Based on Exploring Society : India and Beyond

New NCERT Textbook

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Social Science

EXPLORING SOCIETY : INDIA AND BEYOND

For the Student of Class 8

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CHAPTER 1

Natural Resources and Their Use

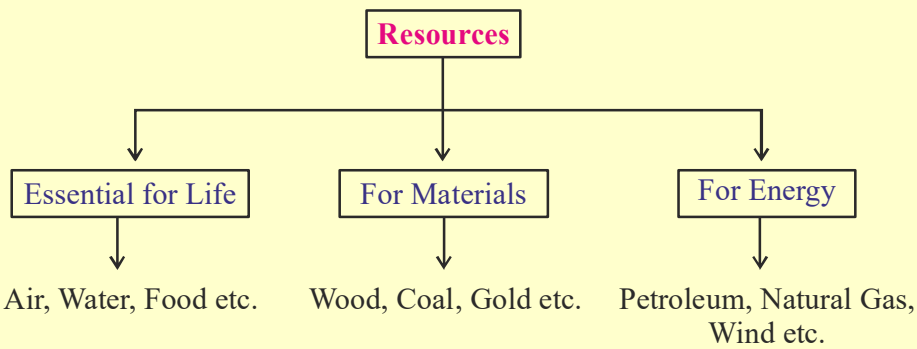
Summary

When does Nature become a Resource?

- 'Nature' is the totality of life and non-life forms, part of environment but not created by humans.
- When humans use elements from nature for living or making things, they become resources.
  Example : Cutting trees for furniture, makes them a resource.
- For an entity to be called a resource, it should be :
  (a) Technologically accessible
  (b) Economically feasible
  (c) Culturally acceptable
- Some important natural resources are :
  Obvious resources : Water, air, soil etc.
  Less obvious resources : Coal, petroleum, precious stones, metal ores, timber etc.

Categories of Natural Resources :

- There are two major ways to categorise resources : (a) based on their use, (b) based on their renewability.
  (a) Based on Use : Resources can be categorised based on their use in human life such as essential for life, materials, and energy resources.



- **Resources essential for life :** These include air, water, food etc. without which life cannot exist.
- We can not create these resources, they are provided by nature.
- **Resources for materials :** Human beings create physical objects out of natural resources for utility.
- India's geographical diversity provides us with a wide variety of natural resources.
- **Resources for energy :** Energy is needed for modern living, transportation, and all types of production processes.
- Energy comes from natural sources such as coal, water, sunlight etc.

(b) Based on Renewability : Renewable and Non-renewable resources.

- **Renewable Resources :** These resources can be replenished or renewed naturally in a short period of time. Solar energy, wind energy, timber from forests etc. are examples of renewable resources.

- Natural cycle of restoration and regeneration must not be disturbed for maintaining renewability of resources.
- Industries produce the goods we consume and generates wastes. This waste material is discharged into rivers and other water bodies.

Fig. : Waste from industries is often disposed without proper treatment

- It leads to disturbance in nature's cycle of restoration and regeneration.

Non-renewable Resources :

- These resources are created over long periods.
- They can not be replenished at the rate we use them such as coal, petroleum, metals etc.

Distribution of Natural Resources and its Implications :

- Natural resources are not evenly distributed across our planet.
- This uneven distribution shapes human settlements, trade patterns, international relations, conflicts etc.
- Industries located near natural resources create employment opportunities, townships grow around them and expand economic opportunities for others.
- Resources combined with skills create valuable products, like India's Wootz steel.

- Resources don't follow political borders, causing disputes between states or countries.

The 'Natural Resource Curse' :

- Some regions rich in natural resources can face slower economic growth and development, this phenomenon is called as 'natural resource curse' or 'paradox of plenty'.
- India has avoided this curse by investing in the development of industries to meet our growing needs.

Restoration and Regeneration of Renewable Resources :

- Renewable resources, like water, soil etc. can replenish naturally if we handle them well.
- Examples of how we are pushing the use of natural resources beyond their capacity to regenerate :

(a) Overuse of groundwaters :

- Farmers use groundwater for irrigation, but they extract more water than nature can replace.

Fig. : Extraction of groundwater

Fig. : Wet paddy fields

- It is estimated that many cities will run out of groundwater soon.
- Rainwater harvesting, reusing water, reviving ponds and tanks etc. can solve this problem.

(b) Soil degradation :

- Improper use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides has led to soil degradation.
- Using cow dung and natural fertilizers, mulching, multi-cropping etc. are ways of soil conservation.

Overexploitation of groundwater—a caselet from Punjab :

- In the 1960's, farmers of Punjab shifted to high-yielding varieties of wheat and paddy needing more water.
- It led to heavy groundwater use.
- Free electricity, encouraged overpumping, lowering water level to 30 meters deep in 80% of Punjab, marked as "overexploited".
- Chemicals from fertilizers and pesticides mixed into groundwater, causing health risks.

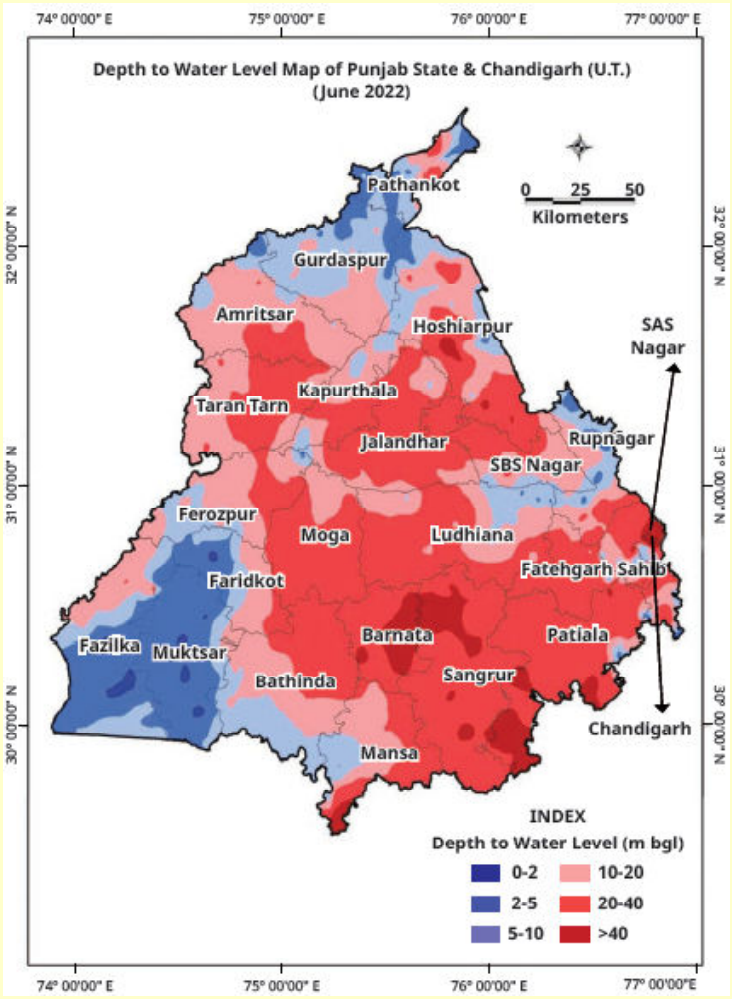


Fig. : Depth to water level map of Punjab and Chandigarh, June 2022 (m bgl = metres below ground level)

The Case of Cement :

- The production of cement has been listed as one of the most polluting industries.
- Cement production releases fine dust harmful for humans and animals, it settles on leaves of plants and also causes water and soil pollution.
- There are many ways to reduce this pollution such as using traditional materials like stone and mud, new plant based materials, recycled materials from waste plastic etc.

Vrikshayurveda :

- 'Vrikshayurveda' is an ancient Indian botanical science that focuses on the study and care of plants and trees.
- It explains about the specific plants to be grown on different soil types and provides methods for seed collection, preservation, and pre-planning treatments.