

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN RIGHT: AN ISSUE

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**Abstract:** The history of sustainability traces human dominated ecological systems from the earliest civilizations to the ecological systems from the earliest civilization to the present. It is becoming apparent that climate change will have implications for the enjoyment of human rights. Technological advances over several millennia gave humans increasing control over the environment. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the industrial revolution had led to an exponential increase in the human consumption of resources. Late 20<sup>th</sup> century environmental problems were now becoming global awareness, through the work of climate scientists. Sustainable development is a pattern of resources uses that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for future generation. Sustainable development ties together concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems with the social challenges facing humanity. The effects of global warming and climate change are of concern both for the environment and human life. Climate change means that extreme weather events will become more frequent and more dangerous. The key to sound environment policy is respect for private property rights. The strict enforcement of property rights corrects environmental wrongs while increasing the cost of polluting. Its important to keep in mind that you don't have to live off the land or more to a cabin in the mountains to start helping the environment. We must have noticed how environmental issues are in discussion every where these days, not to be ignored. We can't continue to be conspicuous with our consumption habits and we have to understand what exactly means is and think about every single action that we take during our daily lives. This paper offers two perspectives i.e. sustainability of environment and human rights.

**Keywords:** Environment, human rights, sustainability

## I. INTRODUCTION

The need for sustainability has emerged with the rebirth of environmentalism. Until, 1972, environmentalism was confined to industrialized countries only and it was treated as a luxury by the developing countries [7]. With the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, this milestone was achieved. It was accepted in principle that world resources are sufficient to meet the long term human needs; however, the basic problem is the uneven spatial distribution of population relative to natural carrying capacities. This led to popularization of sustainable development as an environmental development concept in the late 80's [2].

Though the term sustainable development was first used in the world conservation strategy, however, this formulation emphasized on sustainability in ecological terms and was far less concerned about economic development. It argued for building three priorities in economic development, namely: maintenance of ecological balance, the sustainable use of resources and the maintenance of the sustainable use of resources and the maintenance of genetic diversity [4].

Healthy environment teaches us to green the ruined and fast dwindling portion of natural resources of the country which implies a potential and positive sign. The concept of 'Sustainable Development' was crystallized and popularized in the 1987 report of the UN World Commission on Environment and Development, which was also known as the Brundtland commission. The concept of sustainable development focused attention on finding strategies to promote economic and social development in ways that avoided environmental degradation, over-exploitation or pollution [1]. The Brundtland Commission on Environment and development defined sustainable development as development that

meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [3].

Environmental problems are not new. Human societies have long and major impact on their environment. Their tendency to exploit it as if it were an inexhaustible resource has repeatedly led to disaster, sometimes leading to the loss of entire human communities. However, over much of human history, the environmental impacts of over exploitation or pollution have typically been quite local [3].

However, widespread industrialization and rapid population growth changed this situation. Severe environmental damage and unsustainable exploitation occurred over the whole regions of the world. By the late twentieth century, the impacts had become truly global [9]. By the twenty-first century, environmental issues had been high on the international agenda for a whole generation of political leaders, government officials, scientists, industrialist and concerned citizens. Since the late 1960's, awareness of the risks and implications of a wide range of international environmental problems has increased greatly and justifiably [6].

Civilization from the time immemorial has respected environment as an essential base for human survival. The cultural and social practices developed as customs have imbibed in man, the reverence for nature and environment. As the lifestyles changed due to cultural confluence and ever expanding economic activities, especially globalization, the environment is being put under heavy pressure. Concerns over deteriorating environment and people's claim for better quality of life have assumed primary importance in recent years. The Stockholm conference of 1972 is the beginning of concerted efforts to protect environment globally for sustainable development and perpetuation of human race. An acceptable environment constitutes a precondition for the enjoyment of certain human rights [7].

Human rights, an ecologically sound environment, sustainable development and peace are interdependent and indivisible. All persons have the right to secure, healthy and ecologically sound environment. The living creatures of the world and surrounding environment impact one another through numerous activities and phenomena. While environment and climate changes in the nature greatly influence the overall activities and performance of living beings, the living beings themselves engage in certain activities and process that impact not only the

other living beings but also the overall environment is also get impacted [5].

The conference, which was held in Stockholm, marked a turning point in the development of international environmental politics. By the year 2000, there were over 130 multilateral environmental agreements and hundreds of bilateral ones [13]. Some of these have been 'dead letters' while others were symbolic and weak. Nevertheless, numerous environmental regimes have been really effective, in that they have changed behavior in line with their aims and have at least helped to tackle the problems for which they were established [14]. The Montreal Protocol for the protection of the ozone layer is a prime example. Under these circumstances, these circumstances, the Environment Summit in Copenhagen has opened with participation of 192 nations in order to establish a new legally binding framework. The decisions to be adopted and the implementation are of vital importance for avoiding new environmental problems and were associated with scarce resources [8]. The organic and inorganic components of nature are bound together by such mutual relations and adaptations as to secure a long continuance of the established conditions of each at any given time and place or at least a very slow and gradual succession of changes in these conditions. But due to hostile influence man is everywhere to disturb this balanced position. Since, the dawn of civilization man has disturbed the balanced nature of environment through indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources and other activities meant for development and consumption.

The idea of equilibrium is prominent for natural resource management and is closely connected with the idea of self-regulation. Many ecological processes are self-regulating and are truly at equilibrium, then a compensatory change results to move the system back to its equilibrium state. Resource managers need scientific information to base their decisions on conservation [8]. While conserving biological, that is, living, natural resources such as wild plants and animals, decisions have to be made about their use, management or preservation in order to be made about their use, management or preservation in order to prevent their depletion and extinction and to ensure their continuance in the future.

But over-exploitation of living renewable resources and natural resources created a deplorable position requiring adoption of strategies for more rational management of wild flora and fauna. For this purpose conservationist in the disciplines of wild life

management, forestry and range management adopted a utilization and sustainable approach.

### **I. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY CHALLENGES OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM**

Environment is the source of life on earth and it not only directs but also determines the existence, growth and development of mankind and all its activities [16]. Starting in the 1960's from developed countries, the concern for environmental degradation extended to the less developed countries by the 1980's. Even though there is a consensus today on the need for mitigating environmental damage, there are differences in the most pressing issues of developed and developing countries. While pollution is a perceived threat in most industrialized countries, the developing world suffers from both pollution and degradation of natural resources [10].

A major challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not the creation of wealth, but the management of health. Concern over the rapid depletion and degradation of the world's biological resources and the implications of this loss on the global biosphere and human welfare have been mounting in recent years [12]. Loss and modification of ecosystems and habitats are occurring at an alarming rate, although it is much difficult to quantify or estimate on a global scale. The continuing loss of the biological wealth may leave us with a smaller and less varied stock of global biological resources. The result may leave the human livelihood and the future of the biosphere at risk.

Development efforts along with modern warfare have created uneasy and irreparable environmental consequences, the world over. Human life and ill health raise questions on the developmental efforts in the pursuit of global prosperity and wealth. Achievement of sustainable and equitable development therefore remains the greatest challenge facing the mankind. Despite good progress made over the past few decades, our failure to remove inequitable access to the resources remains the area of concern.

The major reason for differences in environmental problems of developed and developing countries arises from the fact that while the nature of pollution varies with rise in income, few forms of environmental degradation tend to remain constant with economic growth. Environmental quality in itself forms a part of improvement of welfare that the development aims at bringing [15]. Therefore, if the environment quality is deteriorated due to development, it will not lead to improvement of

welfare. The environmental damage can undermine future productivity. The excessive exploitation of natural resources to increase today's income will jeopardize the prospects for earning income tomorrow [18].

It has become clear that most of the world's seas and oceans are over-fished. Soil is being degraded and eroded on a large scale throughout the world. Natural habitats are being destroyed. The area of Tropical rainforest has reduced by over 50% since 1950 and the process continues largely unabated. As a result, tens of thousands of species of plants and animals are probably becoming extinct each year. Huge quantities of waste, including hazardous chemical, heavy metals and radioactive materials, have been dumped at sea, either directly or carried by rivers. Billions of people suffer daily air pollution. Acid rain, stratospheric ozone depletion and climate change are major regional or global problems arising from atmospheric pollution [11].

### **II. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- *Development of refined technology:* Many industrial and transport technologies are highly polluting in their nature. Economic assistance for development of pollution free or low pollution technologies are therefore, essential.
- *Decentralization of Industrial Activities:* concentration of industries in limited areas and thickly populated areas make the pollution problem more serious. The nature of environment is capable of cleaning itself to a certain extent. So the concentration of industries should not be beyond this extent.
- *Restructuring Tastes and Preferences:* life styles and preferences should be changed to restructure the consumption pattern so that the use of goods and services, whose production causes serious environmental problems, is reduced as far as possible.
- *Population Control:* Increase in population necessitates large scale production and consumption and pollution is a bi-product of production and consumption activities. Hence, it is necessary to control population to combat pollution.
- Nursing the free gifts of nature means the development of habits among the people to protect, preserve the abundance and diversity of resources of nature. Land, water, air, forest,

mines, etc., are treated as free gift of nature and their thoughtless exploitation should be stopped.

- Valuable properties of nature not to be exploited recklessly.
- Increased and uncontrolled deforestation, excessive use of toxic products and plundering of renewable natural resources, a crime against environment.
- In developing countries like India, the over use and production of pesticides, chemical and fertilizers have created a havoc in the domain of eco-system. Many of the illiterate farmers use them without adequate information on the use of the same which causes a severe damage to both men and materials of environment. The use of unlimited and enhanced quantity of fertilizers and pesticides spoils the layers of soil and its fertility.
- Nuclear risk is an international danger especially putting tensions on those countries whose neighbours have the nuclear capacity either for peaceful purpose with appropriate precautions or for warfare which precisely does the same thing at a much large scale with indiscriminate destruction on balance.
- To create environmental awareness among the people is one of the important measures to protect it from decay and degradation. For preservation and up keeping of pollution control measures, we have to start educational and literacy drive for the people to develop consciousness as to why conservation of environment is necessitated. For injecting the sense of awareness among the people the organization of seminars, conferences, and symposia, etc. is indispensable to provide literature on it and making use of vast mass media in various spheres of environment.
- Environmental sanitation is an important aspect of ecological balance. In a developing country people are not so conscious and literate about environment sanitation and so it is advisable to educate people not to throw any kind of refuse, dust, dirt and other waste inadvertently and indiscriminately all over. They must be motivated to put them into the dustbins or maddens.
- There are various kinds of pollution which demands the health and hygienic status of environment. Some are in gaseous form, smoke from automobiles and noise which cause diseases.

- The 1972 UN conference on the Human Environment was organized in response to the dramatic issues in the international environmental concern in the 1960's. The aim was to establish an international framework to promote a more co-ordinate approach to pollution and other environmental problems.
- Environmental catastrophe transcends all barriers of nationhood. The need of the hour is the protection of the human race for its survival and perpetuation. The goals of environmental protection are to be pursued in harmony with the established and fundamental goals of peace and of global social and economic development.
- To achieve the environmental goal will demand the acceptance of responsibility by citizens and communities and by enterprise and institutions at every level to shape the world environment of the future. Local and national governments need to bear the greatest burden for large scale environmental policy and actions within their respective jurisdictions. International co-operation is essential in order to raise resources to support the developing countries carrying out their responsibilities in this field. Environmental justice may provide lasting solutions to all aspects of environment-related problems of human life. Environmental justice could be achieved with the state, the judiciary and the people acting in co-ordination with each other and have commitment to the desired objective.

The problems of environmental protection are far more complex in the developing countries than those in the developed countries. Government not only have the onerous responsibility of regulating the activities of the private sector to inculcate good environmental behavior, but they also need to ensure that their own actions do not lead to environmental resource degradation. The first two letters EN-emphasizes the basic significance of the good quality of environment, the next five letters VIRON- denote the main causes of suffocation of polluted environment and the last four letters MENT-represent the compendium of policy recommendations to keep eco-system more balanced and healthy. In the twenty-first century one of the major tasks would be to bring change in the human psyche so that they conform to the ideals, attitude and actions which are environmental friendly.

The environmental policy formulation has to be guided by the factors like participative management of natural resources. Experience has shown that local participation has shown high economic and environmental returns in implementing programs of a

forestation, soil management, park protection, water management, sanitation, and drainage and flood control. Unfortunately, despite the interest in public participation, there remains a poor understanding of what it actually accomplishes and what contributes to its success. This leaves policy-makers and agency personnel with little information in designing effective participatory programs or improving those currently underway. This area, therefore, deserves further research in the developing countries.

In sum, it is not out of context to say that our society is living on a sword's edge. Any further disturbance in eco-dynamics may be hazardous and infinite. Efforts initiated by the Government, NGO'S and the public at different levels deserve praise. But, more debates, discussions, speeches and observations of 'environmental days' are not going to improve the quality of the environment. With the modernization pervading almost all aspects of our social life we are not becoming responsible, enlightened and awakened. Our duties towards the nature are still from being nature-friendly. Let us all work together for better future and make the Earth a better place for living.

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