

NURTURING A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT: THE LANDSCAPE OF INDIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNEY

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Abstract

India's strong framework for tackling ecological concerns in the face of global environmental deterioration demonstrates its unwavering commitment to environmental sustainability. The emphasis on environmental preservation in India is reflected in the conference's topic, "Nurturing a Sustainable Environment: The Landscape of India's Environmental Journey." Ecosystems are under stress as India's industrialization progresses, needing environmental regulations to protect them. Ancient scriptures like the Agni Purana and the Yajnavalkya Smriti, which emphasize the function of plants and trees, demonstrate India's traditional appreciation for nature. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act and the Forest Act of 1927 both signaled a turn towards environmental conservation after independence. India strives for sustainable development through decentralized governance and public-private partnerships, guided by the National Environment Policy of 2006. Through sector-specific missions, the National Action Plan on Climate Change (2008) tackles climate concerns. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan-style programs improve hygiene, and smart cities incorporate sustainability. The circular economy strategy encourages thoughtful consumption. India's steadfast dedication exemplifies good environmental care and integrates development with the natural world.

Keywords: Sustainable, Environmental, Developmental, India.

INTRODUCTION

India's commitment to environmental sustainability is evidence of its understanding of the complex relationship between nature and human well-being. India has been steadfast in creating a solid legal framework to manage the myriad problems brought on by ecological concerns in light of the worldwide repercussions of unchecked environmental degradation. The phrase "Nurturing a Sustainable Environment: The Landscape of India's Environmental Journey" captures the heart of this investigation and highlights India's commitment to preserving its natural heritage for both present-day and future generations.

The rapid industrialisation, urbanisation, and population expansion of India are placing an unprecedented demand on its ecosystems and natural resources. These activities have contributed to a rise in pollution, the loss of species, and the long-lasting effects of climate change, even though they are still essential for economic progress. In awareness of the urgent need to solve these issues, India meticulously approved a number of environmental laws that combined provide a comprehensive legal framework devoted to environmental preservation and the development of sustainability. Growing ecological consciousness has had an impact on the historical trajectory of environmental law development in India. According to the 4000-year-old Agni Purana, mankind must safeguard and preserve woods in order to get religious blessings. He recognised the importance of woods even during the reign of Chandra Gupta Maurya, and in order to

assure their protection and preservation, he assigned a senior official to take care of the forests. (Sharma.A, 2021)

Although the Forest Act of 1927 set the first foundation for forest conservation during the colonial era, a more concentrated effort to address larger environmental challenges only began to take hold in the post-independence era. (Sharma.A, 2021) Forests and Wildlife were added to the Concurrent List in 1976 by the 42nd Amendment Act. The Constitution's Articles 48 A and 51 A (g) place a strong emphasis on the responsibilities of citizens and the state to protect the environment, forests, and animals. The detailed listing of species for protection in the act, together with the outright ban on hunting and capture of some species, signalled a paradigm change in favour of a renewed dedication to wildlife preservation. (Kavuri, 2020)

The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act was enacted in 1974 to provide for the prevention and control of water pollution, and for the maintaining or restoring of wholesomeness of water in the country. The Act was amended in 1988. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act was enacted in 1977, to provide for the levy and collection of a cess on water consumed by persons operating and carrying on certain types of industrial activities. This cess is collected with a view to augment the resources of the Central Board and the State Boards for the prevention and control of water pollution constituted under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974. The Act was last amended in 2003. (Central Pollution Control Board, 2019). Due to the complexity of enforcing these regulations, regulatory organisations like the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) were created

Environmental evolution in early India

Hindu mythology and old writings like the Vedas, Puranas, and Upanishads have resonance with India's love for the environment, which is intricately woven into its religious and historical tapestry. These verses emphasise the critical role that plants, animals, and trees have in people's lives. This philosophy is best shown by the Yajnavalkya Smriti, which forbids the wanton destruction of trees and lays out the consequences of doing so. Ashoka's Fifth Pillar Edict also expresses his dedication to the welfare of all creatures living in his dominion. Even while beautiful gardens and verdant parks were built during the mediaeval Mughal era, the emphasis seemed to be more on aesthetics than on actual forest protection. (Patel.JD, 2017)

In sharp contrast to India's earlier history, the British colonial era brought about resource depletion and environmental disrespect. Early legislation covered a range of topics. The 1857 Oriental Gas Company Act focused on gas emissions, while the 1853 Shore Nuisance Act tackled coastal pollution. The Indian Penal Code of 1860 addressed irresponsible use of dangerous chemicals and contamination of public water supplies. It also addressed public annoyances, demonstrating the expanding understanding of environmental effects.

The Bengal Smoke Nuisance Act and the Bombay Smoke Nuisance Act were both passed in response to concerns about air pollution. Localised wildlife protection legislation were the initial steps towards biodiversity preservation. India's history reveals a complex

relationship with its surroundings. (Patel.JD, 2017)The value of nature was praised in ancient literature, but environmental commitments changed with time. Exploitation of resources began during colonial control. However, early legal measures recognised the dangers of pollution, creating the groundwork for later conservation efforts.

National Environment Policy of (2006).

India's efforts at sustainable development are guided by the National Environment Policy of 2006, which aims to balance economic development and environmental protection. This strategy recognises the complicated relationship between socioeconomic advancement, human well-being, and environmental well-being. It places a strong emphasis on incorporating environmental considerations into planning for future growth, guaranteeing the sustainable use of resources and the reduction of pollution. The strategy supports the idea of "sustainable development," which aims to advance the economy while preserving the environment for current and future generations.

The policy emphasises the value of decentralised government and community involvement in environmental management. It emphasises the need of promoting environmental awareness and develop skills for sustainable practises. The policy promotes public-private partnerships to improve resource management and environmental protection. The policy's agenda includes dealing with issues including waste management, biodiversity protection, and climate change. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations and other international agreements are aligned with the National Environment Policy. The National Environment Policy of 2006 serves as a road map for India's path towards sustainable development by encouraging prudent resource management, the reduction of pollution, and the inclusion of environmental issues in political choices. (Government of India, National Environment Policy, 2006)

National Action Plan on Climate Change (2008).

India's comprehensive approach to overcoming the problems caused by climate change is laid out in the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) of 2008. The NAPCC, which was designed as a multifaceted strategy, is led by eight national missions, each of which focuses on a particular industry or region. These initiatives are based on the knowledge that different consequences of climate change call for different approaches.

The National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency, which focuses on energy conservation and efficiency, the National Water Mission, which addresses water scarcity and effective resource management, and the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture, which aims to ensure food security through climate-resilient agricultural practices, are some of the missions of the NAPCC. The NAPCC also includes the National Mission for Green India, which concentrates on reforestation and afforestation initiatives; the National Mission for Sustainable Habitat, which aims for energy-efficient urban planning; the National Mission for Strategic Knowledge on Climate Change, which promotes climate research and innovation; and the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture, which concentrates on farming methods that are climate-resilient.

India's dedication to achieving a low-carbon and sustainable development trajectory is reflected in the NAPCC. It aims to integrate India's development with the need for climate action by establishing sector-specific targets and mobilizing resources, while also supporting adaptation and mitigation measures across different facets of the economy and society. The NAPCC acts as a road map for India's efforts to combat climate change, pointing the country in the direction of a more resilient and sustainable future.

The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (2014)

The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, also known as the Clean India Mission, is a game-changing programme that the Indian government initiated in 2014 with the ambitious objective of attaining nationwide sanitation and better hygiene. The idea of a clean and sanitary India that Mahatma Gandhi had served as the motivation for our goal. Both rural and urban locations are covered, with a focus on the development of private and public restrooms, appropriate waste disposal, and societal behavioural modification. Several important tactics are highlighted in the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan report. First of all, it emphasises how crucial it is to build toilets in homes and public areas to end open defecation, a serious problem that affects sanitation and health. The expansion of solid waste management infrastructure, as well as encouraging trash separation at the source and scientific disposal, are also stressed in the study. The mission also strongly emphasizes behaviour modification, with advertisements that encourage the use of restrooms and suitable waste disposal techniques.

The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan's performance may be judged by several metrics, including greater toilet use, a decline in open defecation, cleaner public spaces, and improved waste management techniques. The mission's effects go beyond sanitation and affect people's entire health and dignity, especially women and marginalized groups. (Government of India, Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) , 2019)

Smart cities and Environmental sustainability.

Smart cities in India are paving the way for the attainment of more sustainable goals through their innovative approaches to urban development. These projects encompass a wide range of sectors, including infrastructure, waste management, renewable energy, and efficient transportation systems. The integration of renewable energy sources is a key driver of sustainability within smart cities. This significant adoption of solar power not only reduces carbon emissions but also contributes to India's clean energy targets. Efforts toward waste management have also been noteworthy. Approximately the projects undertaken by smart cities are directed towards modernizing waste management practices. Through improved waste segregation and efficient collection methods, smart cities are contributing to the reduction of waste generation and its impact on the environment. Climate change is a global collective action problem. India is a Party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), its Kyoto Protocol (KP) and the Paris Agreement (PA). India with more than 17% of the global population has contributed only around 4% of the global cumulative greenhouse gas emissions between 1850 and 2019. India has progressively continued decoupling of economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions. In key sectors of economy, the mitigation efforts have been undertaken with a vision of low-carbon, sustainable development. As a result,

India has achieved 24% reduction in emission intensity of GDP between 2005 and 2016. (Press Information Bureau, 2022) Furthermore, the development of green spaces and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure is enhancing the livability of these urban centers. Initiatives such as cycle-sharing programs, increased green cover, and the creation of recreational spaces are collectively contributing to improved air quality and a healthier urban environment. These sustainable strides underscore the commitment of smart cities to align with India's national sustainability goals and global environmental agendas.

Circular Economy Approach: Minimizing Waste and Maximizing Resources

The circular economy approach offers a paradigm shift in how societies manufacture, consume, and dispose of things. Contrary to the conventional linear "take-make-dispose" paradigm, the circular economy aims to establish a closed-loop system in which goods, materials, and resources are continuously utilised, recycled, and renewed. The major goal of the circular economy strategy is to break the link between economic growth and resource consumption, which will ease the burden on limited resources and slow down environmental deterioration. It emphasises the need to create things that are durable, repairable, and recyclable so that resources may be used for as long as feasible. This necessitates a thorough reevaluation of product design, production methods, and consumer habits.

First, it promotes effective resource utilisation by arguing for a decrease in waste creation at the source. Second, it promotes recycling whenever possible to extend the life of items or parts and keep them out of landfills. Thirdly, recycling is essential because it enables resources to be processed again and added to new products. Last but not least, energy recovery from non-recyclable trash guarantees that materials can still contribute to energy generation at the end of their lives. The circular economy strategy has several advantages. It has economic benefits in addition to lessening the environmental load of waste and resource depletion. It promotes innovation and job growth by opening doors for new business models like leasing and sharing. Additionally, by lessening reliance on finite resources and unstable commodity markets, it improves supply chain resilience. Several effective cases illustrate the circular economy in action. Remanufacturing and refurbishment techniques are being adopted by businesses to increase the lifespan of items like machinery and electronics. Platforms for renting apparel are one example of a collaborative endeavour that is changing the fashion business. Additionally, laws are being passed by lawmakers that promote recycling and forbid the use of single-use plastics. The circular economy is emerging as a potent paradigm for fostering long-term change as societies increasingly recognise the need for resource preservation.

CONCLUSION

In the complex dance between development and ecological balance, India's unwavering dedication to environmental sustainability shines out as a shining example of accountability. The topic, "Nurturing a Sustainable Environment: The Landscape of India's Environmental Journey," highlights the country's extensive efforts to reduce unrestrained environmental deterioration and highlights its will to protect its natural legacy for both present and future generations. The necessity of striking a balance between

environmental preservation and development is made clear by the extraordinary strain that India's march towards industrialization, urbanisation, and population increase is placing on ecosystems and natural resources. India's dedication to sustainable development is exemplified by the National Environment Policy of 2006, The National Action Plan on Climate Change (2008), which uses sector-specific missions to address various areas of climate adaptation and mitigation, and serves as an example of India's commitment to addressing climate change concerns. By promoting public health and dignity, programmes like the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan show India's commitment to upholding cleanliness and hygiene. The development of "smart cities" demonstrates creative steps taken in the direction of environmental sustainability, incorporating renewable energy, garbage disposal, and green areas. The circular economy strategy encourages sensible consumption, which is consistent with India's rich cultural tradition. India's extensive efforts in response to environmental issues throughout the world show a steadfast commitment to balancing nature and civilization. This dedication not only ushers in a more environmentally friendly future but also upholds India's tradition of responsible environmental care. This commitment continues to serve as a continual reminder that human welfare and the health of the world are inextricably linked as the country develops. India's progress towards environmental sustainability serves as an example for the rest of the globe, demonstrating the potential for establishing a peaceful coexistence between people and nature.

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