

Climate Change 2019: Sustainable Development & Environmental Issues in India: Some Challenges- Jagbir Singh - University of Delhi, India

Jagbir Singh

University of Delhi, India

Sustainable Development & Environmental Issues in India | RBI Grade-B Main Achieving economic development is crucial for any country. But is it worth it if it comes at the cost of environmental degradation? We were made aware of the ill-effects of environmental degradation in our high schools. But what about the economic implications of such issues? Or the benefit that sustainable development can offer to any economy?

This article will break down the meaning & function of 'environment', the various environmental issues & concerns India is facing at the moment; and assess the alternative that sustainable development offers.

Environment: Meaning & Function

The term 'environment' refers to the natural setting in which we live, which is bestowed to us by our ancestors. It encompasses the interaction between biotic (the living components, including plants, animals, birds, etc.) and abiotic components (land, air, water, etc.) that co-exist to form this natural-setting.

The four major functions served by the environment are: supply of resources, sustenance of life, providing aesthetic value, and assimilation of waste generated by various production & consumption activities.

Environmental Issues in India

In India, factors like rapid growth of population, urbanization, industrialization, and poverty, among others are responsible for harming the environment. Some of the severe environmental issues prevalent in India are

- Degrading Air Quality Index
- Rampant Environmental Degradation
- Loss of Biodiversity
- Urbanization in the Himalayas
- Loss of Resilience in Ecosystems
- Lack of Waste Management
- Depletion of Resources (land, air, water)

Growing Water Scarcity The main challenges to sustainable development which are global in character include poverty and exclusion, unemployment, climate change, conflict and humanitarian aid, building peaceful and inclusive societies, building strong institutions of governance, and supporting the rule of law. Any country's environmental problems are related to the level of its economic development, the availability of natural resources and the lifestyle of its population.

In India, rapid growth of population, poverty, urbanization, industrialization and several related factors are responsible for the rapid degradation of the environment. There are many environmental issues in India. Air pollution, water pollution, garbage, and pollution of the natural environment are all challenges for India. Environmental problems have become serious in many parts of the country, and hence cannot be ignored.

The main environmental problems in India relate to air and water pollution particularly in metropolitan cities and industrial zones, degradation of common property resources which affect the poor adversely as they depend on them for their livelihood, threat to biodiversity and inadequate system of solid waste disposal and sanitation with consequent adverse impact on health, infant mortality and birth rate. In India, efforts are being made on for the environmental management in a sustainable manner. At all levels of education provisions have been made for the knowledge of environment and its conservation. In the country many centers are providing special training for environmental management.

The programmes of environmental awareness have been launched through media. India is an active member of International Organizations concerning environment. The Government has recently started emphasizing the combined use of regulatory and economic instruments for improving environmental quality. India makes up 2.4 percent of the world's land, while supporting 16 percent of the world's population.

The compounding result is a severely unsustainable use of natural resources for several generations. Currently, India is experiencing rapid and widespread environmental degradation at alarming rates. Tremendous pressure is placed upon the country's land and natural resources to support the massive overpopulation. Mismanagement and overuse of India's once abundant forests has resulted in desertification, contamination, and soil depletion throughout the sub-continent.

This has serious repercussions for the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of Indians that live off the land. There is a need for coordination between government agencies, NGOs and the public for the proper management of environment quality and to achieve sustainable development in the country.