

A Conceptual Study of Sustainable Development in the Era of Globalization

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Abstract- Since from the beginning, the phenomenon of globalization has captured world attention in various ways. The tremendous change in the countries caused erosion of environmental quality to a large extent. Hence the concept of sustainable development has gained importance since Rio Declaration. The central purpose of it is to create an enabling environment in which all human beings lead secure and creative lives. This paper focuses on the adverse effect of globalization on environment, and the need for sustainable development of environment with the industrial growth.

Index Terms- Globalization, Rio Declaration, Sustainable development, WTO

I. INTRODUCTION

“The world today is economically richer and environmentally poorer than ever,”

-Lester R. Brown

Foreign trade is an engine of growth and innovation. It tends to optimize the use of world resources with every country specializing in the production of the commodity for which it is best suited according to natural and human resource endowment. International trade leads to an increase in productivity and competitiveness and reduction of costs and thereby growth of nations. But the economic expansion in the last century and half had alarming consequences for the global environment. The new economic policies and the structural adjustment programme often predict environmental impact without accuracy because of the complex interplay of various economic, social, political and ecological factors. These are put into effect in an effort to meet India's severe balance of payments crisis (BOP), and to propel its economy into quicker growth and global integration¹.

This led to depletion of ozone layer, air pollution, loss of forests and bio- diversity, extinction of animal and plant species, loss of marine life, soil and water pollution at an alarming rate. On realizing the importance of the environmental variations, problems created by them and its impact on human settlement the concept of ecology acquired prominence during the 1980's. Hence the concept of sustainable development originated for the first time, with the objective of taking actions in the present to improve the human condition and the earth system in which we live, to be long lasting and benefit future generations, which leads to Sustainable human development.

II. CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-MEANING AND ORIGIN

The concept of sustainable development originated with the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), *Our Common Future* (the Brundtland Report) of 1987 which defined sustainable development as "development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The concept of sustainable development was first given prominence at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) (the "Earth Summit") in Rio in 1992, following which the notion of sustainable development rapidly gained wide currency and encouraged a greater awareness of the major environmental problems and disparities in the world. It marked a decisive stage by recognising the existence of challenges and problems that were common to the entire planet and all humankind, and by seeking to identify cases where joint responsibility could be established. It thereby considerably widened the scope of global problems to include such matters as the environment, health, trade and poverty. It also highlighted the links between globalisation, planet-wide risks and shared responsibilities that created a need for concerted action by the international community.²

III. OBJECTIVES OF CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development combines the two terms, 'sustainability' and 'development' to indicate a pattern of growth which strengthens both the national capabilities to care for their people in relation to their total relationship with the resources of earth. It focuses upon a relationship between humans and their environment and indicates a warning that human being can not push development which is against nature. Sustainable development has some forward looking and broad based objectives which transcend class, caste, language and regional barriers. These are-

- to maintain the standards of living of the largest number of people with equity and justice, the consideration of trans-boundary and cumulative impact in decision making has to be realized.

² Ayesha Dias, "Human Rights, Environment And Development: With Special Emphasis On Corporate Accountability" - at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2000/papers/ayesha%20dias%20.pdf> last cited on 25.03.13

¹ <http://www.countercurrents.org/nomani310707.htm>

- to conserve and protect earth's natural resources from misuse and wasteful consumption.
- to innovate new technology and scientific techniques which work in unison with laws of nature and not opposed to it.
- to respect diversity and involve local and indigenous communities for a more grass roots oriented and relevant development policies.
- to plan international institutions which recognize the requirements of poor nations and support them to achieve their growth targets without destroying their natural wealth and environment
- to seek peaceful co- existence of all nations of the world; this demands honoring of treaties and international agreements.

Sustainable development is, thus, a desired direction of change and provides a framework to decide developmental actions by nation's communities and individuals.³

Conceptually, sustainable development can be conceived of as integrating three 'pillars'; namely- International Environmental Law, International Human Rights Law and International Economic Law. The integrated structure of sustainable development is such that it requires support from each of the pillars.⁴ In stating that human beings are at the centre of concern for sustainable development and that they are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony and nature, Principle 1 of the Rio Declaration employed language of Human Rights Law. The emergence of sustainable development has coincided with a broadly increasing consensus in International Human Rights. The third pillar of sustainable development is International Economic Law. Concepts of Economic Law have been borrowed as concepts of International Environmental Law.

They are-

- The concept of internalizing the economic costs of pollution and environmental degradation, referred to in environmental law as "full cost pricing";
- The "polluter pays principle" which seeks to make the polluter fully responsible for all costs of pollution, be they economic, human, social or cultural;
- The concept of environmental responsibility and liability based upon a product's "cradle-to grave life-cycle"; and,
- The mechanism of "economic instruments" which provide incentives and disincentives regarding desired environmental performance or behavior.

IV. GLOBALIZATION AS NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

Now major objective of new economic policy in India is globalization. Globalization can be defined as, "a business philosophy of viewing one's business in a global perspective in terms of global outlook, using globally viable technology,

offering the products and services which can better satisfy the customer needs in a global environment, maintaining a quality in adherence to global standards an identity of global citizenship and ultimately fostering a global organizational and business culture".

The core idea of globalization is that more trade is better for all the parties concerned. Any action that interferes with the free flow of capital, goods and services, would produce sub-optimal results. The term globalization means the opening up of the economy for world market by attaining international competitiveness. Globalization is considered as an important element in the reform package and it has four parameters:

- 1 Permitting free flow of goods by reducing or removing trade barriers between the countries;
- 2 Creation of an environment for free flow of capital between the countries;
- 3 Creation of an environment, permitting free flow of technology between the countries; and
- 4 From the point of view of developing country, creation of an environment in which free movement of labour can take place in different countries of the world.⁵

In response to trade and foreign investment opportunity resulting from globalization, a large and growing number of developing countries including India have embarked on the liberalization of their trade and foreign investment regimes, as well as the adaptation of their domestic economic structures and straightening of their export capacity.⁶

V. EFFECTS OF GLOBALISATION ON ENVIRONMENT

Economic development means very often an increase of pressure on the environment. Starting with the impact on the environment; there is one point of view that since globalization stimulates economic growth, trade, investments etc., will consequently lead to more pollution and environmental degradation. In this point of view, most of the environmental damage is a by-product of the process of socioeconomic development. The impact of globalization on environment needs to be continuously addressed in Indian context which profoundly remains in the transition.

In spite of the potential of globalization to economic convergence it paved for an increase in inequality resulting in increased environmental impacts such as climate change, protection of the ozone layer, biodiversity and desertification. But these international trade arrangements and environmental agreements contain very few provision for harmonizing trade and environment trade and development.⁷ Globalisation and its effects have caused anxiety worldwide about the direction that

⁵ Ruddar Datt and K.P.M. Sundaram, "Indian Economy", 40th ed, New Delhi: S. Chand and Company Ltd, 1999, p.724.

⁶ David Woodward, "Effects of Globalization and Liberalization on Poverty: Concepts and Issues", A Paper presented in an inter-agency seminar on "Globalization and Liberalization: Effects of International Relations on Poverty", Held in Geneva, Switzerland from 15th to 17th April 1996, pp. 68-69.

⁷ Dr. Zafar Mahfooz Nomani, "Environment, Sustainable Development And Globalisation: A Plea To Indian Legislatures", 31 July, 2007, CounterCurrents.org

³ Suchinmayee Rachna, "Gender, human rights and Environment", 2008, Nice Printing Press, Delhi. pp.131-132

⁴ Ibid.

society is taking. Traditionally seen as an economic phenomenon linked with the appearance, development and consolidation of the global market, it has become connected with areas previously regarded as bearing little relevance to economic development. However, a new body of international economic law is emerging relating to trade and investment, whose impact on environment and human rights is highly questionable. Much recent writings and analysis has focused on the environmental impacts of the World Trade Organization (WTO). This body, along with other objectives aims to imbibe sustainable development of the environment among the member nations.

VI. CONCLUSION

To conclude, although industrialization is seen as a solution to providing economic growth and increasing economic levels, all inevitably produce discharges and wastes that are capable of polluting. Where high population and economic growth demands resources and discharges in the form of pollutants, not many

industries have arrived at suitable suggestions on sustainable measures, thus putting pressure on the environment. The phenomenon of globalization has led governments and individuals to realize the international and trans-boundary dimensions of environmental issues, which later led to recognize the concept of sustainable development. The WTO, which is considered as an apex institution in matters of international trade also aims to protect the environment while encouraging the international trade. The Rio Declaration brought together some concepts like polluters pay principle; inter generational equity, etc., to reserve and preserve the environment for future generation with sustainable growth of the industries. But self awareness of protection of environment and preserving it for future generation is the need for the hour.

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