# Sustainable Development

'Sustainable Development' has become the most debatable topic today. It has raised many controversies between Development and Environment and that is why it is most relevant today. In India this concept has even greater relevance due to controversy surrounding the big dams and mega projects and related long-term growth. Environmental deterioration is increasing day by day due to deforestation, over-grazing, greenhouse gases, etc. If not checked in time our very survival will be at stake. The efforts towards sustainable development can help the earth to keep in balance.

What is sustainable development? The World Commission on Environment and Development, in its report 'Our Common Future' in 1987 defined sustainable development as "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Sustainable development does not mean a return to a pre-industrial or pre-technological era. It calls for continued economic growth and for business and industry to play a key role in achieving sustainable livelihoods for all people– alleviating poverty and improving living standards while maintaining the integrity of the global environment. But the process has been hindered by a conceptual obstacle: the belief that economic progress and environmental protection are mutually opposite goals.

Business and industry have traditionally regarded the environment as an almost limitless source of energy and raw materials, with the environmental costs of doing business shifted to society at large or future generations. This thinking originated with the industrial revolution and achieved its fullest realization in the decades of unprecedented growth following World War II, when innovation produced such high-tech items as computer chips and satellites, new and quicker modes of transport, agricultural green revolution, etc. However, this only served to reinforce a belief in the virtues of unbridled industrial development, even at the expense of the environment.

As the decisions of yesterday play havoc with the global environment of today, the idea that there should be little or no environmental constraints on business and industry has been rendered obsolete. 'In one area after another, environmental degradation is eroding the potential for development', was reported by World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987.

Human survival is under attach due to environmental degradation. The factors responsible for environmental degradation are population, deforestation and economic development. The emission of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide,

methane are on rise which has led to rise in temperature of earth. This has led to greenhouse effect which can cause melting of ice caps leading to rise in sea levels. It can submerge coastal areas and even few countries affecting the life of people and making them environmental refugees. We very well know that refugees have social and political dynamics for problems when they migrate causing security threats for those countries. Similarly, ozone depletion can create a lot of environmental problem. Ozone layer which protects from ultraviolet radiation is depleting due to increase of chloroflouro carbons used in refrigerators. Ozone hole has been detected which has serious repercussions because ultraviolet radiation can cause serious diseases like skin cancer and cataract.

The issue of limiting or restricting the greenhouse gases has become a North-South problem. Developed countries emit more than two thirds of the total greenhouse gases due to over consumption of energy resources. Their economic development is far ahead of the developing countries. Developing countries are at the initial stage of economic development. It is the need of the developing countries to develop. So, developing countries are demanding that developed countries' responsibility is greater in reducing the emission of greenhouse gases. Moreover, the developed countries should pay for the pollution and environmental degradation since they have polluted and degraded the environment more. Also, the developed countries should provide technical assistance to developing countries and help in transfer of technology at affordable prices so that the damage done to the earth can be repaired at the earliest. The arrangements can also be done for alternate or substitute technologies which are environmentally sensitive so that development of developing countries is not in jeopardy.

A middle ground in this debate appears to be taking shape. The developed nations appear ready to decrease their share of environmental degradation and increase aid in the form of technology transfers, education and new funding mechanisms, in exchange for commitments by developing countries to safeguard their environment and develop on a sustainable basis. Various conferences and conventions have taken up since 1972 UN Conference on Human Environment like IIPC, Montreal Protocol and Rio-Summit. In Rio-Summit, a blue print for environmental action known as 'Agenda 21' was drawn up which is really landmark development.

Balance is essential between development and environment changes in global climate patterns, deforestation, species loss, air and water pollution, ozone depletion and toxic waste disposal, all indicate the urgent need for sustainable practices. Environmental laws are to be implemented. Environmental education and awareness has to spread at all levels. The role of NGOs and activists is no

less in educating and spreading the awareness. The crisis is global. So both North and South have to make painful choices in the name of mutual security in order to meet the goals of sustainable development.