

Art-Eng Neeta- 2019-20

VOLUME No.68, ISSUE No.05, JANUARY-2020

ISSN (Online): 0474-9030



# SDGS 2020 OUR HERITAGE

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UGC Care Listed, Multidisciplinary Journal for Research Publication  
Special Issue on

# Sustainable Development Goals



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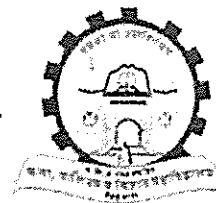


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## "SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS"


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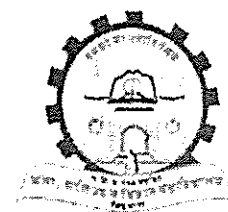


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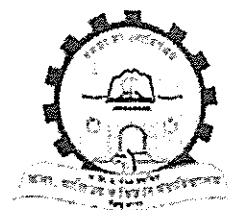


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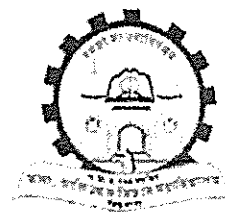


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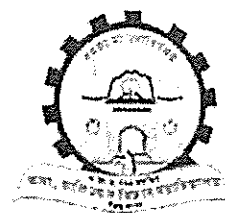


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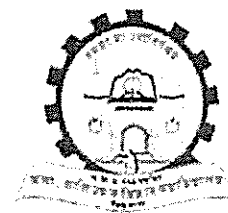


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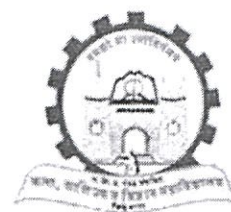


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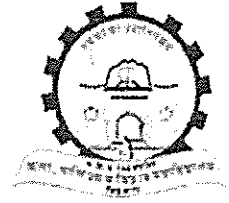


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### Juxtaposing Sustainability of Resources with Social Deviance: A Study of Jules Verne's 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea

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#### Abstract

Sustainability of natural resources would allow these to be available to the forthcoming generations and although depletion of natural resources is often seen as an offshoot of the process of development of mankind, the trick perhaps lies in using resources consciously in moderation. Jules Verne, a Science Fiction writer of the nineteenth Century in his *20,000 Leagues under the Sea* imaginatively presents a way of living under the sea, which essentially draws upon scientific facts and historical data and appeals for a need to show responsibility while using resources available under the sea.

*Keywords: Sustainability, Social, natural*

#### *resources Introduction:*

The novel starts when the American Government invites Monsieur Pierre Aronnax, a Professor of Natural History from France, with sound knowledge about sea life and having several books on the subject to his credit, to board the *Abraham Lincoln* to aid Commander Farragut and his team in a social mission to undo a potential risk for sea farers by killing a huge narwhale sighted in the seas. In anticipation, the vessel is armed with a capacity for great speed and an ability to admit high pressure of about seven atmospheres. Professor Aronnax accepts the invitation and boards the ship along with his servant Conseil who is utterly devoted to him. Another person who receives an invite on this ship is Ned Land, a Canadian with sharp eyesight and exceptionally skill in using the harpoon. However, in course of the novel, when *Abraham Lincoln* is attacked by the narwhale, due to its impact, Professor Aronnax, Conseil and Ned Land fall aboard from the ship. They soon realize that the object of their quest rather than being a cetacean was a true human constructed marine monster, a submarine called *Nautilus* owned by Captain Nemo, a man who has broken all the ties of humanity and who had made the sea his home, well protected in the *Nautilus*— his cocoon with everything that he needed. As captives of Captain Nemo, the trio travel 20,000 leagues under the sea before they are able to escape. The novel beautifully encapsulates the thrilling adventures that they experience, the enormous beauty of life under the sea, the dual face of mankind—both kind and cruel and his relative success in making the sea his home.

As the novel proceeds, several aspects of Captain Nemo's character are revealed. For instance, when the trio are caught, Captain Nemo, initially takes time to take a decision and justifies it by saying that he had many options for dealing with them including keeping them on the deck or sinking them. Further, when the prisoners object to these suggested options rather than that of providing them with hospitality as the ways of a savage and not that of a civilized man, Captain Nemo counters this argument with the words, "I am not what you call a civilized man! I have done with society entirely, for reasons which I alone have the right of appreciating. I do not, therefore, obey its laws..." (Verne 51)

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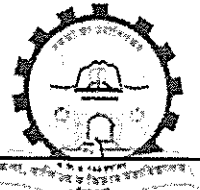
  
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The novel offers two different reasons for Captain Nemo's desire to live away from other human beings. The first reason can be derived logically through observation when in spite of possessing a rich collection of twelve thousand volumes on various subjects and in different languages in his library, books on political economy are conspicuously absent. Thus, his aversion for this particular subject is revealed and it may be surmised that he was oppressed by the political economy of his country, although the country of his origin is not recounted in the novel. The second convincing reason that we find is hidden in his actions. There are number of instances in the novel when he shows his weakness for the poor, oppressed and the disadvantaged; whether they be man or animal. For instance when his mate was lying on his deathbed having been grievously wounded in a private battle, he is in tears or when the poor Indian diving into the sea to bring up pearl oysters is attacked by a shark, he rushed to fight the shark himself and risked his life to save him as he felt that the Indian was 'an inhabitant of an oppressed country' (Verne 165) or when he fights the battle against the cachalots to protect the southern whales from them as he perceived the whales as weak. Further, he uses these reasons to vindicate his decision to drown a ship that accosts *Nautilus* when he articulates, "I am the law, and I am the judge! I am the oppressed, and there is the oppressor! Through him I have lost all that I loved, cherished, and venerated— country, wife, children, father, and mother. I saw all perish! All that I hate is there!" (Verne 293)

The novel unfolds two fertile minds— Captain Nemo's and Professor Aronnax's bonding on the basis of their unconditional love for the sea and its history. This love for knowledge also acts as a catalyst in Captain Nemo's offer to Professor Aronnax to take them 'to visit the land of marvels.' (Verne 54) Throughout the novel, vivid description of animals of the sea abound. The absolutely first experience of the trio observing fishes from nautilus is described thus:

"During their games, their bounds, while rivalling each other in beauty, brightness, and velocity, I distinguished the green labre; the banded mullet, marked by a double line of black; the round-tailed goby, of a white colour, with violet spots on the back; the Japanese scombrus, a beautiful mackerel of these seas, with a blue body and silvery head; the brilliant azurors, whose name alone defies description; some banded spares, with variegated fins of blue and yellow; the woodcocks of the seas..." (Verne 76)

Captain Nemo takes not only the trio, but also the readers on this cruise. One of the first of these is a special privileged visit along with a hunting-party to the forest of Crespo where the flora and fauna of the sea are thus alluded to by the professor:

"Various kinds of isis, clusters of pure tuft-coral, prickly fungi, and anemones formed a brilliant garden of flowers, decked with their collarettes of blue tentacles, sea-stars studding the sandy bottom. It was a real grief to me to crush under my feet the brilliant specimens of molloscs which strewed the ground by thousands, of hammerheads, donaciae (veritable bounding shells), of staircases, and red helmet shells, angel wings and many others produced by this inexhaustible ocean." (Verne 88)

This visit is followed by several other marvels including a trip to a submarine forest with flora richer than at the arctic or tropical zones and with the flora and the fauna closely resembling each other; large scale fishing by dropping of nets so that some could be eaten fresh while others could be pickled and kept for future use; witnessing of the terrible spectacle of the submerged vessel of the Florida, Sunderland along with their dead occupants; a glimpse of Vanikoro, the site where La Perouse, who had been sent on a voyage of circumnavigation by Louis XVI in 1785, was lost; an adventure on an island involving an attack by savages; an excursion to a coral kingdom; glimpsing of a coral formed island called Keeling Island and white waters of the sea due to the presence of myriads of infusoria; a visit to the magnificent

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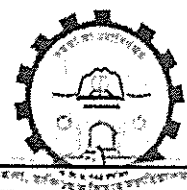
  
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Ceylon fisheries to see fishing of pearl oysters; a journey through the Arabian tunnel; fishery of gold and silver from a capsized vessel of the Spanish Government, visit to a mountain that was a volcano, visit to the submarine coal-mines and to the South pole where they had a near death experience being caught between huge icebergs. As the reader accompanies these voyagers, he experiences the visual imagery of the places and experiences and comprehends the presence of immense natural resources under the sea. Captain Nemo also takes it upon himself to teach us lessons in sustainability of these natural resources. For example, when Ned Land desires to kill southern whales by using his harpoon, Captain Nemo refuses to permit him:

"...it would be killing for killing's sake. I know that is a privilege reserved for man, but I do not approve of such murderous pastime. In destroying the southern whale..., your traders do a culpable action, Master Land. They have already depopulated the whole of Baffin's Bay, and are annihilating a class of useful animals. Leave the unfortunate cetacean alone. They have plenty of natural enemies—cachalots, swordfish, and sawfish—without you troubling them." (Verne 228)

Captain Nemo, however is very practical. At one point of time, he allows Ned to use his harpoon against a dugong so that he could procure fresh meat for his crew. Also, when he sees a southern whale lying dead as it was attacked by a cachalot and finds that from its mutilated fin, hung it's dead young one, he directs his men to draw two or three tons of milk that its breast contained. Although, this may look appalling to the normal eye, he claims that the milk could be preserved in the form of cheese or saltbutter and consumed by the inmates of *Nautilus* when the need arose.

Captain Nemo refuses to allow Professor Aronnax, Conseil and Ned Land to leave although, he has high regard for Professor Aronnax. This is primarily because he wants to lead a life of a recluse with no connections with the civil society. However, in course of the novel, Prof. Aronnax discovers Captain Nemo's aspiration for worldly acclaim when Captain Nemo himself apprises him:

" Here, M. Aronnax, is a manuscript written in several languages. It contains the sum of my studies of the sea; and, if it please God, it shall not perish with me. This manuscript, signed with my name, complete with the history of my life, will be shut up in a little floating case. The last survivor of all of us on board the *Nautilus* will throw this case into the sea, and it will go whither it is borne by the waves." (Verne 275)

These contradictory claims of Captain Nemo may be seen as a sort of deviant behavior and can be explained by a sociological theory of deviance put forth by American sociologist Robert K. Merton. Merton explained how wealth and materialism could become the aspiration of a generation but some people perceive a tension between the goals and the means and use 'Innovation' as a coping strategy and forego societal approval if it helps achieve the goal. (Agnew 1892-1900)

#### Conclusion:

For instance, it may be argued that angered at the treatment meted out to him, Captain Nemo deviates from the social norms of living. So, his innovation involves finding other like-minded people, developing common grounds with them including a language that's distinct from those commonly used in mainstream society, using the available resources in his vicinity to carve out a standard of living in the sea comparable to one of the best available on land without needing to ever set foot on land. However, ironically, he finally desires to leave his name and achievements as a legacy to that very society. So, Captain Nemo is educated and believes in its value for advancement, but later as he is disillusioned and is denied these goals by society, he shows deviant behavior. Herebels, walks away from society and plans to

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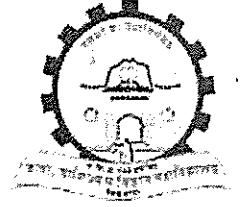


## OUR HERITAGE

ISSN (Online) : 0474-9030 Vol-68, Special Issue-5

Impact Factor (2020) - 6.8

Special Issue on "Sustainable Development Goals"




achieve the final goal of humanity– name and fame by assimilating his knowledge and making use of the untapped natural resources under the sea. The complex character of Captain Nemo may thus be said to be a summation of two contrary traits, that of understanding and believing in sustainability for development and of showing deviance to achieve the ultimate good of humanity.

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