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**PRIVATISATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES: A CRITICAL
THREAT TO SUSTAINABLE**

INTRODUCTION

What is a natural resource? It's a physical resource necessary for the survival of an organism, which can be depleted. For example air, water, oil, forest etc. These resources are indispensable "partners-for-life", for Human Kind.

Since the dawn of history, people have valued Natural resources as the source and guarantee of their survival. They have travelled to areas rich with Natural resources and settled in such areas. This change from nomad to settler was accompanied by a shift in the means of living as well as in the interaction between people and Natural resources.

Subsequently, consecutive demographic, social and economic factors further impacted the interaction of people with Natural resources and necessitated the adoption of various methods of developing and managing these resources in adaptation to their changing environment and emerging needs. Governments and societies have, long since, treated Natural resources mostly as a free or a social good.

The increasing rivalry, nevertheless, for inadequate supply of Natural resources around the world has led to differences in objectives and methods of their management. It is the ongoing struggle between viewing Natural resources as an economic commodity whose use and

distribution is determined by profit, by way of privatisation or as a fundamental human right. So, hereby we will discuss what “How privatisation is a critical threat to sustainability of such Natural Resources”

WHY PRIVATISATION IS IMPORTANT?

Privatisation refers to shifting all shareholding property from government sectors to private sectors by means of buying the maximum shares holds possible. During this process all the authorities that were under the control of government will be run by the private companies as per their wish and the government cannot intervene unless they have done something which contravenes with the law of the country.

As we know how resourceful our country is, and how it is naturally diverse, but due to lack of proper entrepreneurship, monitoring, and political instability India’s government has not been able to reach out to every nook and corner of the country and make maximum use of the natural resources. Secondly most of the public enterprises owned by the government are operating under heavy losses now a day; this is because they were the breeding ground of corruption, financial disaster and inefficiency, so in this scenario if the privatisation of the natural resources is not done than the situation of this country will turn into something like of having a cow, but not being able to extract milk from it.

Privatisation will help the citizens to value the natural resources, instead of exploiting it and will promote economic development. The idea behind privatization has a proper logic to it. “When was the last time you washed a rental bike before returning it?” asked a libertarian friend of mine. His point, was that we take care of things we own, and we don’t take care of things we don’t own (because we aren’t aware of its value). This implies that the appropriate way to ensure that things are treated with care is to ensure that everything important is privately owned.

But as the privatization model has been applied to ever-larger parts of the common wealth, the downside of privatization has become clear.

PRIVATISATION AS A THREAT TO SUSTAINABILITY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

In comparison to the advantages of privatisation, the major disadvantage of privatisation is that it leads to the threat of sustainability of natural resources. The main reasons regarding the same are mentioned below.

- 1. Monopoly:** Due to privatisation of natural resources the private company impliedly becomes a monopoly and as a result the population is prone to arbitrary pricing under this monopoly. Secondly by privatisation “the right” to take from the natural resources is turned into a tradable commodity, and these rights are quickly bought and sold. This almost means that the rights become concentrated in a few hands. This means in turn that the local owners of the rights have no stake in the day-to-day production and no stake in the communities where the work is done. In all the situation will become much worse and the people will be disentitle from the resources which were given to them by Nature.
- 2. Profit oriented:** Private companies are profit oriented. From an economists’ standpoint, the investment horizon for local owner-operators is measured in decades or more. But a corporate owner that seeks only a financial return will have a much shorter time horizon when making decisions. This may lead to the welfare and profit of their company instead of the community. Thus, it may simply not be worth it to preserve the future productivity of a natural resources if that means forgoing a much greater profit today.

The view that privatization or the consideration of natural resources to be privatised is for economic good can be argued on the basis that commodification of natural resources is ethically, environmentally and socially wrong because it bases decisions of natural resource allocation on commercial, not environmental or social justice considerations. Privatisation entails principles of scarcity and profit maximization rather than long-term sustainability in natural resource management.

For example: The most devastating effect of the commodification of water that affects us directly is the danger of water scarcity and droughts. One of the important global environmental campaigns at the moment is the effort to stop climate change, and one major part of that is to stop the Ice Caps from melting. Not only will stopping this protect arctic animals, but also the fresh water, as the Ice Caps are the largest resource

of fresh water left in the world. As the Ice Caps melt, we lose this water because it seeps into the ocean. Consequently, natural drinking water is a lost natural resource. Water does make up a majority of our world, but that does not mean we can use it privately. In order for humans to drink ocean water (which private companies will try to do, in order to increase their profit), it has to be put through an extensive process that harms the environment. Not only is it majorly expensive, but it will again lead to the commodification of water.

The same example goes with other natural resources. Thus if we privatise our natural resources, the private companies will exploit it continuously to increase their profit consequently endangering the environment.

3. Accessibility of resources: Privatisation policy will adversely affect the close and living relationship between natural resources and the rural people, including tribals, who were critically dependent on them for their survival. While the so-called privatisation may have served the strategic needs of the colonizers, it led to the destruction of the forest wealth of the rural people, adversely affecting a wholesome life-support system and culture on one hand and a great civilization that had established a healthy relationship between nature, culture and society on the other. Thousands of protest movements including well-known tribal rebellions from the late led by leaders like Tilka Manjhi, Sidhu Kanhu, Birsa Munda which do not find an important place in history textbooks, were essentially efforts to protect local natural resources.

4. Retards growth and development: Privatisation has reduced the growth of various countries by extracting maximum resources from a particular place and then leaving those places destitute. For Example: In small farming towns all across the world, Nestle buys a piece of land and the local right to natural drinking water from the aquifers for the “grains and crops” on that piece of land for a whopping million liters a month. In that particular month, Nestle accesses the aquifer and bottles and sells around a million liters of water. It continues to do this continuously for months until the aquifers are effectively dried up. Then, it leaves the town essentially destitute, leaving these farming towns with no water for their crops and grains. Thus, with no crops being grown in places that used to be major crop producers, there is a risk of running out of food, and an economic crash.

This stops the growth of the area, especially in developing countries. Most of the developing countries do not have access to clean drinking water unless they buy water bottles, which makes them dependent on these corporate companies. This retards the growth and development in the area instead of helping them achieve self reliance. This could be done, as a solution for example, through creating water purification systems that will in the long run be a major contributor to that particular area's development.

The example is of Canada, where the BC government allows Nestle to withdraw fresh water for some dollars per million liters. Is it good to commodify water—the basic human right? Should we be worried about the potential impact of large-scale water bottling in regards to future water scarcity and droughts? Companies like Nestle and other commodify a human right and have little to no resistance against them. If these aren't stopped, they could cause social, economic and environmental problems not only for small towns and developing countries, but also for the entire world.

5. A disadvantage that is of more concern to fully privatized utilities is that such a model is **difficult to reverse**. In most instances the global grab threatens the very survival of the poor and the future of this planet itself. Mahamta Gandhi had clearly stated, 'Real swarajya will not come by the acquisition of power by the few but by the capacity of the many to resist when power is abused.' Thus, We need to make sure that what we have received from nature; we have the right to use it whether it be air, water or other resources. Because once these resources are exploited by these private companies, we will only regret and cannot undo the situation.

6. **Exploitation of resources:** Due to illegal and unlawful activities done by individuals and private companies our natural resources are not being used effectively and efficiently. They are involved in illegally exporting the natural resources from one country to another to earn money unlawfully. All these activities have pushed a threat, a threat of converting a resourceful land into a desert. Thus, it is hazardous for us if the natural resources be privatised. Secondly these private companies are profit

oriented, thus they are over exploiting are resources which creates a threat of sustainability of such resources.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable development is defined as: "to ensure meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". But keeping in mind the abovementioned disadvantages of privatisation of natural resources, we cannot achieve sustainable development, because the main disadvantages of privatisation of natural resources are: include potential monopoly, increased prices to users, and high costs relative to perceived risks and also the illegal or over exploitation of resources in the present by the private companies, which may not leave any resources for the future generation.

As stated above Human kind should be aware that the natural resources are indispensable "partners-for-life", in a partnership in which humankind should not be dominant. Therefore, humankind should realize that there is a limitation of development and usage of natural resources.

Natural resources are known to be for common good. However, as observations showed that neither 'the state' nor 'the market' is uniformly successful in enabling individuals to maintain sustainability in natural resources use therefore we should be guided more towards finding 'an ethical and social balance' among using and preserving our water and land resources. While sustainable development aims to achieve a balance between the utilitarian use and respect for the intrinsic value of Earth's resources; then, whatever management, the ethical and social balance can ensure, is worth adopting.

Lastly, in our life our main goal is to achieve happiness, we cannot compare our GDP with Gross National Happiness which means peace and harmony with the nature; we can have happiness when we have peace and harmony with the nature. But if we start privatising and exploitation of our natural resources, we will not achieve happiness, thus privatisation of natural resources should not be promoted.

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