

Challenges before environmentalist

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No matter how dirty and polluted the urban areas are, Nepal is still a beautiful country. To keep the country clean, beautiful and in its natural condition, awareness, education, and change in our attitude is a must. The environmental awareness and education has helped the people to be conscious on the different environmental pollution and its effects. People with the help of environmentalists are forcing concerned organizations and the government for the necessary rules and regulations for its enforcement in the country. One example is the banning of three-wheeler diesel vehicle from Kathmandu valley recently. Not only the user of those vehicles, businesspersons are also adopting environmental friendly vehicles, rather than diesel operated ones. The regular awareness campaigns, training, workshops, seminars are also helping to know the existing situation of the environment in the city and the country. This trend will definitely help to have clean and healthy environment and it has to be in its pace.

Six years back, there were neither any educational organizations offering environmental education in the country nor were there qualified human resources in the field of environmental science.

The environment related local organizations were also not effective in dealing with these cases. Awareness and education has also risen up due to the inclusion of subjects like Health, Population and Environment in school level and undergraduate courses of environmental science through different colleges and universities. Now, within the country, four and three years B Sc in environmental sciences graduates are produced by Kathmandu University (KU) and Tribhuvan University associated organizations respectively. Besides this, there are now also the people who have attained B Sc, M Sc, and PhD degrees from foreign countries in environmental science.

Nowadays, the term environment has become so catchy that most of the people and organizations tend to relate themselves or their work to some short of environmental terms. It is very good to be interested in environmental works and to help for the improvement of the environment. But we should keep in mind that no one can be environmentalist just by doing environmental related works. If a technician starts calling himself an engineer, a conductor as a driver, head master as a professor, health assistant as a doctor and every person working in environmental field "an environmentalist" then there would be more problems than solutions.

The common origins of anthropogenic environmental impacts are from the industrial production, consumption, farming practices, energy consumption and traffic patterns. The one who can cope up with these in relation to nature and human kind are the environmentalists, who have studied environmental science and specialized in knowing the process of environment. Environmental knowledge does not mean knowing either one or two components of environment nor can a single person know all the components.

That's why the environmentalist can be considered as a person who has learnt most of the components of environment or basics of all the elements and their processes. Therefore environmentalists, ecologists, naturalists, biologists or chemists and so on are different. The time has come to regulate and stop the misuse of the term 'environment' and its importance. The study of environmental science is a new field and the term environment itself is vague and can be associated with any other branches. Because of this, even without any environmental science degree, people do not hesitate to call themselves environmentalist and occupy the environmental related sectors, which is a first challenge to environmentalists for their existence. Most of the environmental related national and international organizations working in the country do not have environmentalists and are giving opportunities for so called environmentalists, which is the second challenge. None of the National Parks and Wild Life Conservation areas is incorporating environmentalists in their activities.

Environmentalists were very optimistic after the establishment of the Ministry of Population and Environment (MOPE) but they lost their patience when none of the environmentalists were incorporated in the ministry or its related sectors even in eight years of the establishment of the Ministry. The post of Environmental Inspector was created in MOPE but recruitment is yet to take place.

Another challenge is to overcome the misuse of other environmental terms. For example, rechargeable battery or LPG vehicles are running in the capital with the slogan "Pollution free or Zero emission vehicle". How can a vehicle be a zero emission when the unborn LPG is irritating to eyes, throat, nose and causing headache to the people? And how can it be pollution free if the disposal of batteries and acids is not done properly, posing risk of land and ground water pollution, highly toxic than diesel smoke.

A map of house can be passed by government only if that is designed by a license holder architectural engineer, accountancy practice can be done only by auditor or chartered accountant having license to do so, only license holder lawyers can practice and work on legal issues. In the same way, it is now time to issue license to environmentalist so that only licensed environmentalists can do the environmental studies like IEE and EIA and related issues because the government already has rules and regulations for such studies before the implementation of any development activities. There should also be a provision to include at least one environmentalist in such environmental studies.

Even the Public Service Commission should define and incorporate environmentalists in its recruitment policies just like recruiting four years B Sc Ag, M Sc Ecology or four years B E degree holders. Environmentalists are never mentioned in its policy before and that may be due to the lack of environmental consciousness and resource persons. Now it's time to recruit specialized people in specific fields to manage and improve the environmental problems with its appropriate solutions because, for every environmental problem, only the environmentalists can work out the proper solutions without opposing any development activities. The environmental problems often have long term effects, affecting future generations. So the concerned authorities have to consider these things in environmental policies making processes so as to provide for environmentally sound and good tomorrow.