

Sustainable Development and Environment: Inclusive Growth Strategies for India

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable development calls for concerted efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people. This paper reveals the three dimensions of sustainable development are economic development, environmental protection and social well-being. Sustainable development promotes economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. This paper highlights the economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection to work together, benefiting both current and future generations. The first and most critical pillar of sustainable development is environmental protection. Environment and economy are interdependent and need each other. Sustainable development means improving people's lives today without damaging the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Keywords: sustainable, development economic, growth, environmental and degradation

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Development is a long-term approach to development and planning that ensures present needs are fulfilled. Sustainable development is development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. As civilizations grow, their demand for resources leads to deforestation, soil erosion, and loss of biodiversity, creating unsustainable conditions. Sustainability is the balance between the environment, equity, and economy. The aspiration to achieve both economic growth and environmental sustainability is laden with several complexities. Economic pursuits, often propelled by the pursuit of progress and prosperity, intersect with the environment in manners that carry substantial consequences.

Controversy has surrounded many major developmental and infrastructure projects in India, such as the Sardar Sarovar dam on the river Narmada, the (mute Lake in Orissa, the Konkan Railways, the East Coast Road, etc. Objections to these projects pertain to the extent of environmental destruction and uprooting of human settlements such projects may cause. But these environmental and social costs have been justified by the government and other protagonists as essential for any kind of development. This dichotomy reflects the essence of the debate around sustainable development. The process of resolving the perceived conflict between environment and development in all these issues and the actual solutions that are worked out, will indicate whether the concept of sustainable development is implementable in a country like India. Not only in India but almost everywhere in the world, 'sustainable development' has become the new buzz-word. Every international agency-from the World Bank to the UNICEF-end almost every country is talking of it. But what does this sustainable development mean?

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs." This definition has been offered by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in its report 'Our Common Future' (1987) and widely accepted. Economists define it as an economic progress in which the quantity and quality of our stocks of natural resources (like forests) and the integrity of bio-geo-chemical cycles (like climate) are sustained and passed on, unimpaired, to future generations. "Some scholars say it is an oxymoron because according to them, development is inherently unsustainable. Other commentators are disappointed in the lack of progress that has been achieved so far" (Brown, James H. 2015). There needs to be sustainable economic, ecological and community development

The eminent Indian economist, Sukhamoy Chakravarty has pointed out that the success of 'sustainable development' lies in the fact that it says nothing precise and therefore, means anything to anybody! For a logging company it can mean sustained projects; for an environmental economist it can mean sustained stocks of natural forests; for a social ecologist it can mean sustained use of the forest; and for an environmentalist it can mean a clean heritage for our children. As a western joke goes now sustainable development for multinational companies. Many of which have also embraced the concept, means simply 'sustained growth' or 'sustained profits'. "Ernst Basler, explained how the long-acknowledged sustainability

concept of preserving forests for future wood production can be directly transferred to the broader importance of preserving environmental resources to sustain the world for future generations”(Basler, Ernst 1972). Sustainable development is the pathway to the future we want for all. It offers a framework to generate economic growth and exercise.

Leaving aside its many uses (and misuses), ‘sustainable’ here simply means keeping something going for an ‘indefinite’ period of time. However, when governments and industrial interests talk of ‘sustainable’ extraction of coal from coal fields, or oil from oilfields, or coral from coral reefs, or of ‘sustainable’ farming by modern methods (which depend on the input of finite fossil fuels), it is often out of ignorance, greed, or with an intent to mislead. The notion of sustainable development or sustainable ‘exploitation’ is not new: it has been with us for well over 100 years. Until the very recent past, however, it had not crept into conservation strategy. Today, the word ‘sustainable’ is tacked on to every major facet of human activity.

In its modern form, ‘sustainable development’ was born and developed in the World Conservation Strategy produced jointly in 1980 by the IUCN, WWF and UNEP. It aimed “to help advance the achievement of sustainable development through the conservation of living resources.” It declared that “conservation, like development, is for the people”, and thus implicitly assigned to all other species-plant or animal-a status of existence that is primarily for omen use. That is the way all future development was to take place and be judged. “Scholars who are investigating global environmental governance have identified a set of discourses within the public space that mostly convey four sustainability frames: mainstream sustainability, progressive sustainability, a limits discourse, and radical sustainability” (Sénit, Carole-Anne 2020:429) Sustainable development demands aligning ecological boundaries with socio-economic justice.

The concept assumed immense importance against the backdrop of the growth of human population and modern man’s indiscriminate and unbridled exploitation of environment to gratify his ever-growing hunger for prosperity. The two factors may soon exhaust the environmental resources and the planet will then not help in the survival of even human beings. People and planners must accept that there is a finite amount of habitable land and water on this earth. A specific concern is that those who enjoy the fruits of economic development today may be making future generations worse off by over-exploitation of the natural resources and polluting the earth’s environment.

Adding to the problems caused by population growth is the economic explosion. During the twentieth century, world economy has expanded twenty times and industrialization has increased by a factor of five since 1950. This boom has depleted stocks of ecological capital (fuel, forests, soils, species, fisheries, water, atmosphere, etc.) faster than such stocks can be replenished. Our own success thus threatens to become our undoing.

Environmental degradation has already been massive. Yet not many seem to be aware of it. The natural resources are being exploited without much consideration for the future generations. Because of the holes in the ozone shield and the accumulation of greenhouse gases, the world as a whole may already be on a critical threshold. Indications of ecological degradation only reveal that economic growth of the present kind which depends on consuming the earth’s natural and environmental resources is not sustainable. Thus, human survival and development today, more than ever, depend on two critical factors-a check on the population and a successful ‘management’ rather than ‘exploitation’ of the world’s natural resources.

The process of economic transformation in recent years is seen to have involved a rapid increase in the scale of human pressure on the environment and also radical structural transformation, particularly in terms of urbanization and industrialization. Threats to the environment can be linked directly with these rapid changes in several different ways. For example, as population expands, people move into previously ‘empty’ areas generally involving destruction of various species of flora as well as fauna. Quite a different form of environmental degradation results from effluents, smoke and other waste produced by industrial operations. The crowding of people into urban areas requires sanitary, transport and housing amenities which are more complex and often more costly than those in the countryside, and all are accompanied by varying degrees of pollution.

Sustainability can never be absolute. It is not plausible that all natural resources can or even need to be preserved. Successful development will inevitably involve some amount of land clearing, oil-drilling, river-damming and swamp draining. But economic development and sound environmental managements are complementary aspects of the same agenda. Without adequate environmental protection, development will be undermined; and without development. Environmental protection will fail. “Digitalization is often promoted as a tool for sustainable development, recent scholarly analysis has introduced a more complex view, indicating that the rapid reliance on digital technologies can have a negative overall impact on environmental sustainability, despite positive influences on economic and social development aspects” (Singh, Ajay Kumar; Jyoti, Bhim 2023) India’s environmental governance faces the dual challenge of promoting economic development while ensuring ecological sustainability.

Each society experiments and learns from its own mistakes. Sustainable development cannot be thrust upon anyone by an external agent-whether it is the World Bank. The UNO, or the forestry department of a government simply because it believes, at any point of time that it has learnt all the lessons there are to learn. That will be a process towards unsustainable development. "Sustainability means different things to different people, and the concept of sustainable development has led to a diversity of discourses that legitimize competing sociopolitical projects" (Sénit, Carole-Anne 2020:411) The World Bank estimates that environmental degradation costs India approximately 5.7% of India's GDP annually.

Strong public institutions and environmental protection policies seem to be essential. Policy reforms must focus on changing agricultural and industrial practices so as to reduce drastically the amount of pollution wastes and other environmental damage per unit of output. Environmental impacts need to be recognized; policies aimed at changing behaviour should rely heavily on economic incentives. Early action to prevent degradation will usually be much cheaper than attempting to reverse it later.

Maybe there should be a retrospective study of past practices especially in agriculture to see if they could not be applied with modifications to suit present needs. Several Lemmas are, indeed, discarding chemical fertilizers and pesticides and going back to traditional manures and biological pest control. Such steps certainly help towards making development sustainable.

Responsive and effective institutions must be developed. Dissemination of information and analysis must be improved to assist in setting up priorities, and formulating policies. In the formulation of policies and decision-making, effective participation of the people on the spot should be ensured. Finding and implementing solutions to environment problems requires a partnership of efforts among nations. Industrial countries should assist in the transfer of less-polluting technology to the developing countries. These combined with other technical assistance, would help developing countries to avoid or at least reduce environmental degradation. Further the industrial countries must take the lead in formulating and funding solutions to problems of worldwide concern as they have been the primary culprits on environment spoilage. But, above all, unless and until the world community strives in concert, to check population growth no measure can work effectively.

People have always used the earth's resources and it is unreasonable now, with exploding populations to expect them to stop. The solution to the human thrust on nature is not to cordon nature off, but to encourage wisdom in the exploitation of it, with the motto: "You must give back to the earth what you take from it." Man will have to shake off his predatory habit of viewing all natural products as his belongings and indulging his eternal greed at the cost of other species and ecosystems. "The idea of sustainability can guide decisions at the global, national, organizational, and individual levels. A related concept is that of sustainable development, and the terms are often used to mean the same thing" (Berg, Christian 2020).

The agenda for reform is large and comprehensive. Accepting the challenge to accelerate development in an environmentally responsible manner will involve substantial shifts in policies and priorities and will be costly. Failing to accept the challenge will be costlier still. But, the value of this challenge becomes clear only when we realize that humanity is not distinct from nature but a part of it. If all the global issues are taken together, nothing draws more attention than political and economic upheaval as well as climate change and food security while political and economic upheavals seem to be temporary nature, climate change and food security are going to have long- term implications and call for both immediate and sustained efforts by people across the globe, because both the issues are vital our existence itself.

Since, the time man came to know about the benefit of organized living, he has unscrupulously used the bounties of nature and this practice continues in a great measure today also. Only a few conscientious people are determined to educate the vast majority on the dangers that are involved. Until not very long ago, the people, both layperson and scientists were not aware of the phenomenon like ozone depletion, extinction of numerous species due to loss of habitation and change brought by human interference and the dangers that have been looming large over the countries as a result of man's insatiable passion for development which wreaks havoc in its wake. It is ironic that so long as man had been ignorant of modern farm practices, he had stuck to the farming that is now thought of being sustainable and beneficial the long term. For example, organic farming was the original type of agriculture that had been practiced from time immemorial. The other form of farming called forest gardening which is a fully organic food production system which dates back to prehistoric times, is now thought to be the world's most resilient agro system. It was in the mid 1920s in Central Europe that of work Rudolf Steiner had gave birth to an organic movement, because aware of the fact that the inorganic methods, introduced by the industrial revolution, were to some extent not well developed and had serious side effects too. Rudolf Steiner had introduced biodynamic agriculture which was a precursor of organic farming. What is referred to today as organic farming was, in fact, developed through the work of Albert Howard in England in the 1940s? Albert Howard had developed an aversion to agriculture's growing dependence on synthetic fertilizers.

When the green forming or eco- farming stressed by the experts and the scientists, recently organic farming acquires a central place. It is the form of farming that relies on techniques such as crop-rotation, green manure, compost and biological pest control. Organic forming makes use of fertilizers and pesticides, but excludes or puts a limit on use of manufactured (synthetic) fertilizers, pesticides (which Comprise herbicide, insecticide and fungicides), plant growth regulators such as hormones, livestock antibiotics, food additives, generally modified organisms, human sewage sludge and nonmaterial.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable development recognizes the need to preserve these resources for current and future generations. It is balancing economic growth with environmental protection. There is a need to examine the concept of sustainability critically to improvise appropriate strategies to drive environmental agenda. Sustainable development Environmental sustainability involves making decisions and taking action that are in the interests of protecting the natural world. The document discusses sustainable development and provides examples of how a lack of sustainable practices has negatively impacted communities.

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