

## **Sustainable Development: Role of Education in Indian Context**

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### **Abstract:**

Development is essential for every civilized society. Under the pretence of achieving development human beings are exploiting the natural resources to which they come across easily in the natural surrounding and are available to them free of cost. Sustainable development is that which assures satisfaction of the need of the present society without threatening the ability of the future generation to encounter their own needs of existence. Education is the most significant way which leads to increase the ratio of literacy and also helps to create awareness among all about the concerned issue. Environmental degradation is the serious threat to the human existence in the developing countries like India. To achieve the goal of developed Country it is crucial to have an education system which helps in spreading awareness about protection and improvement of environmental conditions, which can best be achieved by adopting the principles of sustainable development. Article 48-A and Article 51 A (g) of the Constitution of India impose duty on the State and Citizens, respectively to protect the environment. Indian judiciary has also given true effect to the intent of the Constitutional framework through its various judicial pronouncements. To achieve the goal of sustainable development, it needs to spread awareness about it among the citizens. People should realize to change their attitude towards environment and environmental resources and it can be done through the medium of education and education only.

**Keywords:** Environmental protection, Sustainable development, Education, Constitution, Judicial pronouncements

### **Rationale of the study:**

**“Knowledge and Education are key factors for sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and for the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals.”**

**UN General Assembly MDG Summit Draft resolution: Keeping the Promise September 2010**

Environment and sustainable development are interlinked concepts. These are the two sides of the same coin. If development is an integral part of the human life, pure environmental condition is essential is essential for human existence. For developing the condition of life use of resources available in the nature is inevitable. Since the birth of earth and birth of human being on the earth, human beings have been exploiting to the free resources in the environment. Nowadays, with the development of Industrialization and urbanization and modern Technology the concept of standard living is totally changed. To raise the level of living and for achieving the goal of development human being has started exploiting each and every natural resources which lead to cause degradation of environmental purity.No doubt that the resort to the natural resources is an integral for the overall development of mankind. But it doesn't mean that development should cause threat to the existence of future generation. So, it is expected from the present generation to maintain the balance between available natural resources and the degree of development so that the upcoming generation should get assurance about healthy and pure environment which is essential for the sustainability of mankind.

**What is sustainable development?**

Sustainable development is the predominant archetype of the United Nations. The concept of sustainable development was described by the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report as “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Sustainable development is the principal of systematization or leading principle to meet the goal of human development with the sustainability of natural resources and environment system which makes available natural resources and ecosystem services upon which economy of a country and existence of society is depended. Sustainable development aims to achieve the condition of a society in which living style of mankind is such as to meet the needs of human being without compromising or threatening the integrity and stability of the natural environmental system.

**Knowledge and Education are key factors for sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and for the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals.**

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### **Principles of Sustainable Development**

The following nine principles of sustainable development have been accepted as the contents and principles of “Sustainable Development” on the basis of Brundtland Report and other international documents prepared at Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro-

<sup>1</sup> <https://en.unesco.org>>.uk

1. Intergenerational equity
2. Use and conservation of Natural Resources
3. Protection of Environment
4. The Precautionary Principle
5. The Polluter Pays principle
6. Obligation to Assist and Co-operate
7. Eradication of poverty
8. Financial Assistance to Developing Countries and
9. Public Trust principle<sup>2</sup>

#### **International Scenario**

- ❖ The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance
- ❖ The Stockholm Declaration of 1972
- ❖ The Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of waste and other matters, 1972
- ❖ The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES), 1973
- ❖ The Economic Commission for Europe Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution, 1979
- ❖ The World Charter for Nature, 1982
- ❖ United Nations Convention on the Law of the sea, 1982
- ❖ The Vienna Convention for the Protection of Ozone Layer, 1985
- ❖ The Hague Declaration on Environment, 1989
- ❖ The Beijing Declaration of Developing Nations, 1991
- ❖ The Rio summit (Earth Summit), 1992
- ❖ The Earth Summit+ five, 1997
- ❖ The Kyoto Environmental Summit, 1997
- ❖ The Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development, 2002

Above are the measures initiated at the international level to protect and preserve the Environment and environmental sustainability. The followings are the proclamation of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment which met at Stockholm that:

**Principle 1**-Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for the present and future generations.

**Principle 2**-The Natural resources of the earth, including the air, water, land, flora and Fauna and especially representative samples of natural ecosystems must be safeguarded for the present and future generations through the careful planning or management.

**Principle 19**-Education in environmental matters for the younger generation as well as adults, giving

due consideration to the underprivileged, is essential in order to broaden the basis for an enlightened opinion and responsible conduct by individuals, enterprises and communities in protecting and improving environment in future human dimensions.<sup>3</sup>

#### **World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)**

The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, 2002 having met in Johannesburg, South Africa reaffirmed their commitment to sustainable development, some among that are:

We reaffirm our pledge to place particular focus on, and give priority attention to, the fight against the world-wide conditions that pose severe threats to the sustainable development of our people.....

We recognise the reality that global society has the means and is endowed with the resources to address the challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development confronting all humanity.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Indian Scenario**

In pre-independence period the laws related to environment protection were mostly related with different types of pollution and with wild life protection such as the Shore Nuisances (Bombay and Kolaba) Act, 1853, The Wild Birds and Animal Protection Act, 1912, The Bengal Smoke Nuisance Act, 1905.<sup>5</sup>

After independence first environment-related policy of India came around in 1972 i. e. after the First United Nations Conference on Human Environment (UNCHE). The policy first time focussed on global environment and needs of development. In the same year The National Council for Environment Policy and planning was set up. In the year 1985, The Council later on transformed into the Ministry of environment and Forest (MOEF) and in 2014 captivated climate change within its ambit. During the period of 1970 to 1980 the Central Government has taken significant initiative and enacted various laws and acts for the protection of environment such as the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, Air Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 etc.

The most significant legislative initiative for protecting and conserving environment taken by the Indian Government was in the form of The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The National Environment Appellate Authority Act, 1997 is another landmark legislative step taken by the government. The Biological Diversity Act, 2002 was

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<sup>3</sup>Dr. Tiwari H.N., Environmental Law, (2015) Allahabad Law agency, law publishers Faridabad (Haryana)

<sup>4</sup> ibid

<sup>5</sup> indiakanoon.org>doc

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<sup>2</sup> Environmental law, Dr.H.N. Tiwari, Allahabad Law

enacted to protect and preserve the biological diversity in India. The Indian Government has also framed some policies such as the national Environment Policy of 2006, the National Conservation Strategy and the Policy Statement on Environment and Development of 1996, the National Forest Policy, 1988. Significant initiatives have been taken over the last few years to enable India's sustainable development. The Government introduced a target of 175 giga watts of renewable energy capacity to be achieved by 2022 and the country crossed the landmark of 100 gw of wind, solar and biomass capacity in August 2020.<sup>6</sup>

### **Judicial Trends in India on Sustainable Development**

The judiciary of India has played a vital role in maintaining sustainable development and in encouraging public and private sector industrialization to give least opportunities to have irreparable damages to the natural environment and environmental resources which is necessary for maintaining flora and fauna. Indian Legislature has enacted number of laws to protect the environment and Supreme Court and High Courts in India are playing a pivotal role in giving true effect to the intent of the legislature and to develop the concept of sustainable development.

In **Subhash Kumar vs. State of Bihar**<sup>7</sup> the Supreme Court (SC) has widened the scope of Article 21 of the Constitution of India and interpreted it to include right to wholesome environment in the sphere of right to life.

In **Vellore Citizen Welfare Forum vs. Union of India & others**<sup>8</sup> the SC has held that the precautionary principle and polluter pays principle are part of the environmental law of the country.

In **M.C. Mehta vs. Union of India & others**<sup>9</sup> known as **Calcutta Tanneries Case**, in the facts and circumstances of the case, the SC while reaffirming that, one who pollutes the Environment must pay to reverse the damages caused by his acts.<sup>10</sup>

In **A. P. Pollution Control Board vs. prof. M.V. Nayudu (Retd) & others**<sup>11</sup> Hon'ble SC has held that the principle of precaution involves the anticipation of environmental harm and taking measures to avoid it or to choose the least environmentally harmful activity.<sup>12</sup>

In **Narmada Bachao Andolan etc. vs. Union of India & others**<sup>13</sup> the Hon'ble Apex Court has held that the sustainable development means what type or extent of development can take place which can be sustained by nature/ecology with or without mitigation.<sup>14</sup>

### **Education Policy, Environmental Awareness and sustainable development**

**“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.”**

### **Nelson Mandela**

#### **What is Education?**

According to the dictionary meaning 'education is the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university'. Thus, education is a two-way process which compasses teaching and learning within its ambit with the objective of imparting and acquiring knowledge, skills, values, morals and also life skills such as personality development etc. education is the most effective means of transforming cultural heritage and thinking from generation to generation.

#### **Education for sustainable development and Education Policy in India**

Education plays a significant role in imparting the importance of sustainable development from generation to generation. Education for sustainable development enables the learning person to take reasoned decisions and appropriate steps towards the protection and preservation of environment and to create a just and favourable social environment for upcoming generation. Since, the medieval of 1980 the endeavours have been taken by the government of India to include environmental education in the regular education system at all the levels. As per the directions issued by the Honourable Supreme Court of India, in the year 1991 environmental education should be included in the syllabus as a compulsory subject at all the offered courses. It has also issued further directions to NCERT to draft a model syllabus for standard I to XII.

India's National Education Policy (NEP2020), the first education policy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century aiming to transform India's education system is timely in its release and response to the global goals and momentum on SDG4. The NEP is expected to put India on track to attend SDG4 of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development by offering inclusive and equitable education and assuring lifelong learning opportunities for everyone. NEP acknowledges that achieving SDG4 will require the entire education system to be reconfigured to achieve all critical targets and SDGs.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ciiblog.in/indias-sustainable-development-framework

<sup>7</sup> AIR1991SC420/1991(1)SCC 598

<sup>8</sup> Air 1996 SC 2715

<sup>9</sup> (1977) 2 SCC 411 (430 to 433)

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Swamy N. Maheshwara, Textbook on

Environmental Law, 2018, Asia Law House, Hyderabad

<sup>11</sup> AIR 1999 SC 812

<sup>12</sup> Supra 9

<sup>13</sup> AIR 2000 SC 3751

<sup>14</sup> Supra 9

<sup>15</sup> Frompolicycircle.org-d

### **Effect of Education on the Plans for Sustainable Development**

- By taking education people become literate. Literacy contributes in developing the logical and reasonable thinking capacity in the human beings. For the country with high literacy rate and skilled citizens, it becomes easier to implement any policy decision with less efforts and in a very short period of time.
- Education about environment awareness helps the citizen to take qualitative decision in carrying their activities with keeping in mind the less degradation of available natural resources and the Goal of Sustainable development.
- Education also plays a crucial role in improving the living standard of human being. Imparting education on sustainable development develops the sense of enhancing quality of life considering the economic and social well-being of future generation also. This would best be termed as the true effect of the ESD and a step towards achieving the SDG.

### **Environmental Awareness and sustainable Development**

Environmental awareness is proved to be important from various points.

In India environmental awareness gained importance since 1970s after the UN sponsored conference on environment in Stockholm(1972). Indian Government took many environments friendly activities. Ministry of environment and forest was established and laws were enacted on environment in 1986.<sup>16</sup>

Education plays a very significant role in the life of every human being. Education is the paramount steps towards creating awareness among people about the protection and improvement of the environment. Environmental education an essential factor for creating awareness that leads to the awareness about the need of sustainable development. In today's era of urbanization and industrialization the protection and improvement of the environment is of the most concern. The old concept of degradation of environment is an essential for achieving the development of Nation, is having no place, today as the solution lies in the new idea of "sustainable development". Directive principles of the Constitution of India has casted some duties on the State for the protection and preservation of the rights of its citizens. Article 48-A speaks about the responsibility of the State towards the protection of environment. It reads as-"The State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country. According to the Article

51A (g) it is the fundamental duty of every citizen to protect the environment. It says that, "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures."

Indian Judiciary had also played a vital role in spreading environmental awareness. It has emphasized on providing education on environmental awareness and sustainable development and spreading literacy among people about the importance of protection and improvement of environment. In the case of M.C. Mehata vs. Union of India<sup>17</sup> the Supreme Court of India has observed: "For the human conduct to be under the prescription of law there must be appropriate awareness about what the Law requires. This should be possible only when steps are taken in the adequate measure to make people aware of the indispensable necessity of their conduct being oriented following the requirements of Law." Thus, India is taking every cautious step to create environmental awareness among the people and to imbibe the significance of the concept of sustainable development.

### **Conclusion:**

Education is a key factor in the development of Nation. Education for sustainable development is indeed essential for creating a clear vision among people about the sustainable future of the upcoming generation. It helps to foster critical thinking among the teachers and learners for taking steps towards the sustainable development i.e. without compromising the need and wants of the future generations. Sustainable development can be achieved if the natural resources are accessed in a judicious way. Education is the only media that can proved to be the best way of eradicating illiteracy about environmental protection and improvement.

### **Suggestions:**

After doing the conceptual study of the above subject through the medium of this research paper the research scholar would like to put forth the following suggestions:

The principle of Sustainable Development is an unavoidable concept to be accepted by the every developing as well as developed country. Teaching and learning platform need to be prepared with the adequate facilities.

More emphasis to be given on including the subjects regarding environment consciousness, in the curriculum at all educational level including Higher education system. Training programmes, workshops need to be arranged for creating awareness through education among all at the grass root level.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://ajmalfoundation.com>

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<sup>17</sup> AIR 1992 Sc 382 read at <https://indiakanoon.org>

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