Repercussions Of Development On Our Environment And Social Justice

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Abstract

Climate change has already had significant effects on productivity and the quality of life. A balance has to be struck between industrial progress and environmental degradation caused primarily by industrial pollution. Development and environmental protection can dovetail with proper planning and management. Sustainable development does not end with sustainability of environment and resource system but it also requires sustainability of economic and social systems.

Keywords- Repercussions Of Development, Our Environment, Social Justice, Climate change.

Introduction

With the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, the world moved fast towards better living – terming it as growth – but at the same time, degrading the purity of nature in all forms. The Stockholm `Conference held in 1972, on the "human environment" brought to light the urgency of tackling environmental problems through various efforts. Environment is of course a critical challenge to continuation of our growth and to the extent of which growth translates into improved quality of life. Many of our cities are increasingly experiencing high levels of pollution. If we cannot protect our environment at present level of development, greater growth will make matters far worse. The consequences of rapidly falling water tables in many parts of the country are already threatening our sustainability. Climate change has already had significant effects on productivity and the quality of life in India whereas we need to be at the forefront of global efforts to combat it. 1. The purpose of economic development in any region is to provide opportunities for improved living and jobs to people. While industrial development invariably creates more jobs in any region, possibilities of adverse effects on the environment also increase. Dust, smoke, fumes, and toxic gas emissions occur because of highly-polluting industries such as thermal power plants, coal mines, cement, sponge iron, steel & ferroalloys, petroleum and chemicals, etc. In industry-specific clusters, these have not only become hazardous, but also cause irreparable damage to our ecology and environment, often breaching the environment's carrying capacity. 2.

Environmental protection measures have become necessary for development and to sustain environment at the same time. It is all the more important for India where economic development is necessary to meet the growing demand of people . However, indiscriminate degradation of environment in the name of economic progress is unwarranted. A balance has to be struck between industrial progress and ad environmental degradation which is caused primarily by industrial pollution.

Sustainable development does not end with sustainability of environment and resource system; it also requires sustainability of economic and social systems. Development and environmental protection can easily go together. It would be better to begin new projects with built-in environmental safeguards, rather than make haste only to regret later. Growth without environmental safety can prove counterproductive in the long run. The Bhopal gas tragedy is still fresh in the minds of the people. Unfortunately, no foolproof measure has yet been devised to cope with such unforeseen accidents which is very necessary to safeguard the health of the people living near the plants. High emission level of pollutants at industrial clusters has been reported in Raipur-Durg, Korba-Bilaspur, Agra-Kanpur, Vapi-Ankleswar, Dhanbad-Bokaro, Vizag, Tarapur, Ludhiana and so on. This is despite the fact that the number of power plants switched over to super-critical technology. Steel, cement, chemicals and petroleum refineries have also adopted state-of-the-art technologies. Adequate and effective pollution control measures are required so that adverse effects on the environment are minimized. There is a need to review and rework the strategies of setting up industry-specific clusters based on comparative advantage.

India's installed capacity of diesel generating sets forms a third of its total grid connected capacity. Toxic fumes emitted by burning diesel in Diesel Generator sets have serious implication and power thus generated is also expensive. As a deterrent, incentives for both capital investment and power generation by solar rooftop have been encouraged. 3. Various policy inducements have translated into lower generation cost. Tariffs for solar power have fallen to record low due to the Government's solar energy drive aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The gap between the thermal power and solar power has been narrowing. In 2018, renewable energy has reached 73 GW accounting for over 20 percent. The installed capacity of renewable energy in the country recorded 83.4 GW as on 31 October, 2019 while wind energy accounts for 37 GW and Solar 31.7 GW. Apart from increasing share in green energy and adopting latest technologies in fossil-fuel based plants, a host of measures are being undertaken to reduce India's carbon footprint; while coal and other fossil fuels will continue to play a major role in India's energy mix in the decades to come, it is committed to tackling climate change.

Clean technology essentially means a process that minimizes use of raw materials and produces minimal waste. Globally, environmental trends are reshaping the industry. There are plenty of examples of clean technologies round the globe. The growth in clean technology industry will definitely help in making sustainable and safe environment for next generations. International Energy Agency (IEA) claims that clean energy technologies and policies can indeed meet multiple objectives in the most effective way. For example, sustainable mobility solutions can increase access to services while reducing congestion and increasing productivity. Efficient building technologies can reduce energy investment needs while increasing comfort for residents. Local sources of energy and integrated distribution systems can decrease the costs associated with delivering various services, while improving resiliency and flexibility. The Government has launched National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) as a long-term, time bound, national level strategy to achieve 20 to 30 percent reduction in PM10 and PM2.5 concentration by 2024. Overall objective of the NCAP is comprehensive mitigation actions for prevention, control, and abatement of air pollution besides augmenting the air quality monitoring network across the country and strengthening the awareness and capacity building activities.

The NCAP will be a mid-term, five-year action plan with 2019 as the first year. The approach for NCAP includes collaborative, multi-scale, and cross-sectoral coordination between the relevant central ministries, state governments and local bodies. Dovetailing of the existing policies and programmes including the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and other initiatives of the Government with reference to climate change will be done while execution of NCAP.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines "climate change" as a change in climate attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of global atmosphere. It is observed over comparable time periods in addition to natural climate variability. The major characteristics of climate change include rise in average global temperature, icecap melting, changes in precipitation and increase in ocean temperature leading to sea level rise. The efforts needed to address climate change include mitigating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions on one hand and building adaptive capacities on the other. India is committed to the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, which represent international consensus on the ways to deal with climate change. It has a very comprehensive framework of legal and institutional mechanisms in the region to respond to the tremendous challenges to the environment and has initiated several climate-friendly measures, particularly in the renewable energy sector.

India inked Paris Climate Change deal on 2 October, 2016, a landmark pact which calls on countries to combat climate change and limit global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius. Incidentally, the Paris deal adopted by 195 countries in 2015 (leading player of GHG emission, the USA opted out) aims to limit global warming to 1.5 degree Celsius, considering pre-industrial level as the baseline. Paris hosted and spearheaded the One Planet Summit on 12 December, 2017. The event was aimed at sustaining momentum on climate change and to ring together civil society, private sector, and also national, regional, and local governments. The focus was on climate finance - both public and private – and to retain and defend the essence of operationalising some of the commitments to reduce GHG emission and switch to low-carbon path. At the summit, 60 heads of States and business leaders vowed to fight climate change. Regarding financing climate plan, the EU is reported to provide the $ 100-billion-a-year grant that developed countries have committed to by 2020. Japan plans to contributing to the Global Climate Fund (GCF) and focusing on adaptation efforts in vulnerable areas like Pacific Islands. Seeking to boost the global economy's shift to clean energy, the World Bank announced at the Summit that it would stop financing oil and gas exploration and extraction from 2019. The move was meant to help countries meet the GHG curbing pledges they had made in support of the 2015 Paris Agreement. Despite such development, however, according to Annual audit report of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), national pledges on emission reduction made by countries under Paris Agreements will only account for one-third of what is needed to avoid the worst impact of climate change. Even full implementation of the countries' unconditional 'NDC' (nationally determined contributions) would lead to temperature increase of at least 3 degree Celsius by 2100. It means Governments have to urgently deliver much stronger pledges when revised in 2020.

India announced its new climate plan, also known as Intended Nationally Determined Contribution, (INDC) in 2015. India's INDC targets installing 175 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2022 (out of this, 100GW has been allocated to solar and 60 GW to wind) by increasing its share of

non-fossil based energy from 30 percent to about 40 percent by 2030. It has committed to reduce its emissions intensity per unit GDP by 33 to 35 percent by 2030 and create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO_2 through additional tree cover. The Prime Minister in a recently held Climate Action Summit at New York (October-November 2019 has asserted that India was going to increase energy produced from non-fossil fuels to 175 GW by 2022 and would further it to 450 GW. India's report on climate action plan under the Paris Agreement suggests that over 80 percent of the 51 companies are responding to carbon disclosure project (CDP). India's climate change programme has reported one or more types of emission reduction targets and initiatives in 2017. It noted that 40 percent companies are committed to renewable energy production and consumption targets with three of them even committing to 100 percent renewable power in due course. The Indian companies are increasingly adopting internal carbon pricing (ICP) as an important tool for managing climate risks. ICP provides incentives to relocate resources towards low-carbon activities. Just 478 units reduced 2 percent of India's annual CO_2 emission. 4. The CDP India Annual Report (of 2018) noted that 13 companies are using ICP and 24 companies anticipate incorporating ICP in the next 2 years as compared to 11 and 20 companies respectively in 2017. In 2019, 37 companies in India were in the process of adopting ICP including major cement producer. 5.

However, to a large extent, an effective pollution regulation system will reduce the emissions of green house gases. At the operational level, the industries have to be closely monitored by a responsive and competent body which would create a more predictable and smoother regulatory environment, setting regulatory standards in new areas necessitated by development and enforce regulations effectively. There is need to improve the capabilities as well as strengthen our regulatory institutions. The Central and State pollution control boards are understaffed and often lack infrastructure. The Central Pollution Control Board has a few hundred employees compared to 140000 at the US Environmental Protection Agency and number of scientists is even fewer   6.while the State Pollution Control Boards function at sub-optimal levels due to gap in the capacity of enforcement and inadequate infrastructure. The Delhi Pollution Control Committee has less than 30 scientists and engineers dealing with air pollution in the NCR whereas Mexico city has over 200. 7.There is an urgent need to strengthen these agencies by recruiting professionals, taking up R&D work and provision of better infrastructural support.

The best brains of the world in the field of sociology, law and jurisprudence have tried to define social justice in their own way. The result is that the term has come to assume varied interpretations. To Plato, justice in society was to be attained by 'a division of labour according to natural aptitudes'. He Held that three qualities are found in individuals in society viz. wisdom, courage and temperance, and every individual in society should perform his duties according to his innate quality. Thus Platonic justice consists in 'the will to concentrate on one's own sphere of duty, and not to meddle with the sphere of others; and its habitation, therefore, is in the heart of every citizen who does his duty in his appointed place'. If the 'producers' of the community attempt to intervene in the affairs of the 'ruling classes' (whom Plato calls the Auxiliaries and Guardians of public service), then nothing but confusion can result which will be an example of injustice in society (Republic). But how was an individual to find his station or position in society? The individual was left guessing and usually the

accident of his birth decided his place in society. This problem of determinism makes Plato's definition of Justice rather undependable in practice and hence unsatisfactory.

The ancient Hindus also tried to solve the problem of social justice by dividing the society into four varnas : Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudras based on division of duties and occupations, and like Plato, Manu said, in general, 'it is better to discharge one's own dharma incompletely or imperfectly (Vigunah) than to perform completely that of another. Later on varna came to be determined by birth and heredity, and the result was the caste system. The Platonic concept of justice and Hindu caste system might have created social justice in society where population was thin and life was simple. It is unsuited to the present day problems. The concept of justice is dynamic, as society itself is dynamic. What our forefathers considered just, we might consider unjust. For offences for which people were hanged in the past, we impose a lenient fine today. Aristotle justified slavery; Americans fought a war to do away with it. Social justice is relative, its standards are highly variable with time and place but "life without some principle of Justice has never been lived and is not livable'.

In modern times, man as the measure of all things has come to occupy the most important position in any concept of social justice in modern democracies. In democracy, the individual is treated as an end in himself, and any concept of social justice must be based on this basic principle. Social Justice means that every individual is given full opportunities to develop his capacities and this opportunity is given to maximum number of persons in society. The creation of social justice means the creation of an environment in which every individual has got unreserved and unhindered opportunity for physical and intellectual development. In removing disabilities arising from caste, sex, race, colour, creed, religion or nationality, and providing opportunities in a positive way with a view to developing individual faculties lies the essence of social justice.

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