



# INDIA and SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** This article is on the evolution of sustainable development and role of India in it. It traces from early history to modern times and analyses India's contribution to the world in the field of environment. It shows India's stance on international stage and its support to CBD policy. It also gives insight on sustainable development goals and how India is preparing to achieve it and about the International solar Alliance which was recently formed.

## Introduction

During early and medieval period, the lifestyle of people was closely attached to the nature and their survival was dependent on the nature's life. People worshipped the nature in the vedic period which can be called as golden period of environmental protection. In the Mauryan times the administration and polity developed, King Chandra Gupta Maurya appointed separate Department of Forest called '*Kupyadhyaksha*'. Arthashastra written by Chanakya provides many measures to conserve and administer forest. One instance in Sangam age of Southern India King Pari gave away even his golden chariot to a creeper plant for its support. This shows the society of that time was more altruistic and benevolent to the nature. On other side in the medieval times hunting was practiced throughout India in an extent that some species like Cheetah got extinct.

In Recent times, Chipko movement is an instance in which people hugged trees to stop it from felling. Indian tradition in general is more towards the conservation of nature and in modern times with change in lifestyle comes with extra pressure on the nature.

## International development in Sustainable Movement 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Recent development in environmental protection and conservation can be traced back to the book "*SILENT SPRING*" written by Rachel Carson (US). One can say that Rachel Carson initiated a global grassroots environment protection movement. The book awakened a new era of environmental consciousness among the Americans and even across world. It focused mainly on negative effects of chemical pesticides like DDT. The US which is the biggest polluter in the world established *Environment Protection Agency* in 1970, thanks to Rachel Carson.

In 1972, the Club of Rome published, "*LIMITS TO GROWTH*" one of the most significant and influential work in environmental protection. The book overtly said the continued growth at present rate will cause catastrophic effect on the environment and the nature cannot support such demands with finite natural resources.

The concept of sustainable development received major international recognition in UN conference on the Human environment held in Stockholm, Sweden. But the term was later popularized by World Commission on Environment and Development's report - "*OUR COMMON FUTURE*" IN 1987. This commission is also known as "*Brundtland commission*", named after the chairperson -Gro Harlem Brundtland, the former Prime Minister of Norway. The report defined the term "Sustainable Development" is *the development that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs*. The report resulted into debate between "the north" and "the South". It stated that the global environmental problems were result of the huge poverty of the South (developing & under developing countries) and unhealthy pattern of developments and production in the North (developed and industrialized countries).

Turning point in the protection of environment on international stage was UN Conference on environment & Development (UNCED) also known as “*Earth Summit*”, was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. It brought together the leaders from most countries, NGOs, diplomats & scientists.

This conference stated that sustainable development was an attainable goal by global community. One of the major outcomes of this summit was “*Agenda 21*” which contains new strategies to achieve sustainable development in 21st centuries. Other major outcomes were UNFCCC and its 27 universal principles, convention on Bio Diversity & Rio declaration.

Article 3(1) of the UNFCCC focuses on the principle of *Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities* (CBDR-RC). India and other developing countries of Asia & Africa are in support of this principle when it comes to climate change talks.

CBDR-RC in simpler terms means all countries should try best to fight climate change, developed countries with huge economic resources which were primarily the cause for degradation of environment should take dominant share of burden rather than developing countries.

In 2015 United Nations adopted *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* as a Universal call to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. SDG is successor to MDG which ended in 2015. It is also called Agenda 2030.

SDGs contains 17 goals & 169 targets. Goals range from poverty reduction, climate action, clean energy, sustainable cities and peace, justice & strong institution.

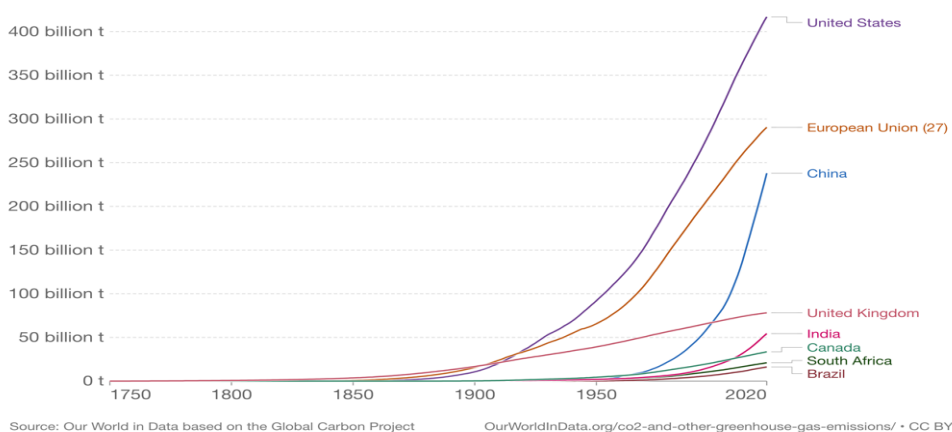
### India’s Support to CBDR policy

India has been a staunch supporter of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) policy from the beginning. This can be understood from the data from *Global carbon Project* given below

The graph shows cumulative emission of countries from 1750s till present. US leads the emission graph by contributing to 25% of total emission in the world. In second comes the 27 member European union which accounts for 22% of total emission, together the both are responsible for around 50% of total emission in the world.

That is the reason why India and other developing countries are suggesting that US and European countries should take *moral responsibility* of their emissions done in the past and pledge to cut in coming decades for the betterment of our world, instead of over burdening the present developing countries.

### INDIA AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



In India Ministry of Environment & Forest and climate change is nodal agency for implementation of environmental policies and programs relating to conservation of country’s natural resources.

India played significant role in formulation of UN Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 and much of country's National Development Agenda is mirrored in SDGs. India is home to 130 billion people which is almost 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the World population, so the success of SDGs largely depends on India's progress.

In 2015 on the sidelines of CoP21 (UNFCCC) held in Paris, India became the torch bearer of solar energy by creating "*INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE*" (ISA). It is a platform for the increased deployment of solar energy technologies. At present there are more than 115 countries signatory to the alliance. The Alliance (ISA) is guided by its "*TOWARDS 1000*" strategy. This aims to mobilise USD 1000 billion of investment in solar energy. India has pledged the target of 175 GW of renewable energy. Out of 175GW, India has already achieved 170GW of renewable energy capacity.

India stands 3<sup>rd</sup> globally in renewable energy added to total energy capacity according to REN21 Renewable 2022 *Global Status Report*.

Rank	Country
1	China
2	USA
3	India

Table 1- Global status report 2022 -Ren21

India has an ambitious target of 500GW by 2030. This is the World's largest expansion plan in renewable energy. Another achievement of India is being home to largest solar farm in the world at BHADLA SOLAR PARK, RAJASTHAN with capacity of 2245 MW.

A floating solar power plant is going to be built in Madhya Pradesh's Khandwa. It is said to be the largest floating solar plant in the world with capacity of 600MW.

In 2017, India witnessed a remarkable judgement of Utrakhand High Court by declaring Ganga and Yamuna as "*LIVING ENTITY*". It is for the first time that an element of natural environment has been declared as a LEGAL PERSON.

With this judgement both the rivers and their tributaries are to be legally protected by the state and central governments and not to be harmed or destroyed. This helps in reduction of pollution of these water bodies and from environment too.

Even after strong efforts by India, it is still ranked 115 out of 162 countries in Sustainable Development Index (SDI) 2022 released by Sustainable Development and Solution Network (UN-SDSN).

RANK	COUNTRIES
1	Finland
2	Denmark
3	Sweden
121	India

Table 2 -SDI 2022 by SDSN

## Conclusion

As per the SDI report 2019, reported by SDSN, poverty in the world has been reduced and mortality rate fell by 49%. Countries are making concerted efforts to address environmental problems. This shows that India has lot more to do in right direction and right way.

The success of Sustainable Development depends on the contribution from every section of the society. Sustainable Development should be "*OF THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE AND BY THE PEOPLE*" to make our Earth more healthy and greener. The integration of modern and traditional knowledge in environment will help in achieving the SDGs. Indigenous knowledge is also a potential source for conservation of environment.

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Even more optimistic future is achievable by drastically changing development policies, incentives and action.

“ The world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed.”- Mahatma Gandhi.

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