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## Issues and Challenges of Sustainable Development in India

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### Abstract

The goals of sustainable development are not merely the development and well being of all human beings but that of all other species on the globe. It is true that our environment is degrading day-by-day due to reckless exploitation of natural resources in India. We are making economic development at the cost of environment. Though lot of efforts and measures are being taken to prevent the environment degradation, but they are not enough. Economic development and environmental protection should go hand in hand. One has to keep in mind that the ultimate goal of sustainable development is to maintain a rising trend in the welfare of the people of the present and future generations.

The present paper has been divided into four sections. The first section deals with the conceptual analysis including definitions of sustainable development and an interrelationship between economic development and ecology. The second section depicts the various indicators of sustainable development. Third section presents briefly a few policy suggestions for sustainable development and pre-conditions for attaining the basic objectives of sustainable development. The fourth and last section includes the need for a new development strategy which would protect environment from all the pollutions.

### **Section-I: Concept of Sustainable Development**

The definition of sustainable development offered by the Brundtland Commission (1987) as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Thus sustainable development refers to sufficiency as well as efficiency.

Prof K.Patrikh(1989) defines sustainable development as “the preservation of production possibilities of an economy to provide the same goods and services including services obtained from the state of nature”.

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According to Raymond (1992) “the most objective and potentially measurable criterion for sustainable development is the preservation of the productivity and full functioning of the natural resource-base”.

Nobel Laureate Prof Robert Solow defined the sustainable development as “making sure that the next generation is as well-off as the current generation and ensuring that this continues for all time.”

Bharathwal and Shukla(1994) opined that “sustainable development has to take the factors like the consumption pattern of society, the living style of people, the social and political values of the masses, attitudes, customs etc. into account along with the technology”.

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In a nutshell; removal of poverty, improvement in demographic structure, change in consumption pattern, health, human settlement, pollution control of hazardous materials and after all the input sustainability are the vital requirements for overall sustainable development of the nations.

Right from the beginning of human existence, man has been exploiting nature for his several needs. The primitive man gathered fruits and hunted animals. Later on man sowed seeds and reaped the benefits of cultivation and used part of land as pastures to cattle. During industrial age man has drawn ever increasing needs of energy and raw-materials from nature. Thus economy is closely related to the exploitation of nature. Preservation of nature is a must for economic growth. Ecology is concerned with the conservation of nature and economic development deals with utilization of natural resources, thus both are interdependent. It is pertinent to note that proper management of the eco-system is an integral part of any programme for economic development.

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Environment and economic development are interdependent and form the essence of the concept of sustainable development. The term environment and sustainable development must be relative to the needs of man in time and space.

## Section-II: Indicators of Sustainable Development

- **Growth Rate of GDP:** This indicator reflects the success or failure of the economy as a whole. High growth rate of GDP is essential for providing employment, price stability and material welfare of people. It helps in elimination of poverty which in turn reduces environmental pollution caused by poverty.
- **Population Stability :** Population is a major source of environmental pollution, so there is an urgent need to control population growth.
- **Water Use :** Availability of adequate quantity of water for consumption and various industrial and agricultural purposes is to be ensured for sustainability.
- **Soil Degradation :** Loss of top fertile soil because of erosion, loss of soil fertility etc are to be reduced to minimum level for sustainable development.
- **Forest Coverage Ratio :** The maintenance of appropriate forest coverage ratio in the land for future sustainability of economic development is a must.
- **Clean Air Index :** With the process of development the level of air pollution is increasing day-by-day. The adverse effects of air pollution are to be eliminated for sustainability of the development process.
- **Human Resource Development Index :** It is a complex one, which combines in one number several aspects of human development like economic condition, education, health deprivation etc.
- **Energy Intensity :** It is quite important to see the impacts of energy supply and demand on sustainable development.
- **Transport Intensity :** Both the intensity of transport and the type of transportation technology should be consistent with the sustainability.
- **Renewable Energy Proportions :** If the renewable energy proportions are in greater ratio then longer will be the sustainability.
- **Material Intensity :** The intensity of output for various basic materials and for different sectors are to be taken into account for sustainability.

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### Section-III: Policy Suggestions for Sustainable Development

- **Introducing a Green Budget:** Expenditures, subsidies and taxes suggested in the budget change the relative prices of different goods and services. Govt imposed regulations to constrain or encourage many activities. Environmentally focused policy instruments are, pollution tax, rationalization of subsidies and fiscal incentives. Green budget should also imposed the differential pricing or differential excise duties for outdated and efficient technologies. Differential pricing duties are encouraging the choice of technology more expensive there by checking pollution.
- **Correcting prices:** The appropriate pricing of resources would be encouraged for the use of more environment-friendly alternatives of all environmental costs included by resource uses are fully charged then locally available renewable resources would have a better chance as they would seem economically more attractive. Also by remaining subsidies, which encourage excessive and wasteful use of potentially environmentally harmful materials such as pesticides and fertilizers can be discouraged. Both the failures-market as well as govt policy can be corrected by appropriate pricing of resources and by removing environmentally harmful subsidies.
- **Main-streaming Environmental Considerations:** Mainstreaming requires substanciative and sometime a radical reforms not only in administrative structures but also in institutional and human behavior. At a minimum it needs increased education and information about environment so as to make the environment a central focus of decision making across all levels of govt., private sector activities, communities and individuals.
- **Devising Sustainability Indicators :** With reference to sustainable development GDP is highly inadequate and should be replaced by a set of indicators reflecting changes in the environment and economic activity. The environment indicators for measuring changes in the state of the environment should be simple and practical. They might be expressed in non-mobilized or physical terms.
- **Institutions Supporting Participation :** Community Groups and NGO's can help local citizens become more active in the development process by facilitating capacity building through education and resource provision. These groups often excel in their

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ability to reach the rural poor in remote areas, promote local participation and faster innovation, particularly structures and limited technical capacities.

#### **Measures to Achieve the Goals of Sustainable Development:**

- Ensuring that human demand on the environment does not exceed the capacity of the environment to support it, bearing in mind the environmental demands of other species and future generations.
- Providing for human needs by increasing the productive potential through sustainable development and by ensuring equality of economic opportunity for all.
- Promoting values that encourage the sustainable rates and types of resource utilization and properly managing the waste.
- Enabling the people to meet the above conditions in ways of their choosing without hampering the development of others.

#### **Section-IV: Need for a New Development Strategy**

Neither planners nor the bureaucrats in India gave any attention to the environmental degradation and the human suffering to the vast majority of poor people implied in our development process. Programmes to check growing ecological imbalance were undertaken during the sixth plan. These programmes received greater importance during the seventh plan. In recent years certain remedial measures to improve the environment have taken up few programmes such as:

- **Economic Development:** The economic development programmes aim at restoration of already degraded eco-system through practical schemes such as land reclamation, afforestation, cleaning of water bodies etc.
- **Pollution Monitoring Control:** The Central Board for Prevention and Control of Water Pollution has been entrusted with the task of tackling pollution problem in the country. The board also co-ordinates, supports the pollution monitoring and control activities of the State Boards.

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- **Natural Living Resources Conservation:** Natural living resources conservation programmes have strengthened the work of the Botanical and Zoological Surveys of India and Man and Biosphere Research Programme and encouraged taxonomic investigations, publication of flora and fauna of India and ecological mappings.
  - **Environmental Impact Assessment:** It was decided to induce all socio-economic ministries, departments and agencies whose projects exercise adverse effects on the environment to set up technical cells for environmental assessment.
  - **Environmental Research Promotion :** For promoting environmental research a Centre for Ecological Research and Training at Bangalore, a Centre for Environmental Education at Ahmedabad and Centre for Mined Environmental Studies at Dhanabad were set up
  - **Environmental Education, Training and Awareness :** To promote the environmental awareness among the public, the following programs have been initiated :
    - i. Incorporation of environmental themes in educational curricula.
    - ii. Encouraging the non-government organizations and mass media to promote non-formal environmental education.
    - iii. Giving aid to various societies and institutions for environmental education.
    - iv. Developing the National Museum of Natural History and setting up of Regional Museums.
    - v. Promoting manpower development and creating literature and audio-visual material for environmental education.
    - vi. Establish Centres of Excellence in environmental education and research.
    - vii. Setting up of Interpretative Centres in National Parks, Botanical gardens, zoos and Biosphere reserves.

### **Tasks Ahead:**

It is pertinent to note that the continued disproportionate impact of environmental degradation will hamper the health, lives and livelihoods of the people of the twenty-first

century. Hence the crux of the problems of ecological sufferings is nailing the brains of the environmentalists of the present world.

Awareness of the problems faced by the environment would enable people to take appropriate decisions to make the earth habitable for future generation. Careful planning of human activities can restore environmental quality and maintain ecological balance. Recycling of waste materials, judicious use of non-renewable materials, conservation of forests, plants and animals can preserve the quality of environment and maintain ecological balance.

Every one of us should realize that there is no existence of man without environment. Hence it is our duty to protect, preserve and promote the pollution free environment in days to come.

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