

# NEW PARADIGMS OF GROWTH AND SUSTENANCE: ROLE PLAYED BY INDIAN DIASPORA TOWARDS GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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## **Abstract**

*Nations have woken up from their deep slumber. There are many conferences, seminars, symposiums and debates being held, across the globe on issues like Green House Effect, good governance, Sustainable Development and other issues that are related to environment. India is one of the largest countries in the world that faces many problems. There are NGOs, government departments, scientists, intellectuals, and research scholars who are working towards sustainable development programmes. Sustainable development in India deals with a variety of development schemes in social and human resources sectors, both central and state governments and also public and private sectors. This also includes sectors like energy, drinking water and agriculture. The present central government speaks consistently on development and good governance and both nationals and members of the Diaspora respond to this concern.*

*The central government has further liberalized its policies and in contemporary times, FDI is permitted in various sectors. The Diaspora communities, through their various associations in India, aim to invest in diverse sectors, taking advantage of the FDI policy of the central government.*

*India has its vast diaspora spread across the globe. There are millions of NRIs and PIOs, who were economically insignificant in India, but have achieved great material success as foreign nationals. There are many in Indian Diaspora who are millionaires and billionaires and wish to contribute in the progress of their motherland. Many expatriate Indians have set up NGOs, associations and organizations towards various challenges which India confronts these days. Sustainable Development is one among them. The present paper aims to focus on how Indian Diaspora helps India towards sustainable development; through people who are contributing towards providing shelter, clean drinking water, clean energy, green environment and other related issues on sustainable development. It also speaks on good governance as seen by Diaspora members in their adopted lands. The Indian Diaspora needs further encouragement from the central and state government as well as general public to initiate requisite steps towards sustainable development in India.*

**Keywords:** *sustainable development, Diaspora, environment, FDI, NGOs, NRIs, governance*

## Introduction

The intellectuals, scientists, and research scholars have often debated on issues like climate change, greenhouse effect and sustainable development. This lip service towards 'safe environment' is gradually changing into action and the need for sustainable development is gaining momentum in the present day. Development reflects the diversity of our experiences and what sustainable development means in practical terms needs to be assessed. There is the growing concern for the future of our interlocked ecological and economic systems in a highly populated world that is characterized by major social disparities.

Krishan Saigal (2008) in his book *Sustainable Development: The Spiritual Dimension* speaks on the importance of maintaining a balance in Nature:

Modern scientific findings conclude that everything on earth is interwoven into a beautiful and extremely intricate and complicated balance of nature. This balance is particularly important in the case of the earth which is, perhaps, the only living planet in the universe. The major scriptures repeatedly focus on the need of maintaining that balance and not upsetting order in nature. As upsetting the balance could lead to the extinction of humanity and its replacement by another creation. (Saigal, 182)

The text books on environment for the primary school children also attest this fact of caring for Mother Nature. Community governance and sustainable development go hand in hand. While referring to governance, Nobel Laureate Ostrom also depicts mutual benefits:

The central question in the study of community governance is how a group of principals who are in an interdependent situation can organize and govern themselves to obtain continuing joint benefits when all face temptations to free ride, shirk, or otherwise act opportunistically.

-(Ostrom)

India is correctly called a sub-continent due to its vast area. The geographical location of India on the world map shows that it is surrounded by water in the South, West, East and in the North by Himalayas. Indians had trade relations with other countries since many centuries. This led to frequent contact with foreigners. Over a period of time, many Indians went to those countries in search of jobs, education, matrimonial alliances, trading purposes and simply on leisure tours. Among these Indians, many stayed back in those countries, raised their family, adopted the local culture, and gradually they became one among the local community. These Indians are concerned about various issues that India confronts today. In this situation, Non-Resident Indians and People of Indian Origin do invest in India and try to restore the 'balance of nature'.

Indian Diaspora has imbibed various positive cultural, social and ecological concerns while being in Christian Liberal Democracy nations of the west, especially USA, Canada, Australia, UK, New Zealand and other European countries. Gerry Stoker, who has concentrated on the governance policies of the west in 1990s expresses his thoughts:

The paradox that the liberal state faces is that governance, interpreted in the broad frame of the political and policy environment of the 1990s, has been used to denote a baseline agreement that governance refers to the development of governing styles in which boundaries between public and private sectors have become blurred. (Stoker)

The above observation made by Gerry Stoker should be a model for bringing the corporate sector, ruling class and the public on a common platform to debate on issues like governance and sustainable development.

### **Definition of Sustainable Development and The Idea of Governance**

Sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definition is from *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report (1987):

Sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: (1) the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and (2) the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs. (Brundtland)

All definitions of sustainable development require that we see the world as a system—a system that connects space; and a system that connects time. In simple words, sustainable development is environmental, economic and social well-being for today and tomorrow.

Monto M. in the book *Sustainability and Human Settlement* (2005) opines, “Sustainability models are usually based on a stand which can be termed as the model concept” (95). The book further states that, “Research on sustainability of human settlements needs to consider human systems and natural systems in a balanced manner” (95). This indicates that the resources available should be judiciously used for our benefit and keeping in mind the future generation, who would require natural resources in abundance due to population explosion.

Does the elite of this country look towards governance and sustainability as the outcome of a long drawn struggle between the civil society on the one hand and the industrialists on the other? George Matthew, a social scientist opines:

For the millions of poor and marginalized of this country, governance has relevance mostly in so far as it relates to the local space of the villages where they live and from where they earn their livelihood. To them good governance means good local governance. Is it responsive to the local needs? Is it transparent and accountable?” The hope of a common man needs to be cherished through effective policies of government. (Matthew, ix)

Rama & Ferran, while showing the subtle differences between government and governance, obviously agree that both these concepts finally relate to achieving the dreams of citizens.

Government and governance are both ways of governing society but the former relates to the forms associated with the liberal representative democracy, the traditional state, while the latter involves a wider set of actors, including elected politicians and public officials but also various no-elected interest and pressure groups. (Maiz and Requejo)

It is in a democratic set up that citizens can reap the benefit of good governance and development. Indian Diaspora indirectly contributes to the concept of good governance by making comparisons and showing the development and the pro-poor policies of the west as against India.

All of us leave our homeland for one or the other reason and we are placed in a host country. We have a dream, we long to go back to our motherland, the longing; the desire to go back to homeland, the feeling of belongingness towards our motherland is the notion of Diaspora.

Many in Indian Diaspora are already billionaires, philanthropists and lovers of Mother Nature. They do save, raise money and send back to their homeland. Arguably, it is seen to reinforce the principle of competitive advantage and help spur savings, investment and demand. What is less recognised is that international migration of human capital: the movement of knowledge, talent and skills across borders is central to learning and development.

Indian Diaspora has become an asset for India. The emergence of significant Diasporas has in recent years, brought into sharp focus two key facts. First, there is a large expatriate population of skilled people from emerging economies in the developed world. Second, overseas communities can constitute a significant resource for the development of the countries of origin. The movement of the high skilled and low skilled workers from less to more developed economies and back opens several new opportunities for development. To view the Diaspora only through the looking glass of remittances and financial flows is to take a myopic view. Not all expatriates need to be investors and their development impact measured only in terms of financial contributions to the home country.

The Diaspora is aware of national and international happenings. They know the causes for the deterioration of our environment. An overseas community does serve as an important bridge to access knowledge, expertise, resources and markets for the development of the country of origin. The success of this bridge is often predicated upon two conditions: the ability of the Diaspora to develop and project a coherent, intrinsically motivated and progressive identity and the capacity of the home country to establish conditions and institutions for sustainable, symbiotic and mutually rewarding engagement. Home countries are now beginning to recognise the need to pursue and promote the dynamics of Diaspora and development.

Indian government can rely upon Indian Diaspora in times of need. The overseas Indian community thus constitutes a diverse, heterogeneous and eclectic global community representing different regions, languages, cultures and faiths. The common thread that binds them together is the idea of India and its intrinsic values. Overseas Indians comprise People of Indian Origin and Non Resident Indians, who are amongst the best educated and successful communities in the world. In every part of the world, the overseas Indian community is recognised and respected for its hard work, discipline, non-interference and for successfully integrating with the local community. Overseas Indians have made significant contributions to the economy of the country of residence and have added in considerable measure to knowledge and innovation. The diaspora associations are tied up with various NGOs in India for the sake of safe environment and sustenance of nature.

Many in Indian Diaspora have shown their frustration towards the ruling party and the general public for being unable to weed out corruption, that directly and indirectly favours the elite of the society and scuttle favourable pro-poor legislation that are meant for safer environment and good governance. Rakesh Hooja who has done extensive research on these issues speaks:

Corruption has become a major threat to good governance all over the world, and India is no exception. Checking corruption is as important for good governance as is the rule of law, citizen-centric administration, effective and vigorous public service delivery that would result in the transformation and change of the society in desired directions. (Hooja)

**Indian Diaspora's Interest in Green House Farming**

The Indian diaspora today, with a strong community constituting more than 25 million and spreading across a hundred countries, continues to make its transnational presence felt. In the context of globalization and trans-nationalism, Indian Diaspora has invested in India in the sectors such as, textile, pharmaceutical, information technology, gems and jewellery, food and cargo, chemical, biotechnology, auto and ancillary, eco-tourism, hospitals and health care, hotels and resorts, educational institutions, aviation and telecommunication. The list goes on but one thing is sure that the Indian Diaspora, over the years, it has learnt to 'give back to nature more than what it receives'. Governance and sustainability cannot be looked at as separate entities as they are deeply interconnected. Italo and Giuliana while dwelling upon the burning issues of governance, vehemently argue that the people who are at the helm of power need to uphold the values of citizens:

A key task of governance is to establish and nurture the connection with citizens' values, needs and expectations, the strength of which depends upon the observable quality of the link between political responsibility and trust and authority in the exercise of power. (Italo Pardo & Giuliana Prato)

The investors in Indian Diaspora are cautious in their approach towards nature, environment, sustenance, sustainable development, governance; very often they speak about 'going towards the greener side'. Many have invested in Greenhouse Farming. The traditional farmers who had to struggle with Indian monsoon, with the investment from Indian diaspora are now growing rare flowers and vegetables for both export and domestic production. In many farming communities, greenhouse farming has altered the traditional methods of growing Jowar and Bajra in those states where dry weather prevails. The investment done by few entrepreneurs in Indian Diaspora has helped many farmers who have accepted this new method of farming and have installed greenhouses. The varieties of crops grown in greenhouses are mostly pepper, Gerbara flower, Dutch roses and other herbal plants.

**Concept of Water Management and Human Settlement**

Few NGOs that are funded by NRIs have set up water recycling plants. Krishan Saigal in his book *Sustainable Development: The Spiritual Dimension* (2008) speaks on conservation of water resources.

Water is essential to life. A total of 20 billion tons of unclean water flows every year from lakes and rivers to the oceans. This water is polluted and poisoned by sewage, agricultural run-off and industrial wastes. One third of rain water on land flows back to the sea. Rivers and streams have no boundaries; therefore one country's polluted water may be another country's drinking water. (184)

Realising the importance of conserving water, people in Indian Diaspora set up NGOs to deal with water and sanitation projects. The impetus for this particular study into NGO involvement and investment opportunities for few NRI associated groups comes from the increased engagement between NRIs and a range of NGOs, academic and research centres. Several state governments in India have accepted the study report from these NGOs on water management and sanitation issues.

NRI associations commissioned the study on water management through NGOs in India. It involved an assessment of engagement mechanisms and a plan for extended NGO activities, including a rapid assessment of NGO water project plans and indicative capacity to absorb additional activities presented from few industries and state governments. The study also considered practical ways to support capacity development in the

water and sanitation sector and opportunities for partnerships between industries. Scarcity of water especially during the summer season has inspired a new level of collaboration and progressive policy-making, in NRI associations and NGOs. It has resulted in the development of significant expertise and new strategies in all aspects of water conservation, from water recycling to catchment and ecosystem health restoration, systems integration, the design of smart water technologies and water sensitive urban design.

Every human being born in this planet has many natural rights, such as, right to breathe clean air, right to consume clean water and right to live in a clean, safe and secure environment. While dealing with sustainability Prof. Monto, opines,

“Sustainability is a fundamental issue dogging human activities and progress. Sustainability of human settlements, particularly in urban areas of the developing world, is vulnerable and being severely threatened. The ability to force likely implications of human actions and their impact on sustainability is crucial to guide progress towards sustainability” (Monnto, 18)

The above statement clearly shows that in India, urban areas are prone to congestion, due to migration. Sustainability in rural areas in India is fine but still people desire to go to sub-urban and urban areas mainly due to economic reasons. Indian Diaspora has time and again, tried to mitigate the problems arising through mass scale emigration to cities.

### **Tapping of Solar Energy**

NRIs are partners in various sustainable development projects launched in India, such as Solar Power. North Western states in India are rich in renewable energy resources. States like Gujarat and Rajasthan have 300 days of sunshine, endless land and relentless heat, good winds along the coast of Gujarat, scope for energy plantation in vast wastelands. In such scenario, we can quote from Krishan Saigal who cites from the Katha Upanishad,

The self-existent made the senses turn outward. Accordingly, man looks toward what is without, and sees not what is within. Rare is he who, longing for immortality, shuts his eyes to what is without and beholds the self (Saigal,96).

Solar energy is free for everyone but it needs trapping equipment. The Indian Diaspora has invested in solar energy. Scientific research has proven that western parts of India have very high degree of solar radiation. The solar parks thus built helps utilisation of vast waste lands which lay unutilised. It helps reducing cost by utilising common infrastructure to host multiple power projects.

### **Investment in Ecotourism & Sustenance of Good Governance**

Ecotourism is another area where the Indian Diaspora contributes its expertise so as to sustain Indian economy, generate new jobs and bring balance in the nature. William Forbes comments in *International Encyclopaedia of Sustainable Development*:

Ecotourism is not just any tourism related to nature. More than 100 different codes of conduct define and guide appropriate ecotourism (The International Ecotourism Society 2001). The key concept to remember is reciprocal development in appropriate eco tourism; both the economy and nature benefit (Forbes, 35).

Though there was ecotourism potential in India, it was not developed due to lack of investment and interest.

However, a re-emergence of ecotourism was made possible by marginalised communities, who are the real conservationist, and were centralised there by giving innovative ideas to ecotourism project. Few NGOs funded by NRIs have included women in ecotourism practices. India has vast potential for ecotourism. India's socio-cultural topography is unique as a land with so much of diversity, customs, languages, religion, dress, food, fauna and flora, climate, relics, historic places, monuments, rivers, beaches, mountains, etc., one cannot find this anywhere else in the world. Hence, the ecotourism potential of India is inestimable and demands further exploration.

### **Conclusion**

It is the duty of every citizen to work towards good governance, sustainable planning and development. Sustainable development aims to establish a resource consumption system that meets the needs of human life without damaging the ecosystem, and enables the ecosystem to continue to produce the resources for future generations. The recent policies of the central government in India of further liberalising its economy through FDI will help Indian Diaspora to invest in various sectors like ecotourism, water projects, urban planning, tapping solar energy, organic farming and conservation of forests especially medicinal plants.

Krishan Saigan has gone one step ahead in his explanation of Sustainable development from the lens of spirituality. He writes:

The concepts of sustainable development are seen to vary from the simple one developed by the Brundtland Commission of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the future to more complex formulations in which concepts like irreplaceability, biodiversity, carrying capacity, socioeconomic and ecological system resilience are included (Saigal, 12).

Further he asserts that religious books of Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and Muslims speak about coexistence, sustenance and sustainable development. In one such writing he opines that we need to exercise restraint while dealing with nature to earn our livelihood:

Is such striving for perfection consistent with normal life? Hinduism affirms that it is. While accepting the spontaneous activities of earning wealth and desire Hinduism asserts that their full value cannot be realized without a rule, a guidance, a restraint (Saigal, 96).

This affirms our faith in Nature, make our future generation safe and secure not only for humans but also for animals. Good governance should result in good policies. Ramesh Arora & Satish Batra sum up their proposition of governance that meets India's needs and aspirations with the following words:

In simple terms, governance is the exercise of power to manage a nation's affairs. Or it is about decision making processes and about interactions between the civil society and formal institutions such as government (less permanent) and state (more permanent). In other words, it denotes how people are ruled, how the affairs of the states are administered and regulated (Arora & Batra).

How does the present central government in India go about totally revamping major policies that are directly going to impact the question of governance and development? The MHRD is contemplating the formulation of a new education policy for which might have special emphasis on good governance and development. Ranabir and Suhit Sen had foresight in speaking on this issue. They observe:

The governance question also assumes significance in the contemporary context because the philosophy of higher education is undergoing rapid changes, if not upheavals (Samaddar & Sen).

It is the duty of the ruling class to adhere to the values that have been practised by Indian citizens and the Diaspora who have propagated these values in their adopted land. Good governance and the policies towards sustainable growth and development should not traverse the trust and the faith every citizen of India and the Diaspora community has kept over the years. Citizens aspire to reap the benefit of good governance and sustainable development over the years. The present central government of India should not disappoint citizens who are in Indian sub-continent and the vast Indian Diaspora that is situated across the globe.

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