

# Sustainable Development: Indian Perspective and Global Paradigm

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## Abstract

The world today faces the greatest ecological dangers of all circumstances comprising of climate change, realized specifically by methods for industrialization, urbanization, current consumerist ways of life and unsustainable examples of improvement. The venture is to retain with development while maintaining the surroundings. Equitable access to the basic resources is an ingredient of the right to development. Undoubtedly, people have the right to development. However, the process of development should not affect the potentiality of natural resources, but should rather be sustainable development. There is a need to achieve a noteworthy progress whereby this age and all the more imperatively; ages yet to come do not experience the ill effects of the evil impacts of the present improvement which is plainly not sustainable. If we degrade and damage the natural assets of the earth, we would not be able to derive the services that these resources provide for living, both for human and other species. Sustainable development can be seen as one of the key issue in every society right from the state up to the international level. The idea of an environmentally sustainable growth is not new. It has been prevalent in many cultures over the course of human history. The term 'sustainable development' not only implies environment protection but it also covers all aspects of human development and promoting their personal well-being. Therefore, the goal is to achieve harmony between environment sustainability, economic sustainability and socio-political sustainability both nationally and internationally.

## Key Words

Sustainable development, principles, corporate social responsibility, national and international paradigm, goals.

## 1. Introduction

Sustainable development has become a buzzword in the world today amongst environmentalists, politicians, in media and among elite masses. The term "sustainable development" first appeared in the WCED's report "Our Common Future" (also known as the Brundtland Report) in 1987 as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own

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needs". To be sustainable, development must possess both economical and ecological sustainability. It indicates the way in which developmental planning should be approached.<sup>1</sup>

As the human population is exploding, resources are shrinking. Concerns loom everywhere, from declining pollinators affecting food security, to air and water pollution affecting the quality of life, and land shortage and degradation affecting both agriculture and biodiversity. These are just some examples of the results of unsustainability. This is an important moment to find solutions for sustainable living, in harmony with Mother Earth.

India is home to one-sixth of the world's people and it has the densest population. It also has the second-largest population after China, which it will surpass in less than a decade if current trends continue. India is a country full of diversity and contradictions. While per-capita emissions are amongst the lowest in the world, it is also the third biggest generator of emissions. Despite being the third largest economy in the world, India also has the largest number of people living below the international poverty line. Because of this sheer size and rapid growth, sustainability is a challenge. In spite of these challenges, India is a conscious aspirant. It has shown leadership in combating climate change and meeting the Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs), as is reflected in many of its developmental schemes. As the fastest growing economy, India is undergoing the dilemma of sustainable development too. India's immediate priority is to provide livelihoods and employment to its population besides creating sustainable economic opportunities at both- micro & macro – levels to keep its promises to take the GDP growth of the country to an ambitious double-digit target of 10 percent.<sup>2</sup> India has to provide houses to millions, ensure food & nutritional security, and make health services accessible & affordable. For the sustainable inclusive growth, jobs have to be created. In order to tackle its developmental challenges, and to push the economic growth further, India, apart from conventional development programs, plans to set up smart cities, construction of roads, railways, and other large infrastructure projects.

## 2. Principles of Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development has come to stay and is growing both in the national and international field according to the economic and developmental needs. As the problem of environment is not confined to any particular area or nation and in view of its global character, the remedial measures are to be taken in the global perspective. The following are the sustainable development principles for the maintenance of the symbiotic balance between the right to environment and development:

### 1) The Precautionary Principle

<sup>1</sup> Gurdip Singh, *Environmental Law- International and National Perspectives*, 210 (New Delhi: Lawman, India, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> <http://businessworld.in/article/The-Challenges-And-Dilemma-Of-Sustainable-Development-India-s-Response/04-06-2017-119426/> (Visited on 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2018)

The Precautionary Principle is a tool for making better health and environmental decisions. It aims to prevent harm from the outset rather than manage it after the fact. In *Research Foundation for Science v. Union of India*,<sup>3</sup> the Supreme Court has explained that “Precautionary Principle” generally describes an approach to the protection of the environment or human health based on precaution even where there is no clear evidence of harm or risk of harm from an activity or substance. It is a part of the principle of sustainable development. It provides for taking protection against specific environmental hazards by avoiding or reducing environmental risks before specific harms are experienced.

## 2) The Polluter Pays Principle

The Polluter Pays Principle, as interpreted by the Supreme Court of India, means that the absolute liability for harm to the environment extends not only to compensate the victims of pollution but also the cost of restoring the environmental degradation. Thus, it includes environmental costs as well as direct cost to people and property. Remediation of the damaged environment is part of the process of sustainable development and as such, the polluter is liable to pay the cost to the individual sufferers as well as the cost of reversing the damaged ecology.<sup>4</sup> *Indian Council for Enviro-Legal Action v. Union of India*,<sup>5</sup> is a classic example how by abuse of the process of law even the final judgment of the Apex Court can be circumvented for more than a decade and a half even after dismissal of review and curative petitions there against. This is a very unusual and extraordinary litigation where even after fifteen years of the final judgment of the Supreme Court in the case of *Indian Council for Enviro-Legal Action v. Union of India*,<sup>6</sup> the litigation was deliberately kept alive by filing one interlocutory application or the other in order to avoid compliance with the judgment and the polluter unjustly enriched himself by abusing the process of the court and by adopting delaying tactics to avoid paying remedial environmental costs. In *Sterlite Industries (India) Ltd. v. Union of India*,<sup>7</sup> the Supreme Court again applied the polluter pays principle and considering the magnitude, capacity and prosperity of the appellant company directed it to pay compensation of Rs. 100 crores for failing to maintain emission and effluent standards and operating the plant without renewal permission and thereby causing air and water pollution which could have been averted.

## 3) Inter-Generational Equity

Intergenerational equity is a concept that says that humans 'hold the natural and cultural environment of the Earth in common both with other members of the present generation and with other generations, past and future.' It means that we inherit the Earth from previous generations and have an obligation to pass it on

<sup>3</sup> (2005) 13 SCC 186

<sup>4</sup> *Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum v. Union of India*, (1996) 5 SCC 647 at 659; *Indian Council for Enviro-Legal Action v. Union of India* (1996) 3 SCC 212 at 247; *Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board v. C. Kenchappa* (2006) 6 SCC 371

<sup>5</sup> (2011) 8 SCC 161

<sup>6</sup> (1996) 3 SCC 212

<sup>7</sup> (2013) 4 SCC 575

in reasonable condition to future generations. The idea behind not reducing the ability of future generations to meet their needs is that, although future generations might gain from economic progress, those gains might be more than offset by environmental deterioration. Most people would acknowledge a moral obligation to future generations, particularly as people who are not yet born can have no say in decisions taken today that may affect them. In *K. Guruprasad Rao v. State of Karnataka*,<sup>8</sup> the appellant, an advocate filed a PIL praying for the cancellation of the mining lease granted to respondent and stopping mining within the radius of 1 Km from the Jambunatheswara temple (Karnataka). The Court explained the ambit and scope of inter-generational equity and sustainable development as, “Sustainable development includes preservation and protection of historical/archaeological monumental wealth for future generations. Right to development includes the whole spectrum of civil, cultural, economic, political and social process for the improvement of people’s well being and realization of their full potential.”

#### 4) Environment Protection

Environmental protection is a practice of protecting the natural environment on individual, organization controlled on governmental levels, for the benefit of both the environment and humans. This has been recognized, and governments have begun placing restraints on activities that cause environmental degradation. Due to the pressures of over-consumption, population and technology, the biophysical environment is being degraded, sometimes permanently. The protection of the environment is an essential part of sustainable development. Without adequate environment protection, development is undermined; without development, resources will be inadequate for needed investments and environmental protection will fail. The strong environment policies complement and reinforce sustainable development. It is often the poorest who suffer the most from the consequences of pollution and environmental degradation. In *Intellectuals Forum v. State of Andhra Pradesh*,<sup>9</sup> it was observed that, “the debate between the development and economic needs and that of the environment is an enduring one, since if the environment is destroyed for any purpose without a compelling development cause, it will most probably run foul of the executive and judicial safeguards. In response to this difficulty, policy makers and judicial bodies across the world have produced the concept of sustainable development. Accordingly, the court has to follow the principle of sustainable development and find a balance between the developmental needs and environmental degradation.” In *Citizen, Consumer and Civic Action Group v. Union of India*,<sup>10</sup> the Court observed that while the courts have social accountability in the matter of protection of environment, there should be a proper balance between the same and development activities which are essential for progress. There can be no dispute that the society has to prosper, but it shall not be at the expense of the environment. In the like vein, the environment shall have to be protected, but not at the cost of development of the society. Both

<sup>8</sup> (2013) 8 SCC 418

<sup>9</sup> (2006) 3 SCC 549

<sup>10</sup> A.I.R. 2002 Mad. 298

development and environment shall co-exist and go hand-in-hand. Therefore, a balance has to be struck and administrative actions ought to proceed in accordance therewith, and not de-hors the same.

#### 5) Obligation to Assist and Co-operate

The environmental problem is not an individual problem or that of one country. It is a global problem and it can be tackled only with the assistance and co-operation of all. Principle 9 of the Rio Declaration provides that the States should co-operate to strengthen indigenous capacity- building for sustainable development by improving scientific understanding through exchanges of scientific and technological knowledge and by enhancing the development, adaptation, diffusion and transfer of technologies, including new and innovative technologies. Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration further provides that environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. Similarly, Principle 12 of the Rio Declaration provides that the States should co-operate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to economic growth and sustainable development in all countries, to better address the problems of environmental degradation. And finally Principle 27 of the Rio Declaration expects the people and the States to co-operate in good faith and in a spirit of partnership in the further development of international law in the field of sustainable development.

#### 6) Use and Conservation of Natural Resources

In order to meet the needs on sustainable basis, it is absolutely necessary to use the earth's natural resources carefully and the natural resource base must be conserved and enhanced. It is part of our moral obligation to other living beings and future generations. The resources must be conserved and enhanced to meet the needs of growing populations.

#### 7) Eradication of Poverty

The 2030 Agenda acknowledges that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.<sup>11</sup> As recalled by the foreword of the 2015 Millennium Development Goals Report, at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, 189 countries unanimously adopted the Millennium Declaration, pledging to “*spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty*”.<sup>12</sup> This commitment was translated into an inspiring framework of eight goals and, then, into wide-ranging practical steps that have enabled people across the world to improve their lives and their future prospects. The MDGs helped to lift more than one billion people out of extreme poverty, to make inroads against hunger, to enable more girls to attend school than ever before and to

<sup>11</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/povertyeradication> (Visited on 25th March, 2018)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

protect our planet. Poverty eradication is addressed in Chapter II of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (2002), which stressed that eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, particularly for developing countries.

### 3. Sustainable Development in India: Perspectives and Strategies

India, since the early seventies, has taken an active part in global efforts to tackle environmental problems. Smt. Indira Gandhi (late Prime Minister of India) was the only visiting head of the State to participate on the U.N. Conference on Human Environment at Stockholm (Sweden) in 1972. It was also emphasized at this conference by Mrs. Gandhi that the removal of poverty is an integral part of the goal of an environmental strategy for the world. The concept of interrelatedness, of a shared planet, of global citizenship and of “spaceship earth” cannot be restricted to environmental issues alone, but applied to the shared and interlinked responsibilities of environment and development.<sup>13</sup> With this spirit, India realized the need for international cooperation, bilateral and multilateral programmes and regional initiatives in dealing with the issues of environment and development. At the government level, the Ministry of Environment and Forests acts as a nodal agency for relations with international agencies like UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme), SACEP (South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme), IUCN (International union for Conservation of Nature), World Bank, FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation) and EEC (European Economic Community). Independently, NGOs in India have also taken several initiatives towards global cooperation and exchange of ideas. Following are the examples of our concerns of such issues at international level where India:<sup>14</sup>

- Acceded to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of Ozone Layer, March, 1985. Under this Framework Convention, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer was adopted in 1987. The Protocol came into force in 1989 for phasing out CFCs. India has signed it after London amendments.
- Signed the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (the Bonn Convention) in 1979. It came into force in 1983. This Convention was ratified between India and the former USSR and came into force in 1986.
- Signed the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution of the Sea by Oil, 1954 (London); the International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage (as amended), 1969 (Brussels); the International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for

<sup>13</sup> Prof. P.D. Sharma, *Ecology and Environment*, 227 (Rastogi Publications, 13<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2016).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage (as amended), 1971 (Brussels); the Protocol of 1978 on International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships; the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982 (Montego Bay); and the Basal Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.

- Signed the Convention of the Antarctica; and considered the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctica under the Antarctica Treaty.
- Made efforts to evolve a South Common Strategy of developing countries to deal with global environmental issues.

To further its efforts towards cooperation and to evolve a common strategy amongst the developing countries to deal with global environmental issues, an International Conference of 21 developing countries was hosted by India in New Delhi in April, 1990. As a follow-up to this, a ministerial level Conference of Developing Countries was organized by the People's Republic of China in Beijing in June, 1991, the first of its kind of developing world. At this Conference 41 participating countries adopted a declaration which articulates the concerns of these countries. India participated actively in putting forward the concerns of the Group of 77 countries. G77's initiatives at the Preparatory Committee Meeting held in Geneva in 1991 have emphasized the centrality of certain developmental considerations in the agenda of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), 1992.<sup>15</sup> Earlier, to UNCED India's viewpoint was also presented by Shri. Kamal Nath, Minister of State, Environment and Forests at the Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council at Nairobi in February, 1992.<sup>16</sup> He summed up as, "It is not a question of assistance or aid, but of global partnership in working towards making our planet healthier, safer and more productive."<sup>17</sup> It was with this background that India approached the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) or Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in June, 1992.

As indicated earlier, sustainability has been an integral part of the Indian culture. The need for conservation and sustainable use of natural resources has been expressed in Indian scriptures more than three thousand years ago and also reflected in our constitutional, legislative and policy framework along with international commitments. India also focused on the increasing air and water pollution, degradation of land and forests and loss of biodiversity.

New Delhi hosted the fourth BRICS<sup>18</sup> Summit on March 29, 2012. People of the Capital of India warmly welcomed the leaders and other delegates from Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa. The meeting of the leaders of the top five emerging economies discussed collective measures to boost cooperation among them and take steps to jointly respond to common challenges. BRICS is considered as a

<sup>15</sup> Prof. P.D. Sharma, *Ecology and Environment*, 229 (Rastogi Publications, 13<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2016)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS)

serious transnational group that can play a key role in reforming the world management system and can contribute towards maintaining economic growth, peace and security.

#### **4. Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility in India**

India under the Gandhian values has always emphasized on sustainable development where each member of the society, the animals and trees grow and live together in harmony. With neo liberalization policy in the turn of the century, our country opened up to promote globalization, privatization and liberalization. Large corporate houses came into existence and old ones deepened their roots to hold on to the competition.<sup>19</sup> Along with this, the demand for resources in terms of land, water, cheap labour and economic support increased from these companies. One of the consequences is the divide between rich and poor expanded over the years. Many people's livelihood and habitats were disturbed. A lot of forested land was acquired and turned into industrial hubs.

Many governments in various countries have managed to resist and stand up firmly to make sure that the current and ongoing developmental actions remain in balanced and optimal harmony with ecosystem and environment. This in turn leads to better human security as well. Therefore we see that the idea of maintaining environmental and social security is not just the responsibility that needs to be taken up by the respective governments, but equally demands a proactive and effective involvement and participation from the companies and industries. Recently, environmental concern is becoming one of the most discussed and important issue among general public. With stringent regulations by government, heightening of consumer environmental awareness and increasing pressure from various stakeholder parties has made firms to go green. Hence Government of India came up with new guidelines for these corporates in the new Companies act 2013 to have a mandatory corporate social responsibility activity in their company.

#### **5. Globalization of Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development continues to gain widespread popularity in policy debates. There are many reasons for this popularity; particularly so as it pertains to developing economies whose expectations are driven by the potential of sustainable development's ability to reconcile economic development with the need to conserve natural resources, protect the environment and meet social objectives. However, "the quest to combine policies for economic growth and industrial competitiveness with those for environmental protection and social inclusion has created confusion on the precise meaning of the concept "sustainable development". There is growing interconnectedness between political, social and economic spheres of global economies which demand the use of sustainable management strategies. During the transition to greater globalization, risks may arise as application to new economic methodologies outpaces their understanding and control and this complexity of

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.mbaskool.com/business-articles/human-resource/9992-sustainability-development-through-csr-activities-in-india.html> (Visited on 30th March, 2018)



the globalization processes therefore requires a truly integrated approach, combining social, economic and ecological aspects. Debates on globalization and how it continues to affect the world economy continue to provoke more and more controversy. A number of authors argue that globalization has made the world a better place, a world that will eventually lead to economic prosperity, political freedom, and world peace. According to *Joseph Stiglitz*,<sup>20</sup> he defined globalization as, "the closer integration of the countries and people of the world brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communication and the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flow of goods, services, capital, knowledge, and people across borders."

Sustainable development has been adopted by the United Nations as a guiding principle for economic, environmental and social development that aspires to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. In this context, sustainable development demands the protection of the environment and natural resources as well as to provide social and economic welfare to the present and to subsequent generations. Sustainability has been acknowledged as a major normative regulation principle for contemporary society which includes a long term ethical relationship of present generations with those of the future. It is therefore a concept which integrates the environmental, social, and economic aspects as three fundamental dimensions. These three dimensions have been regarded as pillars of sustainability. However, the strategies used to balance these pillars have been criticized in recent years. The reality is that a lot of complex issues must be addressed in order to balance the three.

The various international programmes targeted for sustainable development are as follows:

1) The World Conservation Strategy

The launch of the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) in 1980 represented several firsts in nature conservation. It is the first time that governments, non-governmental organizations and experts throughout the world have been involved in preparing a global conservation document. It is the first time that it has been clearly shown how conservation can contribute to the development objectives of governments, industry, commerce, organized labour and the professions. The WCS was commissioned by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) which together with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) provided the financial support for its preparation and contributed to the evolution of its basic themes and structure.

2) The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) or Earth Summit- 1992

The UNCED, also known as the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, the Rio Summit, was a major United Nations Conference held in Rio de Janeiro from 3rd to 14th June, 1992. Earth Summit was created as a response for member states to cooperate together internationally on development issues after the Cold

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.mindtools.net/GlobCourse/gdef.shtml> (Visited on 30th March, 2018)

War. Due to conflict relating to sustainability being too big for individual member states to handle, Earth Summit was held as a platform for other Member States to collaborate. Since the creation, many others in the field of sustainability show a similar development to the issues discussed in these conferences, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

### 3) Agenda-21 or Action Plan

Agenda 21, established at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, or "Earth Summit", in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, is the blueprint for sustainability in the 21st century. Agenda 21 forms the basis for a "global partnership" to encourage cooperation among nations as they support a transition to sustaining life on earth. The central belief is that all countries can protect the environment while simultaneously experiencing growth. The implementation of the Agenda is primarily the responsibility of governments, through national strategies, plans, policies and procedures. International and regional organizations are also called upon to contribute to this effort. The broadest public participation and the active involvement of non-governmental organizations and other groups are encouraged.

### 4) Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was envisioned in Agenda 21, the programme of action adopted by the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). Agenda 21 called for the creation of the CSD to: ensure effective follow-up of UNCED, enhance international cooperation and rationalize inter-governmental decision-making capacity and examine progress in Agenda 21 implementation at the local, national, regional and international levels. At its eleventh session in 2003, the Commission decided on a multi-year work programme consisting of review and policy years. Since its establishment in 1992, the Commission has greatly advanced the sustainable development agenda within the international community.<sup>21</sup>

### 5) The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD): 2002, Johannesburg

The backdrop against which the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development (August 26, September 4, 2002) was held was the issue of environmental degradation caused by human actions to achieve speedy economic growth, threatening the course of life-sustaining natural process and depleting the resources that future generations will need for their progress and prosperity. It resolved to build a humane, equitable and caring global society cognizant of the need for human dignity for all. The Conference recognized that poverty eradication, changing consumption and production patterns, and protecting and managing the natural resource base for economic and social development are overarching objectives and essential requirements for sustainable development. According to the Johannesburg Declaration, the world leaders would continue to pay special attention to the development needs of small developing States and the

<sup>21</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/csd.html> (Visited on 31st March, 2018)

least developed countries. They recognized that sustainable development required a long-term perspective and broad-based participation in policy formulation, decision-making and implementation at all levels. They would continue to work for stable partnerships with all major groups respecting the independent, important roles of each. The leaders agreed that in pursuit of their legitimate activities, the private sector had a duty to contribute to the evolution of equitable and sustainable communities and societies. They also agreed that there was a need for that sector to enforce corporate accountability within a transparent and stable regulatory environment.

#### 6) United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) or the Rio+20 (June, 2012)

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - or Rio+20 - took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 20-22 June 2012. It resulted in a focused political outcome document which contains clear and practical measures for implementing sustainable development. The Rio+20 organizers indicate that governments are expected to adopt clear and focused practical measures for implementing sustainable development, based on the many examples of success seen over the last 20 years.

### 6. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The SDGs work in the spirit of partnership and pragmatism to make the right choices now to improve life, in a sustainable way, for future generations. They provide clear guidelines and targets for all countries to adopt in accordance with their own priorities and the environmental challenges of the world at large. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has provided the following 17 Sustainable Development Goals or Global Goals covering a broad range of social and economic development issues:

- GOAL 1: No Poverty
- GOAL 2: Zero Hunger
- GOAL 3: Good Health and Well-being
- GOAL 4: Quality Education
- GOAL 5: Gender Equality
- GOAL 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
- GOAL 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
- GOAL 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- GOAL 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- GOAL 10: Reduced Inequality
- GOAL 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

- GOAL 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
- GOAL 13: Climate Action
- GOAL 14: Life below Water
- GOAL 15: Life on Land
- GOAL 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions
- GOAL 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal

## 7. Conclusion

Sustainable Development is, therefore, a historic opportunity for the world communities to deliver inclusive growth, eliminate poverty and reduce the risk of climate change by changing perspectives and approaches to economic development. It entails everyone to participate in making efforts to achieve sustainable development. India and the world have a long and challenging way to go in dealing with environmental problems, and learning to live together in sustainable communities. We need to realize that economic and sustainable development is a collective responsibility. We, as individuals, also have to grow into responsible consumers by committing to a changed lifestyle. If we do not act now, we will be delayed to reverse the impact.

Sustainable development does not focus only on the environment but however, it is also for meeting the diverse needs of all the people in existing and future communities, promoting their personal well-being and equity in their relationships with each other, in a context where nature-society imbalances can threaten economic and social stability. Economic development achieved so far has adopted various techniques which have proved harmful to the environment in which we reside in. The growing population and our rate of consumption of natural resources have placed a big stress on the environment. There is a need for development which is sustainable in its nature and which does not have a negative impact on the environment. The way we approach development affects everyone. The impacts of our decisions as a society have very real consequences on other people's lives. For example, by incorporating health plans, for instance, we can ensure that residents have easy access to healthcare facilities which in turn will provide them with a healthy standard of living. Also, poverty and degraded environment are closely inter-related, especially where people depend for their livelihoods primarily on the natural resources based on their immediate environment. Therefore, restoring natural systems and improving natural resource management practice at the grassroots level are central to a strategy to eliminate poverty.

There is still hope for us. We can, to a certain degree, reverse the process of degradation of our surroundings, for Mother Earth is forgiving and able to heal her wounds if we do not inflict more grievous ones on her. The good earth is our mother and that if we destroy her, we destroy ourselves. So we should act today for a better tomorrow for our children. It is time that each one of us adopt an 'energy-efficient and

green' mind-set and use the natural resources available equitably, judiciously and save them for our future generations, as, *“the best way to predict the future is to create it”*.

