

Episode Five: Awakening

This episode deals with a gradual realization at the global level that international cooperation is necessary to deal with Sustainability issues. The Earth's environmental, social and economic issues have to be dealt holistically and the larger picture has to be kept in mind. Progress must be similar across the globe because those lagging behind will pull everyone else, back. Resources must be equitably shared and responsibility towards the Earth also shared equally. Towards this end a lot of global action has been taken. This episode looks at some of the important global consensus and goals.

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List of characters

- Teacher** : **Adult female voice.**
- Sumita** : **Adult female voice.**
- Rita** : **Young girl About 8 years old.**
- Ravi** : **Young boy. Rita's brother. Class IX.**
- Mother Earth:** **Female voice**

(This is a school so questions by Ravi and Rani can be in different voices. Keeping in mind non-availability of dubbing artists only two student voices have been included. Producers are free to use multiple voices for students.)

There is a humming noise as if many children are talking excitedly. Sound of electric static as mike is switched on. Faint sounds of Hello-hello, Mike testing. Ok. Ok

Teacher: Good Morning children. You must be eager to know why you have assembled in the Auditorium. Well, the suspense is over. We are privileged to have with us our former student Miss Sumita. She has received the Green Globe Award for this year for her work on Sustainable Development.

Everyone claps.

Teacher: I hope everyone knows what sustainable development means. It means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Rita: Needs of the present ...does that include us, kids, also?

Teacher: Yes, of course. Just because you are children does not mean sustainable development does not include you. And future means your great grandchildren (*children laugh but teacher continues*) and their great grandchildren too...it includes everyone who will be born on Earth sooner or later.

(*Slight pause.*) Ah! Here is Sumita. Children, please welcome her.

All clap.

Teacher: It is a joy to welcome you, Sumita. Would you like to tell your juniors a little bit about sustainable development?

Sumita: Thank you Ma'am. It is indeed an honour to be felicitated by the school where I was once a student. It gives a great sense of continuity. It also seems to me that as a former student I have a responsibility towards the newer students ...because I came to this school before they did I must pass on the baton to them to keep the school's name flying high.

Ravi: Like sustainable development...it is the responsibility of the present generation to make sure future generations are provided for.

All laugh.

Sumita: In a way, I suppose you have got the idea right! So, who has a question for me?

Rita: I have, please... my name is Rita. I am eight years old...and I have never heard this term before. Why do we need sustainable development?

Sumita: Well, Rita you have asked a very fundamental question. Think of it in this way. We get almost everything from Mother Earth, don't we? Some resources, like the air we breathe we get free but for others, we labour...like the farmer works in his fields to grow crops. Am I right, children?

- Kids:** Yes.
- Sumita:** Well, whatever we get from Mother Earth...these are all resources. Resources are of two kinds. Renewable and Non-renewable.
- Teacher:** Children, from the name you can understand Non-renewable resources are resources for which there is a limited supply. If finished, these cannot be replenished by natural means.
- Sumita:** With renewable resources we are on slightly better grounds as these resources can be replenished by the environment over relatively short periods of time.
- Rita:** Can you please give a few examples?
- Teacher:** Well sunlight can be thought of as a renewable resource. Wind energy too. Crops are another. All animal species reproduce, so these are renewable resources too. But not if a species is hunted to extinction or its habitat is destroyed and there are no more left. Then this species is lost forever.
- Sumita:** We dig into the soil and extract minerals. We have oil wells from which we get petroleum. Well; what will happen if the oil wells are set on fire during a war? Or we dig out all the minerals from a mine...say all the coal from a coal mine?
- Kids:** We cannot grow oil or coal...these must be non-renewable resources. It will all be finished. There will be nothing left.
- Teacher:** Right. Good thinking.
- Sumita:** If all natural resources are finished what will we do?

Total silence for a moment or two.

Rita (*Hesitantly*) .We will die????

Sumita: Hmmm. Let us see what alternatives we have because extinction is not an option. *Laughs.*

MUSIC

Sumita: I have a small stage show to show you what Mother Earth what would say if she had a voice. Listen carefully.

Mother Earth: When human beings first emerged I never thought that there would be more than 10 billion people by the year 2100. I am not even counting the non-humans. I have to feed the people, clothe them and give them shelter. They like to travel and move produce from place to place so I have to give them the resources to do so too. Not all people or countries are the same.

- Some are greedy, they grab more than they need. (*Sounds of Give me more...give me more....*)
- Some are wasteful. They live extravagantly. (*Sounds of water flushing many times*)
- Some are uneducated and do not appreciate my gifts.
- Many are so poor that they have no access to my gifts. (*Sounds of sobbing...I am hungry...I am cold...I need clothes.*)

(The bulleted bits have to be dramatized. May be the reading can be dramatic if sound effects are not possible.)

Earth: Human beings are becoming a burden I cannot bear. But they are intelligent. Some of them have already understood the problem...but they must act. I need help.

Sounds of sobbing.

Children: Mother Earth is so sad. How can we help?

Teacher: This problem has to be solved by joint action of all the people on Earth. Of course, each one of us can also help.

Sumita: First we have to realize that we have to address three main issues if we want sustainability. Count now. First: Social issues, Second: Economic issues and the third is Environmental.

Ravi: So, economic development, social development and environmental protection are the tripod or three pillars of sustainability!

Teacher: Well said, Ravi. Once you start thinking like this you will realize that if any one pillar is weak then the system becomes unsustainable.

Ravi: Are there different organizations for each of these three pillars or is there only one?

Sumita: Most national and international efforts focus on only one pillar at a time. For example, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the environmental protection agencies (EPA) of many nations, focus on the environmental pillar.

Children: OK.

Sumita: The World Trade Organization (WTO) focuses mostly on economic growth.

Children: Alright.

Sumita: The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) focuses on economic growth and also, on social sustainability, like war reduction and justice. The United Nations attempts to strengthen all three pillars.

Teacher: Unfortunately we do not, as yet, have ONE organization that works at a global and international level focussing on all three pillars.

Sumita: Slowly we are gaining international consensus and then, maybe such an organization will evolve.

Rani: How are the different countries coming together?

Ravi: Yes, the rich countries have a different philosophy towards resources. They are more concerned with extracting more, producing more, using more and discarding more. The poor countries have another view because sometimes the really poor have no access to resources that they need badly. (*A little upset and angrily*) I cannot believe the affluent countries and the developing countries can agree on a common agenda.

Teacher (Warning tone): Ravi! No need to be upset about this. Listen to what Sumita is saying. International cooperation is happening...and you will see more of it in the future. For the sake of sustainability, this has to happen..

Sumita: The first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in 1972 in Stockholm. Two heads of state; Olaf Palme of Sweden and Indira Gandhi of India attended. This conference was the first one that focused attention on the condition of the global environment.

Children clap.

Teacher: The conference highlighted the globally shared i.e., international nature of the environment. It made people reflect on the relationship between development

and the environment. After that the world became very conscious about the situation. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was established.

Sumita: About twenty years later, over 100 Heads of State and representatives from 178 national governments came together at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development at Rio de Janeiro. This was the famous 1992 Rio Earth Summit.

Ravi: Oh so people started thinking about the Earth as opposed to thinking only about their own countries. It makes sense, we cannot compartmentalize our air or our seas can we? Pollution will contaminate across national boundaries.

Teacher: Exactly! Well, this was the first international attempt to draw up action plans and strategies for moving towards a more sustainable pattern of development. The Biodiversity Convention was mooted at this summit.

Sumita: Yes, India signed it too. Basically, India agreed to conserve biological diversity, make sustainable use of it and ensure there is fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.

Ravi: Yes, if species become extinct, the loss threatens natural resources. Sustainable development depends on natural resources. Genetic material from plant and animal species is the foundation for the agricultural, pharmaceutical and other biotechnology-based industries.

Sumita: And sometimes we do not even know what potential a species has to benefit us because we have not studied that species in detail...if it goes extinct our hopes of using it gainfully also vanishes.

Teacher: This was the first time that the world recognized that the conservation of biological conservation of biodiversity is "a common concern of humankind" and is an integral part of the development process.

Clapping.

MUSIC

Rita: Ma'am so was there again a twenty year gap before more action was taken?

Teacher: Laughs. No. No. The seriousness of the situation meant that many international agreements were signed. For example:

- the 1978 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (*Sound of cymbals*)
- the 1979 Geneva Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (*Sound of cymbals*)
- the 1985 Helsinki Agreement (*Sound of cymbals*)
- the 1988 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer; and
- the 1989 Basel Convention on Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes(*Sound of cymbals*)

Sumita: However, it was not till 1987 that the phrase Sustainable Development made it into our vocabulary.

Ravi: So, this is a relatively modern term although the concept is a timeless one.

Sumita: Yes. The UN General Assembly set up the World Commission on Environment and Development. The Chairperson was Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. So, the report was named after him.

Teacher: The Brundtland report, declared that the time had come for a marriage between the environment and the economy. It used the term "sustainable development

Sounds of confusion. Students talk among themselves. Loud humming sound.

Sumita: I think you are confused about how environment and economy can be married.

Chorus: Yes.

Teacher: Activities such as extraction, processing, manufacture, transport, consumption and disposal impact the environmental systems. These actions also generate wastes. So there is a direct connection between economic development, use of products and environment.

Children: Oh!We never thought of it in this way.

Sumita: Economic development without environmental considerations can cause serious environmental damage.

Ravi: You are right. Every day when I walk to school I see a factory belching black smoke into the air. Many of my neighbours have developed breathing

problems. My mother keeps windows closed and always grumbles about environmental pollution.

Teacher: According to an estimate, 60% of the Earth's ecosystem services have been degraded in the past 50 years. Natural resource consumption is expected to rise to 170% of the Earth's bio-capacity by 2040. Just put 2 and 2 together and analyze what it means for sustainability on Earth.

Sumita: Think about all this. Google for more information when you go home. Tomorrow you can submit a presentation on what you found out about global steps being taken to achieve sustainable development.

Children: Chorus. Thank you.

Ravi and Rita walking home from school. Sounds of a busy road. Bus honking. Screeching brakes etc.

Rita: Ravi bhaiya, Papa says America and countries in Europe are developed. I think the people there are rich. We are not so developed....so many times Papa says we have no money. Not all of us have cars. Rich people must be using more products, no?

Ravi: It is not so simple Rita. Your simple question is actually about consumption levels and consumption patterns at a global scale.

Rita: You mean worldwide.

Ravi: Yes: Now if there are more people; consumption will be more ..there will be almost 9 billion people on Earth by 2050.Each person is a consumer..may be more or maybe less but every person will use some resources.

Rita: Oh! So the total volume of consumption will go up.

Ravi: Then again, factor in the rise in global affluence and associated consumption: Global middle class is expected to triple by 2030. They will begin to fulfil aspirations and dreams. The higher income group who believe in consumerism anyway will not slow down...they will add to the demand. I remember Papa

telling me that between 1990 and 2002 average overall incomes increased by approximately 21 percent; globally.

Rita: (*Almost in tears*): More money means more power to spend. So you buy more and more! How will it slow down? I think the grown ups should do something. How can we stop runway demands and production...we will exhaust all natural resource...and then, what will happen? No one will have anything.

Ravi: Oi...don't get so upset. The whole world's woes are not on your tiny shoulders alone. I think this has to be done by all countries and cooperation is needed internationally also. After all we have only One Earth. I am sure the leaders have given thought to this. Let's go home and find out. Careful now, step around all these cartons stored outside this electronics store. His shop is so full he has displayed items on the pavement.

MUSIC

Ravi: Rita, come and sit near me. Let me Google the words sustainable development.

Sounds of keyboard being punched.

Ravi: There!

Rita: (*happily*) Oh...you have got many hits. Read quickly. Here read this one first. It is about the Millennium Summit in September 2000. The 21st century is a good time to begin our search. Read quickly.

Ravi: It says that there were eight international developmental goals; and each goal had specific targets and dates.

Rita: What were the goals?

Ravi:

- To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (*Sound of cymbals*)
- To achieve universal primary education (*Sound of cymbals*)
- To promote gender equality and empower women (*Sound of cymbals*)

- To reduce child mortality (*Sound of cymbals*)
- To improve maternal health (*Sound of cymbals*)
- To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases (*Sound of cymbals*)
- To ensure environmental sustainability (*Sound of cymbals*)
- To develop a global partnership for development (*Sound of cymbals*)

Mother: Ravi, Rita what are you two doing on the computer? Aren't you going out to play?

Ravi and Rita: No. Ma. We have an interesting assignment on sustainable development. We have just found out that early this century ...in 2000 the world decided to join hands and work together.

Ma: I think you are talking about the Millennium Development Goals. The deadline was 2015. On September 2^{5th} 2015, many countries adopted a set of goals as part of a new sustainable development agenda. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years. So, Google the phrase Sustainable Development Goals 2030 for updates.

Ravi: So in these 15 years did the global cooperation achieve nothing? Why did we need another deadline?

Ma: (*Hurriedly and urgent tone of voice*) No, no. Dear me, No! It made tremendous strides. The number of people in extreme poverty declined. Child mortality rates fell. Life expectancy rose. Access to safe water and sanitation rose.

Rani (*confused tone*): If such good things happened why a new deadline for 2030?

Ma: (reassuringly) : Sadly, progress has been far from uniform across all the countries of the world. And huge disparities still remain between countries.

Ravi: Yes, but within a country too, poverty is greatest for rural areas, though urban poverty is also extensive. It is under-reported but growing. When I go to school I see the shantytowns, *juggi-jhupris* or *basties* and there are so many homeless on railway platforms and under the bridges.

Rani: Yes many of these poor people are not only homeless, they have no money. They beg sometimes for food and clothes.

Ma: Dear Rani, you are too young to understand that poverty is more than just a lack of income or resources. It also means lack of access to basic services, such as education. It means, hunger, social discrimination and exclusion from the decision making process.

Ravi: I am going to make a chart to explain Sustainable Development Goals 2030 in school tomorrow. Look, Google says The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. Sumita didi told us about the First Earth Summit in Rio...this takes the Agenda forward. I will start here.

Rita: I will help you. Write down the Goals first *bhaiya*.

Ravi: There are 17 Goals! Let me study these first.

17 Sustainable Development Goals

- Goal 1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2 End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6 Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7 Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9 Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10 Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12 Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*

- Goal 14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15 Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

(This can be read by Ravi, Rita and Ma...one Goal at a time)

Ravi: I have just realized that the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 stress everything from zero poverty, zero hunger, good health, quality education, to gender equality.

Ma: It has to! Globally, 1 in 9 people are undernourished, the vast majority of these people live in developing countries...so this is good news for a vast section of society. Poor nutrition causes nearly half of deaths in children aged under five; that is 3.1 million children each year. Think what a huge difference it will make if we can meet the goals.

Rita: (*excitedly*) And it also includes clean water, sanitation, affordable clean energy unpolluted oceans and land!

Ravi: Plus decent work and economic growth, innovation, reduction in inequalities, sustainable cities, responsible consumption, climate action, and partnerships to achieve the goals. I am really happy they have focussed on sustainable production and consumption. That is the key, I think!

Rita: How can anyone do all this?

Ma: Appropriate use of science is one of the most effective weapons. The Sustainable Development goals include issues that affect us all. And also, these involve us all to achieve a sustainable, safer, and more prosperous planet for all humanity for all time.

Ravi: I will include what UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said about this ambitious international goal.

Ravi reads in a serious voice as if reading for the radio: "The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are our shared vision of humanity and a social contract between the world's leaders and the people." "They are a to-do list for people and planet, and a blueprint for success..."

Ma: I think Mahatma Gandhi was way ahead of his time. Remember how he pointed out that the Earth has enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed!

Rita: But how will I know if it is my need or my greed? I want so many things.

Ma: (*Laughs*) Very easy. A need is something that a person cannot live without. So can you name three needs?

Rita: Hmm...cannot live without? EASY!!! Air, Water and Food!

Ma: A want is something that you can live without, but do not prefer to.

(*in a teasing voice*) Like...

Ravi and Rita start laughing...: We understand Ma...it becomes greed when we have limitless wants. And Greed is the enemy of sustainable development.

Ma: Yes. And now global leaders have woken up to the crisis precipitated by runaway greed of individuals and the unsustainable lifestyles of certain nations. They are educating school children also...our next generation of citizens and leaders... Hopefully it is not too late already.

Ravi and Rita: No, Ma we are optimistic that we will meet the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. We must. Failing is not an option.

MUSIC