

# **ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES**

## **LECTURE-7**

### **Natural Resources**

Any material which can be transformed in a way that it becomes more valuable and useful can be termed as resource. In other words, it is possible to obtain valuable items from any resources. Resource, therefore, are the means to attain given ends. The aspect of satisfaction is so important that we consider a thing or substance a resource, as long it meets our needs. Life on this planet depends upon a large number of things and services provided by the nature, which are known as Natural Resources. Thus water, air, soil, minerals, coal, forests, crops and wild life are all examples of natural resources.

#### **Classification of natural resources**

Depending upon availability of natural resources can be divided into two categories such as (1) renewable and (2) Non renewable resources.

##### **1. Renewable resources**

Renewable resources are in a way inexhaustible resources. They have the ability to replenish themselves by means such as recycling, reproduction and replacement. Examples of renewable resources are sunlight, animals and plants, soil, water, etc.

##### **2. Non-Renewable Resources**

Non renewable resources are the resources that cannot be replenished once used or perished. Examples of non renewable resources are minerals, fossil fuels, etc. Resources can also be classified as biotic or abiotic.

###### **a) Biotic resources**

These are living resources (e.g. forest, agriculture, fish and wild life) that are able to reproduce or replace them and to increase.

###### **b) Abiotic resources**

These are non-living resources (e.g. petrol, land, minerals etc.) that are not able to replace themselves or do so at such a slow rate that they are not useful to consider them in terms of the human life times.

## **Problems associated with natural resources**

### **1. The unequal consumption of natural resources**

A major part of natural resources today are consumed in the technologically advanced or 'developed' world, usually termed 'the west'. The 'developing nations' of 'the east', including India and China, also over use many resources because of their greater human population. However, the consumption of resources per capita (per individual) of the developed countries is up to 50 times greater than in most developing countries. Advanced countries produce over 75% of global industrial waste and greenhouse gases.

### **2. Planning land use**

Land is a major resource, needed for not only for food production and animal husbandry, but also for industry and growing human settlements. These forms of intensive land use are frequently extended at the cost of 'wild lands', our remaining forests, grasslands, wetlands and deserts. This demands for a pragmatic policy that analyses the land allocation for different uses.

### **3. The need for sustainable lifestyles**

Human standard of living and the health of the ecosystem are indicators of sustainable use of resources in any country or region. Ironically, both are not in concurrence with each other. Increasing the level of one, usually leads to degradation of other. Development policies should be formulated to strike a balance between the two.