped to fulfil the thirst and dreams of the people and nature. The veins and nerves of the soil are replenished with month's of abundant rain and absence of acute hot in the summer. The state is saved from severe climatic conditions of cold and hot and it became a suitable land for human sustenance. The peaceful atmosphere in the social and political arena creates a folk of updated individuals who are well aware of the impulses of the state. Cent percent literacy helped the state to achieve zeniths of success in the various fields of human excellence. The success in the accomplishment of cent percent literacy paved the way to excel the fellow states of the country to the paths of development and splendour. The state stood as norm for the fellow states of the Indian motherland as 'Kerala model of development' became the dream of the states to the paths of development.

The State had so far undergone many crises and hardships in the time of independent struggle. Ferocious resistance against the atrocities of the colonial powers stood as milestones of anti-imperialistic struggle in the pages of history proclaiming the valour and might of the state. The evils of caste system and feudalism diminished in to the days of the past as the social awareness of the people stood abreast with the realisation of the need for the better world. Social reformers, freedom fighters and hands of enlightenment emerged from the different nooks and corners of the state to raise the state from the days of hardships to the days of prosperity and progress.

Though born after the attainment of independence, the state stood as the pioneer in the different fields of development to the fellow states of the motherland. The attainment of freedom gave way to the freethinking about the future of the state. The struggle for sustenance in the days of colonial exploitation and suffocation of the shackles of slavery diminished to the pages of history as the minds of the people filled with hopes and dreams for the peaceful sustenance of future. The state realised the need for education to build a state of prosperity. Poverty and hardships brought about by the exploitative colonialism dissolved in the soil as the search for sustenance reached the dry deserts of the Arabian sands. The migration to the Arabian countries in search of lively hood filled the hearts and coffers of the state. The gush of oil in the Arabian soil necessitated the need of able hands to drive the country to prosperity. Kerala hands with an unquenchable thirst to fulfil the dreams and hopes of the family and society helped the host country to conquer the horizons of development. The flow of gulf money diminished poverty from the mainstream society and the toil of the young hands and minds in the Arabian soil became the back bone of Kerala economy.

The disappearance of days of hardships and poverty from the mainstream society changed the attitude of the people towards natural resources. Impact of globalisation on the state is evident in the attitude of the people as they found nature as the main means of exploitation. Necessity and

need gave way to greed and luxury. Those who strived hard to make both ends meet in the time of colonisation, caste system and feudalism enjoyed the abundance of natural resources without any restrictions. This led to luxury, misuse, pollution and exploitation. The abundant natural resources of the state are in the verge of depletion because of the exploitation and carelessness. Water, air and soil are polluted and exploited with the intrusion of human hands to the nature.

Globalisation and green revolution changed man's relationship with nature. Human indulgence in nature was for his sustenance. But the materialistic aspect towards nature found it as a means of business and making profit. Commercialisation of natural resources changed the aspect of agriculture and livelihood. While illiterate men used eco-friendly methods of sustenance and livelihood, educated modern men are ignoring nature's dignity and value. Keralites with the pride of cent percent literacy and pioneers in the accomplishments of different genres of life are excelling other fellow states with their antagonistic attitude towards nature. The state bestowed with rich natural resources is marching towards chaos and havoc in the future as need for natural resource preservation and conservation never reach the mainstream discussions. The state with abundance of rain and forty four rivers flowing in different directions is suffering from scarcity of water. "One by one, almost all the 44 rivers in Kerala are facing the terrifying prospect of dusty death extinction..." (Sharma, 2005) The water bodies are polluted with organic and inorganic wastes. The 'literate' Keralites find the water bodies as the places to dump plastic waste. Rivers, canals and irrigation channels are polluted with the industrial wastes and wastes from the households. It is paradox that the people who blame the factories and multinational companies for water pollution are throwing the animal waste and plastic to the water bodies. The canals and rivers are polluted with septic tank waste. "Lack of facilities for disposing waste water is also emerging as a serious environmental and health problem in Kerala" (Prakash, 2004). The houses and shopping complexes are disposing the septic waste directly to the drainages which lead to rivers and water bodies. The houses in the premises of canals are directing their septic waste pipes directly to the canals. The condition of *kanoli* canal in Ponnani is heart-breaking. The canal once stood as the back bone of merchandise and livelihood of Malabar and Travancore is filled with faeces and stool as the houses in the sides of the canal is dumping the waste directly from their toilets. The educated men never realise that the water bodies are the very basis of human sustenance and existence. The scarcity of fresh water is blamed as a fault of the ruling party and administration. The very same people who pollute water bodies are blaming the government for ignoring the steps from the preservation of water resource of the state. The citizens generate a feeling or attitude of preserving their own resources and spoiling others or common resources of the state. The self-responsibility of the citizens is ignored by the individuals and they are anxious about the irresponsibility of the rulers and administrators in the preservation of water resources and protection of water bodies.

Wastage and use of water in the households and industries increased with the advancement of science and technology. The households in Kerala rural villages used water with care when they carried water from the wells and ponds for the domestic purposes. The use of motor pumps enabled the water supply using channels and water taps. The past generation which used water with care diminished with the usage of water taps as water flowed and wasted without any care and attention. People think that it is their right to use water as they like as the water, motor and electricity is used at their own expense. The flow of gulf money to the very roots of livelihood changed the attitude of the people towards natural resources. The grudge emanating from the money flowing from the gulf countries made the people think that they can use and misuse the



resources of nature as they can afford anything at any cost. This attitude increases the misuse and wastage of water in the households of Kerala villages. Wastage has acquired a new manifestation in Kerala society as it is the symbol of luxury.

Open wells and ponds are displaced by huge townships and buildings as the real estate business is considered to be the best way to amass money. Agriculture became a less profitable venture compared to real-estate. Agricultural lands are filled with buildings and houses blocking the free flow of water through the veins of earth. The filling of agricultural lands leads to scarcity of water as the irrigation to the fields and lands keeps the earth wet and supply water to ponds and wells. The vast paddy fields which stood for the supply of food and water of the state is fast disappearing with the uncontrollable construction with and without the silent consent of the rulers.

Keralites are keeping 'the other' attitude towards the water bodies of the state. Their and our attitude develops in the mind of the Kerala people as the common water bodies are spoilt with the waste of the households and shops. In order to keep the individual households and shops clean and tidy the wastes are disposed to the common water bodies. The cries and protest are rising against the irresponsibility of the rulers and officials in protecting the water resources of the state. But voices are never raised against the antisocial activities of polluting and exploiting the water resource of the state. The rivers and canals are full of pungent smelling waste from the abattoirs and numerous broiler chicken shops. "Visceral contents and effluent are disposed of on nearby land or into waterways" (Chacko, 2010). The intestines and body parts of the butchered animals are dumped in the water bodies.

"Water pollution in Kerala caused by a handful of factories is three times higher than elsewhere in the country" (Devi, 2007). While the pure water bodies of the state extinct from the canvas of natural resources of the state, the multinational companies grab the opportunity to market packaged drinking water in the state. The availability of bottled purified water was unthinkable in the past as the state was rich with pure water resources. The multinational companies exploit the water resource of the state sucking the ground water from the areas where ground water availability is at its pinnacle. This causes the deterioration of ground water level in the state. The number of bore wells in the state is increasing as the open wells failed to meet the daily needs of the people. The dependence on bore wells and bottled water of the multinational companies is the result of the hostile attitude towards the fresh water bodies of the state.

While the pollution and misuse of the water resources of the state made the people to depend on the products of multinational companies, the pollution of air will bring oxygen parlours to the state. The industrial firms, factories and large scale construction vomit smoke, dust and dirt to the air. Keralites once boasted of the availability of fresh air with abundant oxygen in the atmosphere greenery and lush nature supplied enough to maintain the fresh air of the state. But the impact of globalisation ignored nature and its traits are visible in the nooks and corners of the state. Growing number of factories, industrial firms and buzzing vehicles in the street emanate soot, dust and smoke to the atmosphere. The call for reformation and conservation of nature and fresh air is ignored by the much aware Keralites as they view the hazards put forward by the environmentalist as distant disasters. The hostility towards atmosphere makes the feeling that Keralites are unaware of the necessity of fresh air, the very existence of human life. The messages and advices of the officials and authorities to abstain from burning organic and inorganic waste in the public places are ignored as the people are only bothered of removing the waste from the vicinity of their households. Even in the foggy morning the rural and urban Kerala are found burning the waste in the roadsides

and in front of the shops as a routine. The hazards of smog in the neighbouring states and countries never make the Keralites to realise that their fate is at the nearest future. The neglect towards the advices and instructions of the officials compelled the government to impose regulations considering burning waste in the public places as an offence. The mind-set behind the attitude of polluting the atmosphere is that Keralites feel that mere abstaining of the individual bring about little change to the atmosphere as majority is ignoring the value of fresh atmosphere.

The attitude behind polluting atmosphere is the distinction between public and private aspect of natural resources. The very same people who pollute and contaminate natural resources and invite contagious diseases complain about the irresponsibility of the government officials and rulers in curbing the crisis and lack of precautionary measures. The people of Kerala are peculiar with the attitude of complaining about the duties and responsibilities of the government officials and rulers ignoring individual responsibilities. Individual responsibility in the preservation of natural resources and commitment towards nature is often discarded to the margins of mainstream discussions. The negligence towards flowing public water taps, leaking irrigation channels, glowing street lights in day time, wastage of electricity and spoiling essential goods show that Keralites are only concerned about the selfish life of their own cocoon family and ignore the life and sustenance of the society and nature.

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