

Save them to save us

India's five nuclear tests at Pokhran evoked worldwide response. The developed world looked at these as 'a terrible mistake committed by a wonderful, peace-loving nation', which could be translated roughly into 'undesirable excess committed by a weak nation'. While the shock expressed by the developed countries especially the USA, Britain and France could be brushed aside as nothing but 'a pot calling the kettle black' syndrome, the same cannot be said about Japan which has been the only genuine sufferer of a nuclear holocaust;

If America was more concerned about CIA being ineffective, war-mongering Pakistan was taken aback by the daring move by India, which had always adopted a 'wait-and-watch' policy towards Pakistan. The most vehement opposition still came from unexpected quarters. Rising above national and regional barriers, it was the environmentalists from all across the globe who opposed India's nuclear tests, tooth and nail. And they had valid reasons to do so.

Unlike conventional explosives, which only affect life and property in a particular range at that instance of the blast, nuclear explosives have a wider area of affliction and the magnitude of death and destruction is incomparable. Not just that, nuclear explosion releases harmful radiations into (the atmosphere which affect life forms - be it humans, animals or plants, for several generations to come. This is exemplified by the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki disaster, who are suffering the ill effects of radiation even today. The destruction of marine life in parts of Pacific Ocean, congenitally deformed animals in the areas surrounding the surface/subsurface test sites, including the Pokhran site, bears testimony to the harmful effects of radiation. The environmentalists might have a strong case in opposing the nuclear tests. But nuclear pollution is not the only threat to our environment. It is only an added dimension to the ever-increasing environmental degradation. Indiscriminate attacks on our surroundings have brought us close to the edge of the precipice of destruction.

Environmental protection* should be the concern of every responsible human being. The policy makers can at best initiate the process, but it is we who have to implement it. For all the wonderful things nature has bestowed upon us, let us resolve to save it and be saved.

*}une 5 - World EnvironmjU Day

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- Technoworld, June 1998