

Development Vs Environment Preservation Conundrum: Issues And Challenges

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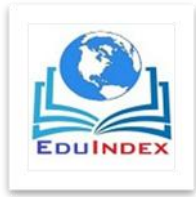
Abstract

A country's environmental problems are affected by the level of its economic development, the availability of natural resources, and the population along with its life-style. These parameters collectively work towards change in natural environment either contributing to conservation or degradation. Economic development involves some sort of damage to the environment and if India wishes to develop, it cannot bear exploitation of minerals. The sole way forward is to limit utilization of natural resources to sustainable level. This paper focuses on the role of strong local governance on sustainable development, environment and sanitation, health and overall human resource development.

Keywords:- Environment vs. Development, Sustainable Development

Introduction

Distressed and unsettled environmental conditions have the potential of appealing the mass. Let it be a television show or a public debate, everyone can be seen bickering about the deteriorating environmental conditions. It is witty to note that almost fifty percentages of those denigrators unknowingly contribute to the mess by not using dustbins and not indulging into recycling and reuse of daily use items. Blaming only the industrial sector for such environmental conditions



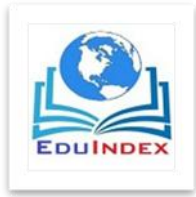
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would be wrong. Rapidly increasing population equally contributes to the same. Solutions need to be generated for sustainable development.

Environmental simply means the conditions that surround every object. The Environment Protection Act, 1986 defines environment as, “environment includes water, air and land and the inter-relationship which exists among air, water and land and human beings, other living creatures, micro organisms and property”.

“The World Health organization has observed that over 70 percent of all human ailments are influenced by environmental deterioration. Industries are all source of hazardous emissions and effluents. The use of chemical insecticides and pesticides in agriculture also leaves dangerous residues”. The public health infrastructure, like garbage, sewage system, etc. have a destructive effect on the environment. About one-third of the total population dwells in highly industrialized countries (more commonly known as Developed Countries) accounting for approximately 85 % of the global personal income and a similar fraction of global resources usage. People living in less industrialized or less developed countries must allocate the remaining 15 percentage of global income and resource usage among two-thirds of the total population. The result is an unfair prosperity among people in DCs and hiked poverty in the LDCs. Millions of people in LDCs, landlocked countries and certain communities like Brazil, India and China, etc are suffering from the consequences of an issue to which they did not contribute. Debates are engrossing in relation to the industrial development in countries like Brazil & India. In terms of greenhouse gas omissions, India is roughly about 1/20th of the US & Australia. Effected by hiking population, India is the world’s third largest green house gas polluter. (iujaipur.edu.in/e-Newsletter_October_2017.pdf)



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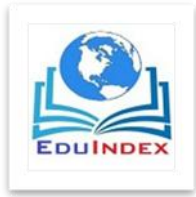
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Tracing the Concern

The current debate is focused upon contradictory aspects of development and environment. The concern is not new to society and it can be traced back to the second and third industrial revolution in the early 20th century when the manufacturing sector proliferated the use of chimneys and omitted effluents in large quantity. There is no boundary to man's scientific understanding and in the way to realize its full potential it intruded and relied heavily on the Mother Nature. It was in 1972 that global concern for environment problems were put forward at the United Nations Convention on the Human Environment (UNHCE), held at Scotholm, Sweden. At the conference India presented its point that what leads to environmental problems is the lack of development, and not the excessive development. So all the Governments throughout the world, must engage into inducing the industrialization in order to reduce unemployment, poverty & malnutrition and also a process of development must be designed and executed that does not generate environmental pollution. This principle was later known as the principle of Sustainable Development.

A Middle Path

Isn't there any middle way between the environmental activism and industrialization? The industrial world's prominence on green issues restrains DCs as this is still seen as an intrusion in their matters. It also accords to a greater divide between the first and the third worlds. Are not we hankering for industrial growth, contemplating environmentalism as obstructionist vogue even today? Are the world's development concerns contradicting with the environmental concerns?



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The world is still facing the development versus environment quandary, even 45 years after the UNCHES conference.

Answer is Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a necessity of the day. It involves in it the limitations of nature and technological states, satisfying the human needs without harming the environmental resources, in a manner to meet the present day needs without effecting the future generations' abilities.

1. Despite of several definitions and inferences of sustainable development it requires that we perceive the world as a system—which connects both the space; as well as the time.
2. This mechanism needs to be laid down over a long time period. It focuses that societies can meet human needs by making sure that equal opportunities are provided and also productive potential is boosted.
3. Use of this scheme can help to keep a check on overuse of the available resources, as well as attaining a viable and sound economic growth.

The sole option that we are left with is the adoption of eco-friendly and sustainable development. The question on how this world will meet halfway between these three: environment, energy and economy, is pulling attention.

Environment is the essence of existence & development is a necessity for any economy. Both are the two facets of the same coin. The best way to governance is taking sustainable economic development along with sustainable environmental development.



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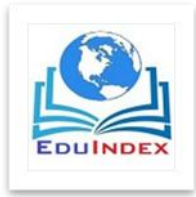
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The Role of Strong Local Governance

Amongst approaches to governance, the role of grass root level local administration in ensuring sustainable economic and environmental developments pivotal. In a rapidly urbanizing world, policies to tackle the growth imbalances caused due to massive urban migration hold vital important. Sustainable development aims to reduce excess consumerism, wastage or luxury and to prevent negligence towards environment. For instance, providing better quality public transport to slow down motorization is an active and effective strategy pursued by strong governments.

Along with creating a “pull” towards public transport, they implement various measures to “push” people out of wasteful personal automobile-dependence. Some city and regional governments use local taxation to attract industries and corporations to keep local employment thriving. Yet others use tax incentives and public awareness to promote social forestry and urban greening.

In India, we face severe growth imbalances caused due to mass urban migration. Economically, politically and environmentally, this has disastrous consequences. In his various works in pre-independence India, Gandhiji had advised that concentration of one or the other political or economical supremacy could disrupt all necessary fundamentals of participative democracy. Gandhiji recommended “Gram Swaraj” or self-governance and self-sufficiency at villages to check centralization. He also proposed the institution of village republics as institutions of parallel polities as well as units of economic liberty. The lowest level in decentralization is a village. From political viewpoint, a village is so small that it permits everyone for direct participation in the process of decision-making. Therefore, a village is the basic institution of participative democracy. Gandhiji’s beliefs were influenced by the ancient Indian sagacity on



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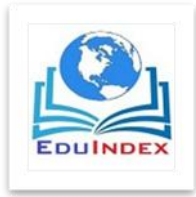
human welfare and development that were embodied in Indian scriptures and partly in the master work of Kautilya's Arthashastra.

However, India took a different path towards development since independence in 1947. Had we followed Gandhiji's model of "Gram Swaraj", perhaps India would have taken this shape:

1. Each Village would have been an independent unit with its own Panchayat Raj system to handle smaller issues related to Law and other administrative problems.
2. There would have been no migration of Villagers into the cities to work in the factories.
3. There would have been no mushrooming of slums in the Cities.
4. There will be no shortfall of skilled and talented manpower after developing technical skills in villages. It will give rise to village poets, artists, architects and research workers.

India's Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi announced "Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana" – a holistic comprehensive sustainable approach to empower Indian villages and make it a model. On Gandhiji's birthday in 2014, Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi launched the "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan". Both these missions can practically be combined to work for betterment of the rural Indian population and realizing the Gandhian dream of an ideal village. The Prime Minister has urged the Members of Parliament (MP)'s to adopt one village of their choice that should include all interventions of health, education, infrastructure, sanitation, hygiene, livelihood, and social aspects of human development.

The present day need is to bring about a comprehensive change in the beneficiaries' lives by uplifting their health and socio-economic status, through effective linkages through community, governmental and other developmental agencies. The Village Development Committee should



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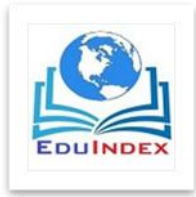
prepare an Integrated Village Development Plan with technical guidance of local organizations/agencies.

Community-based organization will be the key to bring about the overall development of the villages. It is must for the communities to control the process. The ultimate goal for communities is to be competent and confident to choose the best possible option among the available alternatives for an equitable development.

- Adequate housing must be provided to all residents so that there is no homeless family.
- All villages must have an all-weather road connected to the nearest major road.
- Safe drinking water facility to all residents.
- Electrification of villages.
- Appropriate street lighting and clean internal road system must be developed.
- Villages must possess proper communication system, like telephones, post offices and internet in the form of e-chaupals.
- Have a fair price shop and community pharmacy.
- Have a panchayat ghar or panchayat office with provision of a community hall for village meetings.
- Have paved streets with pukka covered drains.

Environment and Sanitation

- Villages must have good sanitation-no open field excretion. All residents must have and use clean toilets. An efficient drainage system must exist with unchoked drains.



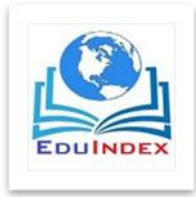
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- Villages must care its environment through tree plantation, water harvesting and maintaining water sources.
- Adopting energy saving methods like solar gas or biogas.

Health and Overall Human Resource Development

- A village should have an “Anganwadi center” (Maternal and child health and hygiene centers and play schools) and schools of appropriate levels.
- Necessary building for school, anganbadi, panchayat samiti, health center and community center.
- Appropriate facilities to promote sports and other physical activities should be present. Children below 6 years of age must be enrolled and should attend anganwadi on a regular basis. Similarly, children in 6-14 age groups must be enrolled and should regularly go to school.
- All adults must be literate and should be provided the facilities to continue their education.
- Reproductive Child Health (RCH) and other primary healthcare facilities (reasonable ante-natal and post-natal mother care, proper child immunization) should be available to all.
- Special attention must be paid to women, children, senior citizens and specially able persons by upgrading relations among various communities.



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- Create awareness on various governmental schemes through intensive awareness campaigns.
- Public consumption of toxic substances, drugs & liquor must be discouraged.
- Gram panchayats, self help groups and youth clubs must be established and strengthened.

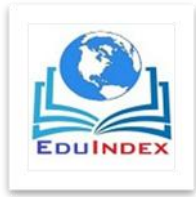
The Land Acquisition Predicament

Conservation methods must be used to manage public land according to some people, which means that humans should utilize and manage the environmental resources in a rational manner. Such people see the importance of environment as the products that it can offer to the public.

On the other hand are the preservationists. The method of preservation is comparatively stricter than the conservation method. The method of preservation does not allow humans to use the natural resources and focuses on maintaining these in their pure form. Preservationists believe that humans can utilize the land, but only for its natural beauty and ingenuity. They believe that land has its own intrinsic value, which means, its mere existence is of worth.

Even after forty years of UNHCE, it is crucial to note that we are far away from practicing sustainable development in its true sense.

Its easier for setting up industries in areas where the raw material can be easily accessed. More often such sites are located far away from major cities. So the urban population has turned a deaf ear towards the concerns related to industrialization. It is the rural people who are forced to give their lands away to the high-paying corporations, these are the ones who are aggrieved because of such projects. Acquisition of land for these kind of projects are generally met by claims from people for compensation enhancement. In case of rural areas the Land Acquisition Rehabilitation



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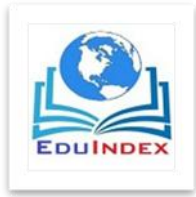
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and Resettlement act makes it mandatory ,for the private companies or the public private partnerships, to pay four times the market price along with the consent of 80% of the displaced population and also must have Environment Impact Assessment reports. Moreover purchase of large land segments by private firms would also need provisions related to resettlement rehabilitations that may also involve employment in these projects.

The estimation of ecological costing of projects is one of the most compelling innovations of the last decade. CAMPA or Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority (2002), was ordered by the Supreme Court of India that makes it mandatory for any party ,whether public or private to deposit a sum equal to the total worth of the ecological advantages lost per hectare averted for such reasons. The NPV of the benefits lost the requisite compensatory afforestation amount along with the accrued amount under the catchment area treatment schemes submitted. This concept has served our country well as today the state governments have with them Rs. 11000 crore for the regeneration and reforestation purpose. But there is a need to periodically readdress the prescribed formula to make sure that such calculations reflect the true and exact cost of such diversion. Also case needs to be made for introducing similar levy for the projects having environmental costs, even if they involve no forest land diversions.

For instance, let us look at the following conundrums in India.

- The destruction caused by sudden floods and landslides in lower Himalayan regions is mainly due to environmental worsening of fragile mountain slopes and reckless commercialization. Being underdeveloped, government has been trying to bring investment in these regions to help them develop in economic terms.

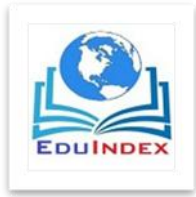


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- The Vedanata bauxite mining project in Niyamgiri Hills, Odisha, was rejected by government, on the ground that this decision was in the favour of the poor tribes living there. From the development perspective, had Vedanta successes in making aluminium a close source of bauxite, the way it had planned, the world prices for aluminium could have dropped to half and India could have emerged as a leading aluminium producer. If Vedanta had done well in building schools & hospitals and providing employment opportunities in Kalahandi, it would have improved the hopeless lives of the locals.
- India's biggest FDI, that is the POSCO steel plant of Odisha is now facing the axe. In March 2012, NGT ordered the ministry to review it claiming that it had failed in dealing with prime environmental issues while speeding the clearance and suspended the project's environment clearance. It stopped chopping down of trees for plant setup, saying that it violated the legal norms. 48000 jobs, directly and indirectly are expected to be created in the area by the POSCO plant, along with other infrastructural developments in the country.
- Copper smelter in Tuticorin, run by Sterlite, produces 4 lakhs ton copper per year and was ordered shut down by the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) because of leakage of harmful sulphur dioxide gas. This shutdown led to hiked imports and shranked domestic supply.

Environmental governance must keep an eye on development of economy and vice versa. The goal is to have a perfect balance. No sole victor shall emerge. The developing nations might never proceed if the environment is given an edge.



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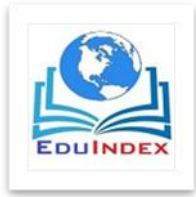
1. For example, consider the Kyoto Protocol. The USA only signed the treaty whereas it forced the other nations to ratify the same. Byrd-Hagel resolution was passed in the US Senate, with one accord, refusing any international agreement that may sternly harm the USA's economy.
2. With developed countries avoiding away these commitments, it is quite confusing to notice why developing nations should lose the chance of a better future.

Conclusion

Industrialization is inevitable, so rather than forbidding projects that are vital for development, focus must be on making an environment policy that allows both development and improvement. Equal opportunities must be provided to all, while safeguarding that no compromise is made with our future existence. All developing countries must implement the sustainable development policy. Economic development involves some sort of damage to the environment and if India wishes to develop, it cannot bear exploitation of minerals. The sole way forward is to limit utilization of natural resources to sustainable levels.

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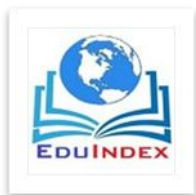
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