**Destruction of Habitats and the Emergence of Pandemic**

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COVID-19 pandemic caused due to coronavirus that has devastated the human society, both economically and socially. This virus spread out so rapidly after a bat was consumed by a human and we are still finding a way to overcome this catastrophe. Many other viruses like SARS, Ebola, SARS-CoV-2 and countless many highly infectious viruses have caused global panic since 2002—and all of them jumped to humans from wild animals that live in dense tropical forests.

The evidences found out regarding these diseases were that they have been transmitted to the human body either by consumption of animals or by coming into close contact with animals. The problem arises when wild animals are deprived of their natural habitat due to deforestation to supply the needs of crops and food cultivation, mining and timbre for housing and production of paper, etc. for the ever-increasing human population. A 2019 study found that a 10% increase in deforestation would raise malaria cases by 3.3%, that would be 7.4 million people worldwide. On an average 28 million hectares of forest land is cleared annually since 2016. Thus, more deforestation leads to wild animals, and hence the pathogens coming more in contact with humans. When these animals are made to dwell in more concentrated habitats, they can easily swap more infectious strains among themselves, leading to natural selection of both the animals and the pathogens. Thus, these pathogens are easily enhanced to the extent of causing fatal damage to the human species in case of transmission from the animals carrying them. Similarly, clearing forest land also reduces Bio-diversity, and the species that survive are more likely to host several diseases that can affect humans. All these factors can be accounted for encroachment of deadly pathogens into the human domain.

Rise in global temperatures due to accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere causes natural disasters such as tsunamis, hurricanes, unexpected rainfall that destroys seasonal crops, rising sea levels due to melting of snow caps, etc. Pandemics can be taken care of in the short run, provided adequate measures are being taken; but climate change caused due to global warning cannot be tackled or reversed in a short period of time. Other causes of global warming include urbanisation causing air pollution due to dumping of gaseous toxic wastes into air, improper chemical disposition causing soil and water pollution, etc. The recent pandemic that humans faced forced them to stay at home causing the factories and production facilities to remain shut for months altogether causing less pollution .But on a greater picture steps like this are uneconomical and temporary to solve humongous issues like that of the Global warming, and thus, stauncher and more differentiating methods need to be employed.

Producing more food per hectare by employing scientific methods of crop cultivation such as hydroponics, aquaponics and refraining from traditional farming which utilises more water and deprives the soil of nutrients making it barren. Focus should be on producing more drought resistant crops. Reducing food wastage could potentially decrease the pressure on the crop industry to cultivate more. Eating less processed foods will decrease the demand for palm oil which is also a major feedstock biofuel is primarily grown on land cleared of tropical rainforests. The requirement of land will also perish if developed countries issue population control schemes and focus on women through their empowerment, by giving them better education and equal social status with men and easy access to affordable contraceptives. Poor farmers in rural areas should be educated and encouraged to give up traditional methods of farming that causes immense harm to the quality of soil and extensive deforestation; funds should be provided by the governments to help them setup modern farming techniques. Poor people in urban areas consume cheapest junk food whose production could have caused harm to the environment; thus, they should be educated to embrace healthy food habits by avoiding such food stuffs.. In September 2019, just before the Coronavirus pandemic, the Us Agency for international development ended the funding of ‘PREDICT’, a 10-year effort to hunt down threatening microbes. Such steps should be condemned and more funds should be provided for organisations such as ‘PREDICT’. The Governments should prohibit the sale of live wild animals in the wet markets, where the risk of pathogen transmission is the highest; and also, crackdown illegal wildlife trade to stop widespread of pathogens. Factories producing packaged meat should be kept in check.

As we chop down at stake tropical-rainforests, with its rich biodiversity, we are eating away the habitats of millions of animals, and many of them are being pushed into greater contact with humans. We're driving deeper and deeper, making roads throughout the habitat, which again brings people and animals in contact with each other. People are hunting the animals and selling meat, or trafficking the infants, and all of this is creating environments which are perfect for a virus or a bacterium to cross that species barrier and sometimes, like COVID-19, it becomes very contagious and we're suffering from it. Ending deforestation could not only thwart pandemics but could address 6 of the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development goals: the guarantee of healthy lives, gender equality, responsible consumption and production, sustainably managed land and climate action and hence leading to the overall development of the society.

We can conclude without any anomaly that if we don't stop destroying the environment and disrespecting animals by hunting them, killing them, or eating them then we will have more deadly viruses like COVID-19 (caused by eating bat), HIV/AIDS caused by eating chimpanzees in Central Africa. If we continue without being concerned then end of the world will be near and will be inevitable.

References:

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