

Promoting Green Growth: Examining India's Frameworks for Environmental Policy and Sustainable Development

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Abstract:

Maintaining environmental sustainability and economic prosperity are two challenges India must overcome. This essay explores the complex interactions that exist between India's environmental regulations and its aims for sustainable development. The effectiveness of programs for sustainable development is evaluated in this research.

There is also discussion of difficulties like the requirement for technology innovation, financial limitations, and regulatory enforcement. The study emphasizes how crucial it is to combine conventional wisdom with contemporary methods to establish a comprehensive approach to sustainability.

This study offers insights into India's progress toward sustainable development, highlighting both its achievements and areas for improvement through a thorough examination of policies and their results. In the framework of a developing economy, the findings are intended to educate policymakers, stakeholders, and academics about the crucial paths for balancing development goals with environmental stewardship.

Index Terms: policies, holistic approach, environmental sustainability, sustainable development, and sustainable economy.

Introduction:

India's dedication to sustainable development and environmental preservation has drawn a lot of attention, particularly in the wake of the historic Stockholm summit. In reality, India, under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's direction, distinguished itself as the first country to articulate a thorough framework for surviving in the twenty-first century, which is now universally acknowledged as the prerequisite for advancement.

Keeping up the momentum, Prime Minister Modi fervently outlined these goals in a historic speech that served as the model for subsequent actions. In addition to guiding India toward sustainable development, this speech was crucial in influencing the contemporary worldwide environmental discourse. As a result, Prime Minister Modi skilfully incorporated these goals into India's national

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policies, highlighting the country's commitment to sustainable development and environmental protection.

These perspectives contend that long-term sustainability must be taken into consideration when determining the objectives of economic and development initiatives. The idea of sustainable yield, which states that replacement should not be less than the current stock, is the foundation of the notion of sustainable development. Due to the misconception that there can be a trade-off between ecological and economic development, environmental damage has been caused at the expense of development during the 20th century. This was undoubtedly a misleading trade-off because environmental harm has resulted in irreparable losses. For example, extinct species cannot be recovered. Therefore, it is impossible to compromise on the environment's quality or the resources that will be available to future generations. The needs of the underprivileged should be given high priority in society, and it is believed that a combination of technology and social structures limits the environment's ability to meet both present and future demands.

This highlights the argument between economic expansion and sustainable development. In the 1987 Brundtland Commission report "Our Common Future," the term "sustainable development" was first used to describe development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

India is a nation that is fast developing and looking to expand economically. The bulk of its people are farmers who live in rural areas and rely on agriculture for their living. The use of natural resources is crucial for economic development and agriculture sector growth.

Background

India has nearly fifty years of planned development under its belt, having used a variety of development tactics since the 1950s. It also has a history of colonial development. The nation is heading towards a higher growth path and has made impressive social and economic progress. In India, the topic of poverty has long been present in discussions about development. High rates of poverty are also significantly influenced by the stark differences in health, education, child survival, access to drinkable water, and basic sanitation. Deprivation of social engagement and a person's experience of helplessness, fragility, and voicelessness are significant aspects of poverty. India's development plans are heavily influenced by the extreme poverty and hardship that exist there.

There have been periodic changes to the development strategies. Heavy industrial growth was prioritized early in the planning process with the idea that it would have a trickle-down effect on the economy as a whole. However, it was believed that the growth pattern was not producing the desired outcomes. Thus, many approaches to eliminating poverty and regional disparities have been highlighted in successive five-year plans.

Economic changes in trade, banking, manufacturing, and other sectors, along with a focus on the role of markets in ensuring effective resource allocation across the economy, marked a shift in the direction of development in the 1980s and 1990s. The planning process and the prevalence of

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poverty have been a major subject of development economics studies about India in the framework of the country's diverse development experiences during the past fifty years.

Objectives

Recognize India's energy objectives and how they affect efforts to mitigate climate change. An evaluation of the impact of government initiatives in accomplishing the declared renewable energy and climate goals has resulted from India's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC). India has committed to lowering its GDP's emissions intensity by 33–35% below 2005 levels by 2030 and raising the proportion of non-fossil fuel-based power capacity to 40% of installed electric power capacity as part of the INDC. India may be forced onto a carbon-intensive infrastructure road by the government's actions and policies, or it may choose to follow a more resilient and sustainable growth path. Our goals are to assess and comprehend the effects of Indian energy policies and initiatives on mitigating climate change, as well as to make clear any discrepancies between these initiatives and India's INDC. Based on this information, we can offer helpful information to policymakers about whether India is getting closer to its INDC targets through coordinated efforts across different government sector plans and whether such policy actions are in line with its climate goals.

Since our examination of India's energy objectives spans several governmental domains, now is the perfect moment to carry out such an analysis within an integrated framework.

Scope of Analysis

The analysis's purview is restricted to the environmental policies and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). India has made great efforts to promote and safeguard its environment. India has a background in international environmental politics, having participated actively in several international environmental debates after initially opposing global environmentalism. Given that the Indian government has voluntarily adopted the SDGs, it will be important to evaluate how these objectives relate to current environmental policy initiatives. The main goal of these policies has been to gradually include environmental issues into sector-specific policy. This is noteworthy since Indian support for the SDGs is predicated on the idea that they won't interfere with the main objective of economic growth. It is more likely that the government will forego the opportunity to incorporate the aims into national policy and legislation if it can be demonstrated that they are incompatible or impractical with the policies. Thus, evaluating the SDGs' effects and environmental aims might provide insightful information about how to incorporate these international commitments into Indian policy. The determination of possible trade-offs between economic trends and environmental sustainability will be aided by an evaluation of the SDGs' relationship to existing and future policies. No other nation in the world has carried out this trended examination of the linkages between policy and the SDGs. Lastly, an evaluation of how Indian action toward the SDGs will align with international environmental commitments is made possible by taking a look at the global context of Indian environmental policy.

Thus, our research will offer perspectives and suggestions for how India should proceed with the

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goals as well as for how the goals and indicators should be developed in a global context. Policymakers, NGOs, other groups, and the academic community would all benefit tremendously from this on a national and international scale. This will be the main audience for this in-depth examination. In general, there is a good chance that the evaluation of the SDGs within the framework of current and future environmental policy would positively influence both the global development of the objectives themselves as well as Indian action toward sustainable development.

Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs)

India's approach to addressing the fundamental demands of sustainable and all-encompassing development is reflected in its global vision, articulated through Mahatma Gandhi's ideas. India is concentrating on determining the agenda's practical implications within the framework of its institutional structures, requirements, and national policies. We accomplish this by acknowledging a complete, inclusive, and "leave nobody behind" plan of action. The commitment to collaborating with many countries, regional and global organizations, and United Nations agencies to usher in a new era of partnership amongst all development partners is indicative of this. It is also evident in our steadfast support of international institutions and the multilateral system.

India is in favour of modifying the methods of implementation to fit each country's needs and national policies. It has made a good effort to match the objectives of global accords with its regional plans, initiatives, and efforts. To assess the degree of consistency or inconsistency between the national-level activity and the objective of "leaving no one behind," new policies and programs have been introduced within the framework of quantifiable indicators. Additionally, measures to strengthen the collaboration between official and nongovernmental knowledge and action have been implemented.

Synopsis of SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an international call to action to eradicate poverty, safeguard the environment, and guarantee that everyone lives in peace and prosperity, according to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. India is dedicated to accomplishing the 169 related targets and the 17 SDGs by the deadline. India joins the 194 nations that have signed on to this bold agenda. The present development context and experiences would be taken into account while creating an SDG execution plan at the country level. These would act in the spirit of "leaving no one behind," be all-inclusive in their conception and involve all citizens. The SDGs would serve as a beacon of hope and aid in enhancing the quality of life for the people of India. The goal would be to put the principles of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikaas, and Sabka Vishwas into practice.

The achievement of the objectives is closely linked to India's domestic priorities, which include the eradication of widespread inequality, poverty, and the underdeveloped state of many regions of the country. India is aligning its development plans with its own goals to achieve the SDGs. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent an international agreement among governments to address the problems facing the modern world and to better the circumstances brought about by

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globalization. The agenda covers several critical issues facing the country and the world, such as environmental preservation, social inclusion, and regional imbalances.

The Goals Are Important for India

SDGs are pertinent for India to overcome its developmental issues since they suggest system thinking focused on understanding complexity. The SDGs' complexity offers a useful framework for policymaking to solve the development gaps that have prevented India's progress from picking up speed in the ensuing few decades. In several areas, they align with India's own development goals. India has a long history of considering all the aspects of human well-being at once. There has never been a period when India has not thought about a better life for its people, whether it be in the past when defining a citizen's respect and later "Sarvodaya" or in more modern times when articulating growth represented in the idea of "Antyodaya". The Indian Constitution was drafted shortly after the country gained independence. It contains several directive principles for policymakers to follow, which, if fulfilled, would greatly contribute to the SDG of "leaving no one behind." These principles include social inclusion, the advancement of rural livelihoods, and equal treatment under the law. With initiatives like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, India has begun putting its ambitious rights-based development approach into practice. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) present a chance for the nation to demonstrate its leadership in the world and to chart a developmental arc in the area that reflects the successful paths it has taken to reduce poverty and promote economic growth.

But India's greatest stake is in the SDGs since it sees them as central to its national interests. This is a necessary condition for any serious commitment to a global partnership for Sustainable Development. The future of the SDGs and the fortunes of India are mutually dependent. India has a stake in a world that is safer, wealthier, and more sustainable. On the other hand, if the SDGs are implemented successfully globally, new risks to India's growth will be mitigated, and in a world where there is growing multipolarity, this will create an international setting that will support India's ascent to greater prominence on a global scale. Essentially, India stands to benefit much from the SDGs, which neatly align with its historical and current growth. Success will satisfy a deep-seated psychological urge for a better world for current and future generations in addition to improving people's material well-being and creating a cleaner, safer environment. There may not have been a more inclusive and comprehensive development initiative in the history of development thinking, given the growing trend of fragmentation and specialization in development discourse and practice. The SDGs offer a great chance to create development synergies across a variety of activity areas.

Developments and Obstacles in Reaching the SDGs

As of the end of 2017, the Indian government lacked any formal goals or specific measures to assess how far they had come in accomplishing the SDGs. Nonetheless, it was disclosed during a keynote speech by Shri. A. Marthanda Pillai that India had already implemented several measures to move closer to the benchmarks before the member states decided on the goals. Provisions for improved

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nutrition and food security for expectant mothers and their offspring, the ICDS's universalization—which attempts to boost preschoolers' health, nutrition, and educational standing—and women's empowerment are a few examples. Between 2005–2006 and 2015–2016, there were decreases in children who were undernourished, a rise in mothers giving birth in institutions, and an increase in children who were anemic. Indirect progress towards the SDG targets can be seen in this, even though the targets might not be sustained over time. Although the outcomes of these provisions have not yet been examined, they will serve as the foundation for assessing the degree of anticipated advancement in due course. The SDGs will make it possible to operate in these fields and enhance the environment. In contrast, the most recent National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) 2015–16 reveals that for a select number of health and education indicators, either nothing has changed or things have become worse. For instance, the number of overweight or Type 2 Diabetes-affected children has increased (SDG 2), and children's learning levels have not increased over time—in certain circumstances, they have even decreased. Because various Indian states have differing demographic and economic circumstances along with diverse levels of development, there are discrepancies in the way indicators have changed. Better indicators have come about slowly, and if at all, inequitably across the states and the various economic brackets. Due to significant economic gaps in society, the majority of middle-class and upper-class groups have largely benefited from improving indices, often at the expense of the less fortunate.

India's Environmental Policy

India's track record about environmental policy is one of the stated objectives not successfully carried out. The main environmental issues are those that have an impact on the nation's infrastructure, which has an impact on people's ability to live modern, everyday lives. The main issues about the environment include air pollution, water pollution, land deterioration, and a lack of potable water. When it comes to using biomass, agricultural waste, and fuelwood for energy, India is the world's biggest user. In India, both rural and urban areas still heavily rely on traditional fuels like coal and biomass for home energy needs. Simple burners made in India that burn biomass cakes without producing smoke have been developed. Approximately 80% of the deforestation in India is caused by an excess of biomass use. The National Water Policy, published in March 2002 by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) of India, outlines the goals the government has for water utilization. The policy is being reviewed, and an update is anticipated. The CPCB is striving to create information and action plans to achieve the objectives outlined in the policy, even though a large portion of it is ambiguous regarding how it should be implemented.

Important Environmental Laws

To protect ecosystems and natural resources from harm, environmental policy seeks to control how people interact with the environment and to mold public perceptions. Early environmental regulations prioritized safeguarding the land, water, and air while preventing, controlling, and reducing pollution. The purview expanded to cover the conservation of natural resources, management of forests, protection of wildlife and their habitats, and general environmental

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protection. To spur economic expansion and development, economic liberalization has had a detrimental effect on environmental conservation, leading to resource extraction, increased pollution, and extinction of species. As a result, the Indian government reviewed its sustainable development plan and evaluated its environmental policies. India unveiled its National Environment Policy (NEP) in 2006, following advancements in global environmental governance during the Rio Earth Summit. This policy sought to further incorporate environmental concerns into India's processes of social and economic development, acknowledging that poverty alleviation requires rapid economic growth that is long-term sustainable. By guaranteeing the long-term maintenance and improvement of environmental resources and the ecosystems they sustain—which serve as the foundation for many people's livelihoods—the NEP aims to balance this. This should be reflected in policy, which aims to ensure that the impoverished and future generations benefit from India's development process while simultaneously internalizing the environmental costs of developmental activities. The following serious problems and issues were noted in the policy and call for quick attention: 1) The nature of governance and the requirement that environmental concerns be taken into account in all facets of government. 2) The harmful development activities, such mining and deforestation, that are occurring in delicate ecosystems and the effects they have on rural communities. 3) Industrial and urban pollutants. The policy then provides a medium- to long-term resolution plan for the concerns that have been identified. The government has made strides in addressing environmental challenges; nonetheless, there have been deficiencies in the execution of policies and plans as well as in the coordination of efforts throughout departments. The main causes of this are the economic trade-offs between development and the environment, as well as a general lack of understanding of environmental issues. The necessity of altering economic development goals to support the sustainable use and management of environmental resources as well as the need to recognize and create strategies for appreciating and protecting the nation's natural capital are key components of NEP.

Environmental Policy Implementation and Effects

The government passed the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act that same year. The Act protects the purity of the water by preventing and controlling pollution. In addition to establishing Central and State Boards with the same authority as outlined in the Environmental Protection Act, the Act was revised in 1988 to incorporate stricter measures. The Boards created by the Air and Water Acts are tasked with collaborating on the development and implementation of pollution prevention and control plans. In 1981, the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act was enacted. It offers methods for preventing, reducing, and eliminating air pollution. In 1987, the Act was revised to add protection for the ozone layer. Among the most significant pieces of legislation that establish a framework for pollution prevention is the Environmental Protection Act of 1986. The establishment of Central and State Contamination Control Boards, which in turn draft regulations to govern a range of activities that lead to environmental contamination, has been made possible by this law. The Boards have the authority to advise the government on any issue about pollution control and prevention. The Act further stipulates that noncompliance will result in sanctions.

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Stakeholders' Involvement in Developing Environmental Policies

The history of Indian environmental policy is replete with both triumphs and tragedies. The success of any given policy has been significantly influenced by the use of stakeholder theory. Early environmental policy was perceived as essentially representing the views of environmentalists, with stringent legislation that produced subpar outcomes. Industrial stakeholders found it easy to disregard the legislation since they were not involved during the policy-making process and knew there would be little consequences. The application of the polluter pays concept and the Water and Air Act are two examples of this. The industry understood that the government agencies in charge could not effectively oversee and enforce these rules, thus they were mostly ignored. One of the main causes of India's environmental policy failures is the exclusion of stakeholders from the policy-making process. It was discovered that the parties impacted by the hazardous waste regulations, which were implemented in the 1980s, were unaware of their existence. This was mostly brought about by the government's inadequate information sharing with these parties. In an interview, a representative of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) said that they were unaware of the regulations themselves until the 1990s.

The success or failure of any particular policy endeavour is largely dependent on the involvement of stakeholders in environmental policy. This is mostly because implementing policies necessitates a behavior shift from individuals who are subject to regulation. When it comes to environmental policy, these can entail costly adjustments to public or industry practices. Stakeholder influence is especially important when policies are being imposed on a specific industry. Businesses that stand to lose a great deal from a policy change are likely to use a variety of strategies to make sure the policy is lax or non-existent. Environmental degradation is mostly explained by the influence of industry.

Suggestions for Future Courses

It is imperative to go forward and enhance India's existing environmental state by taking lessons from the past. Raising environmental awareness at all levels and involving the public more in the formulation and execution of environmental policies are urgently needed. This will assist in increasing the pressure on businesses and the government to behave more responsibly toward the general public and the environment. Environmental policy implementation can be aided and polluting industries pressured by a more transparent, proactive legal system that includes public interest lawsuits. A crucial instrument for assessing the efficacy of implemented policies is the periodic assessment and adjustment of those policies. For sustainable development, more environmentally friendly technology development is also required. This can be accomplished by providing industries with additional incentives and subsidies to adopt cleaner technology. Environmental education must also be included in the curriculum of the educational system at all levels. Environmental development and policy must receive far greater attention if India is to experience sustainable growth. Ignoring or putting off solving this problem will simply result in additional environmental damage and future expenses. If preventive action is done today, it will assist keep development expenses down the road, preserve a clean environment, and promote healthy living.

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Evaluation and Verdict

India has, quite rightly, focused on solving problems related to sustainable development. Many policies, plans, and objectives have been made in an attempt to address the pressing needs of people, the availability and distribution of diverse resources, and the opportunities that lie ahead of us. In India, sustainable development has a wide range of applications. Today's pressing concerns include ending poverty, protecting the environment, halting unsustainable economic development patterns, conserving natural resources, and altering the unfair allocation of resources. Since developed nations are primarily to blame for the current environmental issues, they must play a significant role in finding solutions. Even Nevertheless, for their assistance to be long-lastingly beneficial, their approaches to problem-solving must take the objectives and requirements of the developing countries into serious consideration. A key component of the objective is that when development's benefits are meant to reach the targeted poor and marginalized populations, they shouldn't be transformed into a greater flow of environment and resources from the poor to the rich, from rural to urban areas, or to individuals who aren't part of the targeted group. In light of this, India must outline its unique requirements and issues related to environmental preservation and sustainable development in order to gauge the extent to which it will accept assistance from other nations and global resources to address the problems that it currently faces. Given the particular requirements and issues, the plan should outline how the aims of the national environment and the advantages of the global environment are related, as well as how the two might be combined.

Evaluation of India's Environmental Policies and Sustainable Development Goals

India's progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and through the implementation of its environmental policies should be taken into consideration when evaluating the Sustainable Development Report 2019. Recognizing the role that environmental sustainability plays in the country's current developmental trajectory is crucial. The first policy assessment gauges how much environmental sustainability is taken into account in India's current developmental policy. This is typified by a significant effort made to meet the nation's energy demands from non-fossil fuel sources and a strong commitment to mitigating the effects of climate change, especially as it relates to energy. The decision to raise the share of renewable energy to 40% of total energy capacity and the ambitious target of 175GW for renewable energy serve as examples of this. This could have a good knock-on effect on the climate change goal and is strongly related to the energy sustainable development target. It is also possible to view the considerable rise in investments in renewable energy as a way to implement energy and industrial policies (policy 4) sustainably. All areas of growth, though, need to give the environmental effects of policy decisions more weight. This is especially crucial for infrastructure development, as it can have severely negative environmental effects due to its massive resource consumption and permanent land alterations. If the objective of doubling the pace of infrastructure development and substantial urbanization is not achieved sustainably, India's environment will be seriously threatened. This would necessitate a policy change that takes into account ways to meet goals for urbanization and infrastructure on a sustainable basis

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and reroutes funding for rural development, where India's environmental effect is less severe.

Consequences and Future Course

Understanding the distinction between "good" and "bad" changes in environmental and health-related concerns is crucial since many health-related issues can have long-term repercussions that are biological, subtle, or cumulative. Studies have shown that minor environmental modifications, or "dirtying upstream," can have substantial negative effects on health. The environment is a major determinant of health. It is only possible to prevent this expense if the environment is taken into account during the development phase as opposed to being fixed or lessened afterward. Because their livelihoods frequently depend on natural resources and they lack the means to relocate to better living or working conditions, the poor are most likely to be impacted by environmental changes. India has to strive to meet the SDGs' health-related targets in light of this. The high incidence of severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) in India is one instance of a health-related issue with room for improvement. Clearer domestic cooking fuels were linked to a much lower risk of SARI, according to data analysis, and these results support the objective of lowering indoor and outdoor air pollution. Poverty issues must be taken into account in all environmental topics when attempting to make changes that would improve health, a healthy environment, and the adoption of sustainable living habits.

Three main elements that connect India's environmental policies and sustainable development goals (SDGs) were given special attention in this thorough examination. It was observed that these problems are not exclusive of one another and that actions taken to address one subject will probably have an impact on the outcomes of other themes. The three themes are poverty, water quantity and quality, and health (lower pollution). By evaluating India's current environmental state and using case studies, it was feasible to provide a summary of the adjustments and actions required to get closer to reaching the objectives outlined in each subject.

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