

Understanding the Environment

Exercises

Long answer questions:

1. What is the significance of the biosphere?
2. What are the components of our environment and how are they connected? Explain with an example.
3. Why is the hydrosphere important?
4. How is the human environment dependent upon the natural environment? Explain with an example.

Solutions

Long-answer questions:

1. The Biosphere is the narrow zone consisting of the lower part of the atmosphere/ the upper part of the lithosphere and a part of the hydrosphere where all forms of life are found thereby making it the most important zone.
2. The environment is everything that makes up our surroundings and affects our lives. The environment includes both the natural or physical environment and the human environment. The components of the physical environment comprises the four realms or spheres of the earth. The sphere of land is the lithosphere, that of water, the hydrosphere and of air, the atmosphere. The sphere of the living world consisting of all animals, plants and man is the biosphere.

The human environment or man-made environment refers to the human-made surroundings that include the physical, social and economic components that determine the state, condition and quality of living of a person. Humans interact, adapt and adjust with their natural environment.

The last component is the socio-cultural environment that is linked with our natural environment. The socio-cultural environment includes the family, community, neighborhood, rural and urban surroundings, country, religion and economic activity. There are regional variations of the socio-cultural environment as can be seen in the case of Kerala and Punjab in their food habits, types of houses, crops grown, dresses and festivals.
3. The hydrosphere covers about three fourths of our earth. Water is found in three forms- solid, liquid and gas. In liquid form it exists in water bodies. In its solid state, it exists as snow cover over mountains and as glaciers or ice sheets. In its gaseous form it is found in the form of clouds and water vapour. Water sustains all forms of life and has a strong influence on the climate e.g., large bodies of water.
4. Man is a part of the environment. Man adapts himself or modifies the environment to a great extent to suit his needs. Humans extract, adapt and adjust with their natural environment. Their occupation, food, housing and clothing; are all affected by the environment. They turn mountain slopes into terrace farms, they cut down trees and turn forests into towns, cities, villages and industrial areas.