



## DEBATE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

**Dr. M. N. Ramesh**

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Rani Channamma University, Belagavi, Karnataka.



### ABSTRACT

The concept of sustainability, ever since it was propagated by the Brundtland Commission in 1987, has been under debate and is in a process of evolution. The basic criticism frequently is that the concept is too fluid to be defined. According to Pretty (1995), it is essential to identify: What is to be sustained? Till how long? And, for whom?

India is the 7th largest country of the world with an area of 3.29 million sq km. It is one of the densely populated countries of the world with a population of over 1 billion. Though agriculture contributes less than 24% of the GDP, it employs the maximum working population of the country. The economy is growing at a rate of over 8%. India – a nuclear power – is considered as one of the fastest growing markets of the world.

The Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) is entrusted with the issues relating to sustainable development. Although the Planning Commission of India has outlined human development goals for the next five to ten years, that are more ambitious than the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG), it is unlikely that the government will meet the associated objectives.

Sustainable development has become an integrating concept embracing economic, social and environmental issues. Sustainable development does not preclude the use of exhaustible natural resources but requires that any use be appropriately offset. This concept is not acceptable to many developing countries since it seems to disregard their aspirations for growth and development. Further, in this paper try to analyze the sustainable development cannot be achieved without significant economic growth in the developing countries.

**KEY WORDS:** process of evolution , Millennium Development Goals (MDG) , Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF).

### INTRODUCTION:

Three critical components in promoting sustainable development are economic growth, social equity and environmental sustainability. The question often asked is, should be current economic growth be sacrificed for long term environmental conservation. Policy makers in developing countries often perceive a trade off between economic growth and environmental sustainability. However, there is a growing evidence to show that environmental conservation for sustainability of natural resources is not a luxury but a necessity when considering long term economic growth and development. Particularly in the least developed countries. The decline and degradation of natural resources such as land, soil, forests, biodiversity and groundwater, resulting from current unsustainable use patterns are likely to be aggravated due to climate change in the next 25 to 50 years. Africa, South Asia and some regions of Latin America are already experiencing server land degradation and freshwater scarcity problems. There are many ways to pursue sustainable development strategies that contribute to mitigation of climate change.

Notwithstanding the debate, efforts have been made to define the sustainability of agriculture

especially in the light of the contemporary discourse on growth (and trade), environmental damages, and livelihood (poverty reduction). For instance, OECD (2001) has defined sustainable development as a 'dynamic process, which focuses on the ability of an economy to improve human welfare in cost-effective ways through developing, combining and substituting resources in the production process. It is also a global concept, which recognizes that allowing flows of resources between sectors and economies through international trade can maximize production while reducing the pressure on fragile resources. What is also important is that the concept is multidimensional, encompassing economic, environmental and social aspects that could apply to a large extent, to the specific activities in agricultural sector.

#### ENERGY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

The demand for energy is growing very fast. Dependence on imported petroleum is also very high. To meet the increasing energy demand and to ensure energy security the government, in 2005, formed a high level Energy Co-ordination Committee (ECC). The committee submitted its draft report with specific recommendations for how to meet future energy demands.

For the first time since India's independence the draft report tried to address the country's energy issues from a holistic prospective and develop an energy policy that reflected the aspiration of an independent country.

The study reveals that from 1990 to 2002 India failed to achieve any noteworthy progress in the management and development of its energy sector, especially in the areas of cleaner and renewable energy. Moreover, water, air and land pollution has increased significantly.

The absence of a holistic energy policy and increasingly greater reliance on road transportation are worsening the situation. Imposition of increased road taxes for transport vehicles appears necessary. More funds need to be allocated to rapid upgrading and expansion of India's railway infrastructure.

To ensure the effective use of renewable energy sources, which has tremendous potential in a vast country like India, a 'passionate intent' from the leadership is urgently required. The public sector oil distributing companies such as Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd., which have huge distribution network all over the country including in the remotest villages, should be asked to distribute renewable energy items like solar lanterns, solar panels etc.

In line with the Telecommunication Mission of 1980s, Energy Technology Missions on (i) coal technology; (ii) solar technology; (iii) bio fuels; (iv) bio mass plantation; and (v) community biogas plants should be implemented immediately.

Deforestation, soil erosion, desertification, air pollution from industrial effluents and vehicle emissions, water pollution from arsenic, raw sewage runoffs of agricultural pesticides are some of the important environmental issues which demand immediate attention.

#### Greenhouse Gas

GHG(CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent) 1994	1,228,540 Giga gram Per Year (Gg)
Per capita GHG (1994)	1.3 tones
Main Constituent of GHG (1994)	CO <sub>2</sub> (65%), CH <sub>4</sub> (31%), N <sub>2</sub> O (4%)
Main Contributors of GHG	Energy Sector 61%. Agriculture 28%, Industrial Process 8%, Waste 2%, Land Use and Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) 1%

Source: MoEF, (June 2004), India's Initial National Commitments to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Govt. of India.

Electronic waste has become a new environmental menace. India generates around 1,050 tones of electronic scrap each year. A Silicon Valley Toxics coalition report predicts that 500 million computers will

become obsolete by 2007 resulting in 6.32 billion pounds of plastic and 1.58 billion pounds of lead. 50% to 80% of US e-waste collected for recycling is sent to Asia-mainly to China, India, and Pakistan. A recent report on this suggests that e-waste recycling has become a lucrative business. However toxic materials like lead, cadmium, mercury etc., make e-waste a health hazard.

#### **AGRICULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:**

The integration of agriculture with land and water management, and with ecosystem conservation is essential for both environmental sustainability and agricultural production. An environmental perspective must guide the evaluation of all development projects, recognizing the role of natural resources in local livelihoods. This recognition must be informed by a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions and opinions of local people about their stakes in the resource base.

To ensure the sustainability of the natural resource base, the recognition of all stakeholders in it and their roles in its protection and management is essential. There is need to establish well-defined and enforceable rights (including customary rights) and security of tenure, and to ensure equal access to land, water and other natural and biological resources. It should be ensured that this applies, in particular, to indigenous communities, women and other disadvantaged groups living in poverty. Water governance arrangements should protect ecosystems and preserve or restore the ecological integrity of all natural water bodies and their catchments. This will maintain the wide range of ecological services that healthy ecosystems provide and the livelihoods that depend upon them.

Biomass is, and will continue for a long time to be, a major source of fuel and energy, especially for the rural poor. Recognizing this fact, appropriate mechanisms must be evolved to make such consumption of biomass sustainable, through both resource management and the promotion of efficient and minimally polluting technologies, and technologies which will progressively reduce the pressures on biomass, which cause environmental degradation.

The traditional approaches to natural resource management such as sacred groves and ponds, water harvesting and management systems, etc., should be revived by creating institutional mechanisms which recapture the ecological wisdom and the spirit of community management inherent in those systems.

Considering environment as a global good, a unified production system, especially for food, may be worked out by addressing the dual objectives of maximizing food production with minimum damage to the environment. Given the broad patterns of natural resource endowment as well as the technology-environment interface for food production in the North and South, this could possibly be achieved by rearranging the world food production system where the North, by and large, specializes in production of water-intensive cereal crops whereas the South may specialize in production of water-saving crops mainly, oil seeds, dry land horticulture and livestock. But, this kind of reorganization of the food production system may not work owing to the fact that Southern countries may not have requisite purchasing power to pay for the cost of food imports at the price at which Northern countries would like to sell. On the other hand, Southern countries have serious reservations about being food-dependent, as it may have adverse political implications.

Another set of constraints emanate from the relative factor endowment in terms of labour and capital. Neither Northern economy have the requisite labour force to be employed for managing extensive farming nor, do countries in the South have adequate capital for enhancing the productive capacities of the depleted land and water resources. Thus, working out a world over. Nevertheless, it does indicate possible directions by which a unified system of food production could be explored. It is however, pertinent that attempts to explore avenues for sustainable agriculture must have a bearing on the contemporary debate regarding the role that trade liberalization could play in enhancing sustainable development for all, especially in the context of a large agrarian economy like India, should form an integral part of the policies for promoting agriculture growth, which is employment generating, spatially broad based, economically efficient and environmentally sustainable. Promoting agriculture

production in the North have a significant bearing on agricultural growth and thereby natural resource use in the South. The trade framework therefore, should address issues of natural resource sustainability on the one hand, and the livelihood of people depending on agriculture (as main user of natural resources) on the other. It is hoped that the analysis may help the exploring policy options for promoting sustainable agriculture in the context of the recent developments in trade liberalization and WTO-negotiation.

#### **HEALTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:**

Human health in its broadest sense of physical, mental and spiritual well-being is to a great extent dependent on the access of the citizen to a healthy environment. For a healthy, productive and fulfilling life every individual should have the physical and economic access to a balanced diet, safe drinking water, clean air, sanitation, environmental hygiene, primary health care and education.

Access to safe drinking water and a healthy environment should be a fundamental right of every citizen. Citizens of developing countries continue to be vulnerable to a double burden of diseases. Traditional diseases such as malaria and cholera, caused by unsafe drinking water and lack of environmental hygiene, have not yet been controlled. In addition, people are now falling prey to modern diseases such as cancer and AIDS, and stress-related disorders. Many of the widespread ailments among the poor in developing countries are occupation-related, and are contracted in the course of work done to fulfill the consumption demands of the affluent, both within the country and outside. The strong relationship between health and the state of the environment in developing countries is becoming increasingly evident. This calls for greater emphasis on preventive and social medicine, and on research in both occupational health and epidemiology. Because of the close link, there needs to be greater integration between the ministries of Health and environment, and effective coordination and cooperation between them. Basic health and educational facilities in developing countries need to be strengthened. The role of public health service must give preventive health care equal emphasis as curative care. People should be empowered through education and awareness to participate in managing preventive health care related to environmental sanitation and hygiene. Most developing countries are repositories of a rich tradition of natural resource-based health care. This is under threat, on the one hand from modern mainstream medicine, and on the other from the degradation of the natural resource base. Traditional medicine in combination with modern medicine must be promoted while ensuring conservation of the resource base and effective protection of IPRs of traditional knowledge.

Developing countries should also strive to strengthen the capacity of their health care systems to deliver basic health services and to reduce environment-related health risks by sharing of health awareness and medical expertise globally.

#### **SUGGESTION FOR STRENGTHENING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:**

1. Effective management of resources requires participation by all stakeholders. At the local level, strengthening democratic institutions generally leads to better and more sustained management of natural resources. To enhance effectiveness of people's participation in local governance, committees comprising both elected and executive members of local bodies and representatives of community groups, must be formed. Appropriate capacity building would enable them to undertake local development activities according to community priorities, monitor project implementation and manage community assets. Where the conditions for such community empowerment have already been created, as in India through the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments of its constitution, effective implementation of the provisions should be ensured.
2. All members of society are the stakeholders of sustainable development. Women make up half of this group. Affirmative action to ensure representation and power to women in local governance, and appropriate capacity building, are necessary to make them effective and equal partners in the

- 
- development process.
3. Social groups which have been traditionally discriminated must be represented in local governance and empowered to ensure that they become effective in mainstream partners in development.
  4. Children are a valuable asset of every society. It is the responsibility not only of the parents but of the community that children realize their potential fully, growing up in a healthy, enriching and fulfilling environment. Ensuring the provision of such an environment is a major challenge of governance at the local level.
  5. The occupational, cultural and economic heterogeneity of population is on the whole a major asset in making development sustainable; but there are times of crisis when the same heterogeneity can become the basis of conflict and social insecurity. It is imperative to evolve participatory mechanisms of governance involving citizen groups and local authorities which will provide effective means of conflict resolution.
  6. Sustainable development is achieved through optimizing gains from several variables, rather than maximizing those from a single one. This requires government departments, by convention organisation, to work together, or in some cases as a single multi-disciplinary authority. For this joint planning, transparency and coordination and implementation are required.
  7. The richness of skills available in society must be employed through partnerships involving institutions in civil society, such as NGOs, CBOs, corporate (including private) bodies, academic and research institutions, trade unions, etc., which must be made an integral part of planning and implementation for sustainable development.

#### CONCLUSION:

There is on the one hand a surfeit of laws, many of them outmoded and irrelevant. On the other hand, effective enforcement is lacking in respect of laws relevant to contemporary concerns and conducive to governance. This calls for a thorough review of laws, elimination of those which are outmoded, and simplification of the procedures for implementing those which are relevant. Internal reviews as well as learning's from international experience should be the basis of identifying and filling gaps in existing laws. It must, however, be recognized that laws in themselves do not provide solutions, unless there are mechanisms to effectively enforce them. There are many traditional systems and practices whose value and validity needs to be recognized and brought into the mainstream of governmental development thinking and policy. Appropriate mechanisms for integrating them need to be created.

There is both a need and a scope for regional and global cooperation in sustainable development. Some of the areas of common concern are marine and riparian issues, transboundary environmental impacts, and management of bioresources, technology sharing and sharing of sustainable development experiences. Efforts must be made, especially by developing countries, to work towards synergizing experiences and raising shared regional concerns as a strong united front in international forums. Mechanisms must be put in place to facilitate such international exchange of domestic and global experiences in sustainable development.

There must be mechanisms for monitoring the compliance of countries to their obligations under various environmental agreements. Currently there is a multiplicity of institutions with fragmented responsibilities. Many policies were framed either before sustainable development became a major concern or in a sectoral perspective. These need to be reviewed from the point of view of sustainable development. All future policies must be guided by considerations of sustainable development.

Areas lacking policies should be identified and adequate policies compatible with the imperatives of sustainable development framed, taking into account successful examples of policies and initiatives in similar areas. A better governance regime is required to ensure cooperation and compliance.

**REFERENCE:**

1. B.N. Goswami, V. Venugopal, D. Sengupta, M.S. Madhusoodanam., Increasing Trend of Extreme Rain Events Over India in a Warming Environment., Prince K. Xavier, *Science*, 314, 1442 (2006). (page 15)
2. Bolin, B. and Sukumar, R., Global perspective. In *Land use, Land use Change and Forestry* (eds Watson, R. T., Noble, I. R. and Bolin, B.), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000.
3. Bruce, J. P., Lee, H. and Hates, E. F., *Climate Change 1995: Economic and Social Dimensions of Climate Change, Contribution of Working Group III to the Second Assessment Report of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.
4. Bidwai Praful 2006, India: Sacrificing sovereignty, *Frontline*, February 16.
5. Chaudhury P.D., 2003, Rail and Road in Intercity Transport – Energy and Environmental Impact, *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 13
- Environmental Performance Measurement (EPM) Project (Yale University) and The Center for International Earth Science Information Network (Columbia University), 2005 Environmental Sustainability Index: Benchmarking National Environmental Stewardship, <http://www.yale.edu/esi/>
6. Ghosh S., Sustainable Energy Policies for Clean Air in India, CII, New Delhi.
7. Gundimeda H, 2005, Can CPRs Generate Carbon Credits without Hurting the Poor? *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 5,
8. Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF), GoI, Annual Report, 2004-
9. Mishra N, Chawla R, Srivastava L, Pachauri R K, 2005, Petroleum Pricing in India – Balancing efficiency and equity, The Energy and Resources Institute, New Delhi.
10. Planning Commission (GoI), 2005, Draft Report of the Expert Committee on Integrated Energy Policy, New Delhi, December.
11. Reddy A, 2002, In Support of a People’s Plan for Power Sector Reform, November 2-9, *The Economic and Political Weekly*.
12. Reddy S, Balachandra P, 2002, A Sustainable Energy Strategy for India Revisited, December 28, *The Economic and Political Weekly*, Mumbai.
13. Reddy A K N, 1999, Goals, Strategies and Policies for Rural Energy, December 4, *The Economic and Political Weekly*, Mumbai.
14. Shankar T L, 2002, Towards a People’s Plan for Power Sector Reform, October 5, *The Economic and Political Weekly*, Mumbai
15. Shiva V, 2004a, Super Highways – Lines on the palm or tattoos of dictatorship on the land, *Znet*, February 19.
16. Shiva V, 2004b, The impact of globalisation on India’s environment - *Global Ecology*, May 7.
17. Venkitaramanan S, 2002, Unemployment Problem: Bitter Remedies, July 22, *The Hindu Business Line*, Chennai.
18. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 1992 (UNFCCC), Geneva, Switzerland, United Nations Environment Program Information Unit on Climate Change, 1992.
19. Tenth Plan Document, Planning Commission, New Delhi, 2002.