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ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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✦ Abstract:

Sustainable development is not a new concept. It means living in harmony with the nature in full recognition of the needs of all other species. It is not just "the survival of the fittest", we must help even the weakest of the species to survive because each species has a role to play that is ultimately beneficial to the earth and all its human population. Our forefathers preached us the need to coexist with the environment in a balanced manner. The needs of the people in different parts of the world may be different, but our dependence on the Nature is similar. The most important thing is that we have only one Earth and if we destroy it by our actions, our children will not have a place to live.

Sustainable development represents an opportunity to construct a new approach, and the success of these efforts has powerful implications for issues of peace and security.

✦ Key words:

Environment, Sustainable development, Environment degradation, Global Environmental crisis etc.

✦ Introduction:

The term 'Sustainable development', in place of 'development' is now being increasingly used by scholars. It has become a major topic of discussion among all the social scientists, social organisations, statesmen and leaders. The industrial-technological and economic development registered by the humankind during the past 100 years has not proved to be a real development in so far as it has created imbalances in the environment as well as among nations.

Degradation of environment, resulting from unprincipled and excessive exploitation of the resources of our planet earth, has threatened to negate, and in fact has already adversely affected the development registered by various societies. Undoubtedly, industrial and infrastructural projects are means for development. In the past, the utility and feasibility of such projects used to be determined only in terms of economic gains.

Of late, however, with environment and human rights issues gaining currency, it is considered essential that such projects be formulated, planned and executed in such a way as may ensure the real and enduring socio-economic welfare of the people without doing any damage to the environment. Instead of thinking only in terms of GDP and GDP per capita, we have to think in terms of GDH—Gross Domestic Happiness.

Development should be secured without in any way harming the human rights of the people, particularly of those whose life is to be directly and physically affected by such projects.

The concept of sustainable development denotes this new positive approach. Sustainable development is now held to be an essential condition for securing stable, enduring, real and sustainable world peace, security and development.

✦ **Objective:**

1. To study the concept of Environment and Sustainable Development.
2. To study the importance of Environment and Sustainable Development.
3. To study the current status of Sustainable Development with reference to the Indian context.
4. To study the relation between Environment and Sustainable Development.

✦ **Research Methodology:**

The present study is of descriptive type. This research paper is mainly based on the secondary data. These data are collected from various books and websites. In order to fulfill constructed objectives of the study the secondary data has been assembled.

✦ **Environment Meaning:**

The 'environment' refers to the totality of resources and the total planetary inheritance we have received. It includes *biotic* (animals, plants, birds, etc.) and *abiotic* (sun, land, water, mountains, etc.) components. It explains the inter-relationship that exists between the abiotic and biotic components.



✦ **The Environment performs four crucial functions:**

1. **Supplying Resources:** The environment contains both renewable (air, water, land) and non-renewable (fossil fuels) resources. While the former are re-usable and do not get depleted soon, non-renewable resources come with the fear of depletion.
2. **Assimilating Waste:** Environment absorbs the waste generated by Economic activities through natural process.

3. **Sustenance of Life:** The environment comprises abiotic components that aid the living of biotic components. In the absence of elements such as air, water, land, etc. there would be no life on the planet.
4. **Aesthetic Value:** The environment adds aesthetic value to life. The mountains, oceans, seas, landmasses and other scenery of the environment enhance the quality of life.

✚ **Environmental Degradation:**

Economic activities such as production and consumption have led to environmental degradation over the last few years. This is recognizable from the fact that there is a certain carrying capacity of the environment. When the rate of extraction of resources exceeds the rate of their regeneration, the environment fails to perform its activities. The resulting phenomenon is called environmental degradation.

Resources are limited and therefore, their over utilization is leading to their extinction. The waste generated is also exceeding the absorptive capacity of the environment.

Let us understand more about Diversification into Productive Activities here in detail.



Rivers and other waterways are getting increasingly polluted due to the excessive dumping of wastes into them. This has led to poor water quality for consumption. The rate of use of non-renewable resources has not only depleted their limited reserves but also led to pollution tendencies.

The increasing emphasis is therefore on renewable sources or on devising other sources of generating energy. Different kinds of pollution have harmed the environment as well as man's well-being. Air and Water pollution particularly contribute to air and water-borne diseases and ill-health. Ozone layer depletion and global warming are other severe problems resulting from such degradation.

✚ **Global Environmental Crisis:**

Environmental degradation can be broken down into particular problems that plague the global community, as under.

❖ **Global Warming:**

It refers to the gradual increase in the lower atmosphere of the Earth. The main cause of global warming is recognized to be the release of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. These gases can absorb heat and thus, contribute to global warming. Other causes

are deforestation and burning of fossil fuels like coal and petroleum. Global warming has led to melting of polar ice caps and an average increase in temperatures all over.



❖ **Ozone Layer Depletion:**

It is the phenomenon of depletion in the amount of ozone in Earth's stratosphere. The main cause of ozone depletion is through the release of substances called chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) into the atmosphere. These are compounds include chlorine, bromine compounds that are used as cooling substances in air conditioners, refrigerators, etc.

Ozone layer depletion implies that the Earth gets more and more exposed to the ultraviolet rays of the sun. These rays are excessively harmful to human health and are known to cause skin cancer to human beings. They also affect the growth of aquatic and terrestrial plants.

✦ **Measures to Save the Environment:**

Concerted efforts are required to deal with the global environmental crisis. The concept of sustainable development, thereby, comes into play. Some of the measures that can be undertaken to control the crisis that already underway includes:

1. **Pollution Control:** Air, water, noise, soil are some of the major forms of pollution plaguing the environment today. Pollution control boards can be set up or regulatory standards must be enforced to keep pollution within lowest levels.
2. **Forest Conservation:** Increased industrialization has come at the cost of deforestation. The implication of forests being cut down is that the ecology is significantly affected. Afforestation measures need to be taken and forest conservation regulations must be seriously implemented.
3. **Social Awareness:** Until people are made aware of the graveness of the situation, the problem of environmental degradation cannot be dealt with. Creating awareness through campaigns and movements can help avert the problem of the ongoing environmental crisis.

4. **Waste Management:** Solid waste management must be carefully managed in urban areas. Rural waste has the potential of being used as natural manure by converting it into compost.
5. **Water Management:** Rainwater harvesting and conservation of water can help with the long-term potent problem of scarcity of water.
6. **Implementation of Policy Programmes:** Enactment of environment-centric acts and policies is not enough. Their effective implementation and careful observation are what will actually make a difference to environmental conservation efforts.

✦ **Sustainable Development Definition:**

Sustainable development is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The concept of needs goes beyond simply material needs and includes values, relationships, freedom to think, act, and participate, all amounting to sustainable living, morally, and spiritually.

✦ **Sustainable Development Meaning:**

The idea of environmental conservation gains real momentum if we are able to conserve resources and use them in a manner that they are sufficiently available for the coming generation as well. The **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)** defines this using the concept of **sustainable development**. It explains sustainable development as a process that provides for the present generation without compromising on the needs of the future generations.

Sustainable development has gained momentum as a larger movement over the years. We now associate it with improving living standards, poverty alleviation, nutritional improvements, minimizing social and cultural instability and resource depletion.

The Brundtland Commission lays emphasis on the idea of passing on an environment with enough and good-quality resources to the future generation, just as we have bequeathed from our previous generations.

✦ **What is Sustainable Development?**

The term ‘Sustainable’ stands for sustainability and it represents an approach to development which is concerned with such fundamental human concerns like poverty, environment, equality, democracy, development and peace. The link between development and peace is now realized.

Meeting the basic needs of poor communities holds the promise of eliminating many types of situations which favour the outbreak of violence and wars. Not development, but sustainable development alone can contribute to or benefit the process of conflict-resolution and to the need to check and prevent armed conflicts.

The 1992 Rio Declaration, presented at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, asserted in its Principle 25, that “Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible”. In other words, the idea of peace forms an integral part of the idea of sustainable development. Presently, these two concepts have come to be regarded as inseparable.

The term Sustainable Development was popularized in 1987 by the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development through the Brundtland Report. This report, which was entitled *Our Common Future*, produced the most widely accepted definition of Sustainable Development—"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

✦ **Evolution of Sustainable Development:**

- The 30-year journey of four World Summits from Stockholm to Nairobi to Rio and to Johannesburg has put the world on notice that achieving sustainable development in the twenty-first century is not an option but an imperative.
- The 1972 UN conference in Stockholm highlighted the concerns for preserving and enhancing the environment and its biodiversity to ensure human rights to a healthy and productive world. The developing countries argued that their priority was development, whereas the developed countries made a case for environmental protection and conservation as the prime issue.
- The 1982 Nairobi Summit reviewed the progress in the decade since the Stockholm Conference and called upon national governments to intensify efforts to protect the environment and stressed the need for international cooperation. However, the tensions between Western Governments and the Soviet Union marred progress and commitment toward a Nairobi action plan.
- In 1983 the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development was created and in 1987, the Commission issued the Brundtland Report. This report highlighted that equity, growth, and environmental maintenance are simultaneously possible and that each country is capable of achieving its full economic potential while at the same time enhancing its resource base. It emphasized three fundamental components to sustainable development: environmental protection, economic growth, and social equity.
- During the period 1972–92, over 200 regional and international agreements and conventions for environmental protection and conservation were adopted. However, most of these agreements were negotiated individually and treated as 'separate entities', with many lacking systemic integrations within the social, economic, and environmental framework of sustainable development.
- In 1992, the Earth Summit brought the world's governments to deliberate and negotiate an agenda for environment and development in the twenty-first century. At a parallel Global Forum, non-governmental organisations from around the world also discussed and deliberated strategies for sustainable development. While there was little formal interaction between these two meetings, the world's civil societies succeeded in having their voices noticed. It was an important step toward future dialog and active participation of civil society in sustainable development regimes from local to global levels.



- The Earth Summit unanimously adopted the Agenda 21, a comprehensive blue print of actions toward sustainable development, including detailed work plans, goals, responsibilities, and also estimates for funding. Other important accomplishments included the Rio Declaration, a statement of broad principles to guide national conduct on environmental protection and development, and adoption of treaties on climate change and biodiversity, and forest management principles.
- The first principle of the Rio Declaration states “human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development.” The declaration also highlighted the ‘polluter-pays-principle’ and the ‘precautionary principle’, as important considerations for the protection and conservation of nature.
- Whether addressing vulnerability to environmental change, responsibility for environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity, or policy priorities, careful consideration of the particular groups of people involved, and their social, economic, and environmental conditions, is essential. Focusing on people – their rights, capabilities, and opportunities – has multiple benefits for individuals, society, and their relationship with the environment.
- Agenda 21 pointed out that different populations had ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ for impacts on the environment. In Rio, the thinking was dominated by the goal of converging trends in different parts of the world. There was the clear hope that the developing countries would catch up, while the rich countries would become increasingly environmentally conscious and curb their excessive consumption and the related pollution and waste. This has not come to pass.
- Consumption *per se* is not something to be avoided since it is one important aspect of improving human well-being. Equally important is the recognition that the relationships between well-being, levels of consumption, and environmental impacts depend on the value systems, the effectiveness of institutions, including forms of governance, as well as science, technology and knowledge.
- The lack of progress in turning Agenda 21 into actions for sustainable development leads to the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on sustainable development. Johannesburg put the thrust on public-private partnerships for sustainable development through an endorsement of some 500 such partnerships but most of these agreements failed to be implemented.
- Prior to the Johannesburg Summit, in September 2000, political leaders from around the world took an unprecedented step of setting concrete 2015 targets for millennium development goals (MDGs) related to the priority challenges of sustainable development, namely, poverty, hunger, education, gender, health, environmental sustainability, and a global partnership for development. All these issues are interrelated; one cannot be solved without tackling the others. The



progress up to 2007 indicates that many of these MDGs are unlikely to be realized by 2015.

- The nations of the world at the Earth Summit failed to mobilize the financial resources for the implementation of Agenda 21, and the WSSD in Johannesburg failed to turn agenda into actions. The critical issues of education and human capital were also not on the WSSD agenda. The scientific and technological capacity is essential and educational and research institutions around the world have a fundamental responsibility to contribute to this.
- Education comprises a lifelong learning system to cope with the changing needs and aspirations of society. The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, starting in 2005, lays the foundation to reform and mobilize education at all levels, from schools to universities, in support of sustainable development.

✦ **The features of Sustainable Development:**

- A sustained rise in per capita income (PCI) worldwide.
- Relative dependence on renewable sources of energy to meet future generations need.
- Rational usage of resources.
- Pollution checks.
- Population control.

✦ **The Way Forward with Sustainable Development:**

- ❖ The planet must shift to renewable sources of energy as compared to the regular thermal or hydropower plants that lead to climatic degradation. Solar energy is an effective alternative that we can harness using photovoltaic cells. It is less costly and environmentally friendly.
- ❖ A shift to wind energy is also an option. Setting up windmills in areas with high-speed wind can help convert the natural resource into electricity for commercial or household usage. Another effective solution can come through the use of natural manure or bio-compost as a substitute for chemical fertilizers. This helps avert soil erosion and soil pollution. Subsidized LPG as a fuel in rural areas and CNG as a fuel for vehicles in urban areas could lead the way forward.
- ❖ The rest of the change can come majorly through increased awareness and consciousness. Only when the gravity of the situation and a moral responsibility towards forthcoming generations is realized can we pass on a healthy environment to them.

✦ **The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:**

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in September 2015 by the 193 member states of the United Nations (UN), including Canada. The SDGs cover environmental, social, and economic concerns and are to apply to all nations, large or small,

insular or landlocked, developed and developing countries can use the SDGs, targets, and indicators as a framework to guide their own policies and action plans. The SDGs have been recognized as a focus for the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) and included in the INTOSAI Strategic Plan 2017–2022 as one of five crosscutting priorities: Crosscutting priority: “Contributing to the follow-up and review of the SDGs within the context of each nation’s specific sustainable development efforts and SAIs’ individual mandates. This contribution is expected to develop and change over time as the SDG cycle advances.

✦ United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:



Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

✚ Sustainable Development in the Indian context:

- ❖ India has still go long way in implementing the concept of Sustainable Development to lay emphasis on framing a well-planned strategy for our development activity while increasing our economic growth.
- ❖ We have tremendous natural diversity as well as huge population which makes planning for sustainable growth.
- ❖ The National Council of Environmental Planning and Coordination (NCPC) set up in 1972 was the focal agency in this regard the ministry of Environmental & Forest, set up in 1985 has formulated guidelines for various development activities keeping in view the sustainability principles.

✚ Conclusion:

Exploring the relationship between the Environment and Sustainable Development has proved to be a complex, but rewarding. In examining the concept of Sustainable Development, it was concluded that the term could express more than a pious hope, but rather less than a rigorous analytical schema. Sustainable Development is a concept which draws on two frequently opposed intellectual traditions: one concerned with the limits which nature presents to human beings, the other with the potential for human material development which is locked up in nature. Unravelling and deconstructing this contradiction has been a principal focus of this study. Sustainable development, if it is not to be devoid of analytical content, means more than seeking a compromise between the natural environment and the pursuit of economic growth. It means a definition of development which recognizes that the limits of sustainability have structural as well as natural origins.

From India's point of view, Sustainable Development Goals require to bring collectively development and climate into a particular set of objectives.

Shepherding the accomplishments of the SDGs is an immense responsibility that challenges the responsibility of each sector and every level of society. The occurrences of the pilot nations demonstrate the possibilities for the program which could be created for India to formulate significant and permanent state-philanthropy organizations to obtain the prime minister's vision of "sabka saath, sabka vikas" (cooperative effort, inclusive growth).



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