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HUMAN ACTIVITIES POSING THREAT TO ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY IN HARAKH BLOCK OF BARABANKI

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ABSTRACT:

Harakh Block is situated in district Barabanki on Barabanki-Haidergarh road. Since it is close to district Barabanki many urbanization and industrial activities besides agricultural practices are being conducted in this area. These activities may pose threat to the environment in near future and if not controlled the area may become unsuitable for human beings.



KEY WORDS: *Urbanisation, industrial, agricultural.*

INTRODUCTION :

The environment is life, supporting people and other living things. Environment is widely recognised as a pillar of sustainable development. It provides essential goods and services which contribute to meeting basic human needs, and is essential to human development and quality of life. It provides services to ecosystems, including water catchments which protect freshwater resources, wetlands, river bank environments, biodiversity habitats and ecologically functioning landscapes. The environment is also a sink off the waste generated from different human activities. Activities of modern man have been increased to such an extent that these are causing great impacts to environment. The result of some activities leaves the ecosystem worse off comparatively. Most of such activities come through the release of waste as well as the extraction of environmental resources. Although benefits may accrue to some immediately, the consequences outweigh the benefits.

Activities of human have already caused a great damage to environment in urban areas but now the activities are extending to the rural areas also, which is a matter of great concern. Therefore we decided to concentrate on the human activities that are posing threat to rural environmental quality. The paper is based on the study carried out in the Harakh block of district Barabanki. The paper intends to present impact of agricultural practices, urbanization and industrialization on the quality of local environment.

AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

Agriculture and environment have an age old and permanent relationship with each other. It is a general belief that agriculture does not have an adverse effect on the environment but quite a lot has happened in the field of agriculture in this century that has contributed to the degradation of the environment. New agricultural techniques have found to be adversely affecting the environment. On

surveying the area we found that Harakh block has a vast agricultural land and agricultural activities continue throughout the year. But it was observed that in the past a variety of crops were grown in the area but now farmers switched on to the crops of monetary benefits. Most of the farmers in the area grow cash crops like Mentha crop that gets ready in a period of 3 months and earn them more money as compared to other traditional crops. Replacement of white crop strains with a few monoculture strains will ultimately lead to loss of Genetic diversity as well as loss of soil fertility in the coming years.

Besides people of the area are also clearing grasslands and trees in order to have more area for cultivation. These activities will cause soil erosion, loss of fertility, desertification and degradation of habitat of many species.

Today chemical fertilizers have become essential to modern agriculture in order to increase crop production. Increased use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides has also been observed in the area. Though chemical fertilizers increase crop production, their overuse hardens the soil, decreases fertility, pollutes air and water, and releases greenhouse gases, thereby bringing hazards to human health and environment as well. It is well known fact that continuous use of these fertilizers leads to hardening of upper layer of soil and with each successive crop season the depth of the hard layer goes on increasing. As a result the moisture retention quality of the soil decreases and it becomes barren for future cultivation. Water logging may cause large scale destruction in these areas. The hardened layers of soil do not retain moisture which is essential for many living organisms like earthworms and other useful bacteria. This poses threat to the survival of living organisms. Since salt content is one of the most critical characteristics of chemical fertilizers, they are expected to be harmful to agriculture in the long run as salts are harmful for plants as well as soil. Continuous use of these chemical fertilizers depletes essential soil nutrients and minerals that are naturally found in fertile soil. The overuse may cause imbalance in the soil nutrients further resulting in soil degradation and the loss of equilibrium of a stable soil. It has already been proved how chemical fertilizers pose serious challenges to the balanced and sustainable growth.

Use of pesticides is also increasing day by day to save the crops from pests. Pesticides are generally useful when fall exactly on the target organisms. But this does not happen as only 1% of the pesticides hits the target pests while the remaining drift into the environment. These pesticides also affect non-target species. Runoff from these areas can carry pesticides into aquatic environments while wind can carry them to other fields, grazing areas and human settlements and affect them adversely.

One of the important elements of the new farm technology is assured irrigation. For this, wells are dug up on large-scale. Besides irrigation systems are also built to transfer water from one place to another for continuous availability of water for plants. On surveying the area we found many tube wells in Harakh block for watering the crops.

Excessive use of ground water for irrigation has many adverse effects. It leads to salinization and depleted water table. If the excessive use of water continues in the area the water table will go down to an alarming proportions in the near future.

Excessive use of tractors in ploughing the fields and sowing the seeds is also contributing to environmental degradation. During the course of study we found that most of the farmers were using tractors in their fields and the heavy smoke from them was polluting the year. Fossil fuel is used in tractors and burning of fossil fuels produces carbon dioxide, one of greenhouse gases, that contributes to global warming and thus climate change.

URBANIZATION

The other area of concern in our study was urbanization in rural area selected for the study. In the process of urbanisation some villages grow into towns and cities. On surveying the area we found that many builders have bought the land from locals and developing them as residential complexes. There are many areas where plotting has already been done.

It is good to build houses to accommodate growing population, but to acquire agricultural land for this purpose is not a good practice. The clearing of land, deforestation and over exploitation of groundwater will have drastic effects on the environmental quality. Urbanisation results in the

increased human activities and the increased human activities in turn results in degradation of environment. The over exploitation of natural resources and pollution of the environment are the major aspects that may lead to environmental degradation. Once the township is developed in the area the chances of environmental pollution are increased. The majority of air and water pollution is the result of human activities. Sewage and other wastes from houses pollute the air and water.

INDUSTRIALIZATION

The other area covered in our study was development of industries in Harakh Block. With the industrial revolution many industries were set up and are continuously setting up all over the country. It is necessary for the growth of the country to set up new industries according to the need of the time, but not at the cost of environmental imbalance. Industries should be set up in a specific areas away from the population and agricultural areas, but on surveying the area we found some industries setup near the cultivated area. Due to increase in human activities, green cover is reducing day by day. The waste from these industries may have adverse effects on the air, water and soil quality of the area.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

During the course of study we also observed some human activities that may cause degradation of the environment. First of all we found many brickfields in this rural area. Chimneys were emitting thick black smoke and polluting the air. Many brickfields were set up in the middle of the agricultural fields. Burning of fossil fuel adds to environmental pollution. Ash and dust from these brickfields also have adverse effect on the environmental quality of the area. Soil quality of the area may be affected by the deposition of the ash released from these brickfields.

Other human activities that caught our attention was pollution of water bodies. There are many small ponds in the area. Local people use water of these natural reservoirs for their daily activities. But side by side they are polluting the pond water knowingly or unknowingly. We saw women washing clothes and utensils in the pond water. Besides men were bathing the cattles in the pond water. Ponds in the area are becoming dumping places for the wastes.

Excessive use of Polythene in the area is a matter of concern. During our study we travelled from one place to another and found that most of the people were using polythene bags to carry their belongings. After using these bags people threw them here and there. They are not aware of the consequences. As we know that polythene bags are made of non degradable substance therefore these are not destroyed with the period of time but remain as such. These bags form a layer in the ground which prevents the seepage of rainwater into the ground and thus adds to the depletion of water level. On burning, these polythene bags produce harmful gases that pollute the air and pose threat to human health.

Building roads is one of the other human activities that causes destruction and degradation of land and ecosystem. Roads are built in the process of development in the rural areas but for this village land is acquired. The acquired land is then cleared resulting in the destruction of the environment.

With the advancement of Information and Communication Technology threat to environmental quality has also increased. Mobile towers set up in the area produce radiations that are harmful to the environment as well as human beings.

CONCLUSION

These are some of the human activities observed in the Harakh block that may affect the environmental quality in the coming years. These are several simple things that people can do to minimise their impact on the environment for example, adhering to crop rotation practices to maintain soil fertility, reducing the amount of fertilizers applied to the agricultural fields will lessen the chances of loss of soil fertility, reducing the use of pesticides will decrease the chances of air and water pollution, judicious use of land for industrialisation and urbanization etc. Any activity which reduces air, water and soil pollution can lead to positive impacts on our environment.

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