AGENDA 2030: INDIA'S MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT

"This is an Agenda of unprecedented scope and significance" as per the fifth point in the declaration of Agenda 2030 towards Sustainable Development. Sustainability as a means of living is a dire need today. While necessary measures are being taken at international level forums like the United Nations, India has stepped up its game in incorporating the western ideas of sustainable development in its existing heritage of sustainable and nature - friendly living. The elimination of open defecation through "Swatch Bharat Abhiyaan" has contributed significantly to the achievement of Goal 6 in this area. The widespread use of LPG for residential purposes and the oversupply of electrical connections can be ascribed with the improvement in goal 7. The increase in mobile and internet availability, as well as the improvement in rural road coverage, are significantly responsible for the advancements made in goal 9.

This study explores the 'problem of want' in India – a hub of scarce resources and extensively increasing population. The study also delves deeper into a plethora of aspects within the issue of sustainability, inclusive of the 17 SDGs in the Indian contexts. Apart from analysis of the policies adopted and introduced in India parallelly to the international laws, the study expresses the need for better implementation of the said policies. The study resurfaces that the definitions of the Sustainable Development Goals must be improved in order to focus its scope and take a targeted approach to its efficient implementation.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, SDGs, equitable distribution of resources, SGDI index, gender equality, international index of equality.

INTRODUCTION

This 2030 global agenda is based on the global concept of "Leave No One Behind." Every individual, all over, must be a part of development in all its forms, and involvement from everyone, especially the most alienated and vulnerable, is essential. This holistic agenda acknowledges that more is needed to focus on economic growth rather than creating fairer, more equal communities and a safer, healthier planet. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an appropriate framework that highlights the difficulties in achieving a sustainable future and arranges both individual and group answers. Agenda 2030, calls for a collective action towards ensuring sustainable development. According to its preamble, "This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet, and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom" It is pertinent that change is the need of the hour. We as vigilant citizens need to make sure that the change starts at ground level, from us, our small worlds and transcending to bigger worlds like our society, community, region, state and finally our nation. Micro-level tasking must be adopted in order to tackle the environmental problems we are facing. Sustainability refers to achieving our goals without affecting the capacity of coming generations to fulfil their ambitions. We require financial and social assets in combination with the earth's resources. Environmentalism is only one aspect of sustainability. Most conceptions of sustainability also include considerations for revenue generation and social justice. If nature does not discriminate in providing resources, who are we to create differences amongst ourselves?

India, where a sixth of humanity resides, is aware of its responsibilities and role in promoting the sustainability of the earth and all life on it. Moreover, India has a crucial role in deciding the worldwide success of the Sustainable Development Goals. The responsibility for organizing the SDGs, mapping initiatives linked to the SDGs and their targets, and designating lead and supporting ministries for each target has been given to NITI Aayog, the top-thinking organization of the Indian government. Additionally, negotiations for creating national SDG indicators have been led by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). As they are best equipped to "put people first" and to guarantee that "no one is left behind," state governments are essential to India's success on the SDGs. The NITI Aayog, Union Ministries, and state governments are supported by the United Nations delegation in India in its attempts to address the interrelationships of the goals, to make sure that no one is left behind, and to promote adequate resources in achieving them.

Methodology

In this study, both the descriptive and analytical approaches are applied. In this study, both primary and secondary data were utilised. The secondary data were gathered from a variety of sources, including books, articles, journals, websites, and research reports

INDIA'S SUSTAINABLE LEGACY

Coexistence with nature has been an important part of India's ancient culture and traditions, while the contemporary idea of sustainability is fairly modern, India has had a rich heritage in sustainable living and eco-friendly lifestyle. This is clear from the diverse religious, cultural, and traditional practices, ceremonies, works of art and sculpture, and folklore that are still present in various forms in Indians' mundane lives. It is fascinating how the people of the Vedic era viewed nature and the environment comprehensively and venerated each of its elements and beings by taking great care of safeguarding them.

"mātā bhūmih putruahan pṛthivyā:'', according to Atharva Veda, Prithvi Sukta, shlok no. 12 which translates to "Do not harm the environment, do not harm the water and the flora, earth is my mother, I am her son, may the waters remain fresh, do not harm the waters…. Tranquillity be to the atmosphere, to the waters, to the crops and vegetation"

Indian Literature has numerous evidences of management, protection, and preservation of environment.

I.   Agriculture and Farming Techniques

Farmers were held in high regard and agriculture was regarded as a spiritual profession in ancient India. Crop rotation and organic fertilisers like cow dung were some of the environmentally advantageous methods used. Through these methods, the land was preserved as fertile and profitable for many years. Naturally sustainable methods of farming were devised in order to ensure full use of the potential of the land.

Today, farmland and crops are severely affected to excessive use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides which have in turn resulted in barren lands and poisonous produce.

II.   Forest Conservation

Chipko movement is one of the oldest examples of India being a forest friendly nation. India's rich biodiversity and flora and fauna are evidence to the lengths to which India has preserved

its environment and surroundings.

III.   Waste Management

Since Indus Valley Civilization, city waste management and waste disposal has been a top tier priority when it comes to civilization planning and town planning. Nothing was considered waste; kitchen waste was used as manure and fertilizers. Natural sources of fuel existed by using cow dung and firewood.

India and SDGs

The document named "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated goals, was adopted by the UN General Assembly at its 70th session on September 25, 2015. The Indian government has taken the lead in defining the agenda's parameters and is dedicated to achieving these objectives within a specific time frame. The SDGs are the most comprehensive list of global goals integrating the social, economic, and environmental components of development. They aim to address not just the underlying causes of poverty but also the universal need for development to give a life of dignity to everyone. Countries are primarily responsible for monitoring and reviewing the results of the goals and targets that will be implemented over the next 15 years at the national, subnational, and lower levels. Although not legally binding, the SDGs have nonetheless established themselves as international commitments and will change the priorities of domestic spending over the next fifteen years.

The achievement of the SDGs will depend on how each country implements its own sustainable development policies, plans, and activities. Additionally, there is an unprecedented need for information on national and sub-national statistical systems due to the complexity of the SDGs.

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)

The creation of the National Indicator Framework (NIF) for tracking the accomplishment of the SDGs and related targets is the responsibility of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). Additionally, MoSPI is working to provide guidelines and resources so that State governments and UTs can monitor the SDGs at the state and smaller scales.

NITI Aayog

NITI Aayog, the think tank of India's policy making department has taken cognizance over

performance of Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STEPS TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT of INDIA TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE ABOVE-MENTIONED GOALS

GOAL 6 –

CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Due to a lack of access to restrooms, about 568 million individuals in India endured the humiliation of urinating in public areas prior to 2014 (UNICEF). The poorest citizens, who could not afford toilets and water hook-ups for their homes, tended to engage in these practises more frequently.

Furthermore, it was considered filthy and unhygienic to build toilets inside of homes. According to the 2013–14 Rapid Survey on Children, 22% of Indian schools lacked restrooms for female students. In addition, according to UNICEF, 54% of preschools lacked on-site restrooms and water sources. Access to properly managed drinking water is unavailable to more than half of the population. In 2015, 19.7% of urban families and 63.3% of rural households in India lacked access to sanitation facilities.

The overall situation has significantly improved and appears to be looking up since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) along with nation-wide initiatives on water sanitation and hygiene (WASH). UNICEF highlights Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), one of India's ambitious programmes that helped the nation get closer to attaining SDG 6. To ensure that everyone had access to sanitation, it led to the installation of approximately 100 million household toilets in 630,000 villages. It assisted in lowering the overall number of sick days, preventing soil and water contamination, and creating almost 7.5 million employments as part of the initiative.

GOAL 7 –

AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

It is commendable that India is in line with Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7). Through investments in green hydrogen, sustainable energy transitions, and a bio-economy, it has made modern, inexpensive energy available to everyone. India has been making efforts to combat climate change as a leader in sustainable economic strategies for emerging markets. SDG 7

offers optimism for India's energy sector with goals of reaching net zero emissions by 2070 and supplying 50% of its electricity demand through renewable sources by 2030.

SDG 7 offers a solid basis for sustainability and promotes infrastructure growth and technological advancements. Policymakers have demonstrated how SDG 7 inspires hope for India's energy sector by adopting renewable energy sources that lessen climate impact on a global scale.

GOAL 8 –

DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

The route to achieving SDG objective 8 — Decent Work and Economic Growth for All — has begun in India.

The fundamental tenet of initiatives like Make in India, Startup India, Skill India, and Digital India is to provide job possibilities for the nation's youth. The government is placing a lot of focus on fostering an atmosphere that is favourable to commerce and business. The World Bank's 2016–17 report on the ease of doing business1 mirrored this. According to the report, starting a firm today just requires 29 days. All of these activities show how devoted the nation is to achieving the goals set and how it is using a two-pronged strategy of employment and growth to do so.

India must concentrate on two areas in order to achieve the highlighted objectives: Urbanization and Manufacturing. Innovation is also essential to everything, particularly innovation in our educational system.

GOAL 9 –

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

A thriving economy with increasing employment, solid partnerships, and access to a broader variety of goods depends on the commerce sector. Infrastructure for commerce and transport has not gotten any better. It has held stable at a 2.91 out of 5 rating. The manufacturing sector has neither increased or changed at all. Additionally, this particular sector has the potential to promote economic growth. These factors can be seen in India's industrial growth rate, which fell by 0.8% between 2016 and 2019. The idea of sustainability is at odds with the amount of hazardous waste and water waste produced by India's industry as a whole. Additionally, in

order to achieve SDG Goal 9 in India, the business sector has been streamlined to promote expansion and new ventures. To raise its ranking in the Ease of Doing Business index published by the World Bank, the nation has implemented business reform. As a result, in comparison to 2015's 142nd world ranking, it was rated 63rd in 2019. The creation and design of products has also greatly increased. From 2015 to 2019, the quantity of design patents doubled. This is a sign of impending industry expansion.

GOAL 10 –

REDUCED INEQUALITIES

The concept of a society where everyone benefits from economic prosperity is presented by SDG 10. India has seen one of the world's quickest growths in recent years. The nature of economic growth, however, can occasionally increase inequality. Therefore, despite its high development rate, India may find it difficult to fulfil its goal of reducing inequality. India, a huge and diversified nation where inequality manifests in many different ways, confronts a greater difficulty in achieving SDG 10. By gender, religion, caste, and geography, there exist disparities in income and access to opportunities in India. However, five indicators under SDG objectives 10.1, 10.2, and 10.4 have been identified based on data availability to assess India's performance towards SDG 10. Three states are categorised as achievers, 20 states are front runners, and 2 states are aspirants based on the SDG index score for reduced disparities among 29 states. India has made progress towards attaining objective 10, but there is still a long way to go before top 10% and bottom 40% of households in both urban and rural areas are equally represented. Equal access to opportunities for women, people of colour, and transgender people must still be ensured. India would need to develop a more detailed state-specific strategy to achieve equitable opportunity for all by the year 2030.

GOAL 11 –

SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

The SDG 11 is particularly important in the context of India. The consequences of outdated and narrow-minded urban and regional planning are highlighted by the fact that Mumbai is home to one of the largest urban slums in the world at Dharavi, Delhi leads the pack in the deterioration of air quality, Chennai experienced recent unseasonal flooding, and Bangladeshi immigrants have recently been persecuted in West Bengal and Assam through political propaganda. People with less resources and income pay the price for such oversight, which

highlights the inequality in our society. Poverty, hunger, brutality against women and children, and political unrest are all consequences of this injustice. In order to give urban residents a secure and conducive environment for work, SDG 11 has carefully considered facilities and public areas.

GOAL 12 –

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Resource use is covered by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 as specified by the UN. India, the fourth-largest emitter of greenhouse gases, has created a number of sustainable consumption and production strategies that are given top priority. India is committed to cutting its emissions by one-fourth. The SDG development made by India is respectable but not satisfactory. According to figures from 2015, India's average lifestyle material footprint is about 8,400 kilogrammes per person per year, which is relatively acceptable when compared to the sustainable material footprint of 8,000 kilogrammes per person per year.

GOAL 13 –

CLIMATE ACTION

India produces 6.9% of the world's emissions of carbon dioxide, ranking third among all emitters. However, between 2005 and 2010, India's GDP's emissions intensity decreased by 12%. India pledged in October 2015 to cut its GDP's emissions intensity by 20–25 percent from 2005 levels by 2020 and by 33–35 percent by 2030. India finally ratified the historic Paris Agreement on October 2, 2016. India has pledged to cut its GDP's emissions intensity by 20 to 25 percent by 2020. In order to tackle this problem head-on, the Indian government has also developed a National Action Plan on Climate Change and a National Mission for Green India.

GOAL 14 –

LIFE BELOW WATER

According to India's Fifth National Report to the Convention of Biological Diversity (2014), the country has a 7,517 km long coastline that supports and gives over 250 million people a source of income. India is the world's second-largest grower of fish. The Sagarmala Project, often referred to as the Blue Revolution by the Indian government, aims to enhance the condition of India's ports and coastlines. The government has launched a National Plan for the

Conservation of Aquatic habitats in an effort to protect marine habitats. India places a lot of emphasis on protecting the marine and coastal biosphere.

GOAL 15 –

LIFE ON LAND

currently, 21% of India's land area is covered by forests, and 5% of that is made up of protected areas. India is one of the world's 17 mega-biodiverse nations. Despite occupying only 2.4% of the planet's surface, it is home to 7-8% of all known species. India is dedicated to attaining the Aichi goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity and is also an active participant in the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol because the country is home to about 8% of the world's biodiversity, which includes numerous species that are found nowhere else in the world. The main initiatives for the preservation of terrestrial ecosystems in India are the National Afforestation Programme and a national programme on the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats. Two distinct programmes, Project Tiger and Project Elephant, are being implemented to preserve two of the nation's most spectacular animal species.

GOAL 16 –

PEACE JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Promoting just, tranquil, and inclusive societies is the goal of SDG 16. All other SDGs can only be accomplished if societies around the world and in every nation live in harmony, are free from violence and terror, and feel comfortable going about their daily lives regardless of their race and religion. SDG 16 calls on governments, civil society organisations, and local communities to collaborate and put policies into place that would lessen violence, uphold the rule of law, combat corruption, and ensure the full participation of all parties in the process. When compared to other States and Union Territories in India, Tamil Nadu had the seventh-highest rate of offences that could be prosecuted under the IPC. Nevertheless, according to the National Crime Records Bureau, the rate of violent crime in 2016 was less than half of the national average.

GOAL 17 –

PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS

India's efforts to create networks both within the region and with the rest of the globe have

made it a significant player in this new global alliance. A key component of this has been South-South collaboration, as well as India's participation and leadership in organisations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, BRICS and its New Development Bank, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, and UN agencies and projects around the world.

INDIA'S G20 PRESIDENCY AND ITS ISSUE OF SUSTAINABILITY

India, which currently holds the presidency for G20 was thoroughly appreciated by The United Nations for highlighting key sustainable development goals and shed light on its effective implementation. In the words of UN Resident Coordinator to India Mr. Shombi Sharp, "In fact, India's G-20 Presidency has become SDG-20 Presidency as India is raising strong voice to close financial gaps"

Sharp further mentions that India will receive full support and guidance from The United Nations in its endeavour to reach net zero emissions by 2070 through a Green Transition.

Some key highlights are women empowerment through inclusion in governance, provision of clean and healthy environment, providing affordable, basic healthcare facilities, housing, insurance, and scholarships as well.

In totality, India's G20 presidency has acted as a catalyst in India edging towards sustainability.

CONCLUSION

There still lies loopholes in reaching the set discourse towards sustainability. Sanitation and accessibility to free or subsidised healthcare are the need of the hour.

Although digitization of rural India is being done at a massive level, yet there are remote areas where electricity is a luxury. Affordability along with accessibility is important in order to meet these resource gaps.

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