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## INDIA TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract:

Since the beginning of Indian civilization, sustainable development has been considered the essence of human life, a system in which natural resources are used to improve human life in such a way so that future generations can get a good and healthy environment. India is definitely different from other countries of the world due to its geographical, social, economic and demographical diversity. India has surpassed China to become the world's most populous country with over 140 crores of people. Being World's highest populated country it has many obstacles in the pathways towards achieving sustainable development. Huge income inequality still persists in Indian economy. More than 40% of the wealth created in the country has gone to just top 1% of the population while bottom half of total population is owing only 3% of total national wealth. The other fundamental challenges include-11.28% people still live in multidimensional poverty, 750 million people without electricity, India has around 18% of world population but only 4% of its water resources making it amongst most water- stressed countries, it ranked second with approximately 18 million homeless people and millions of people without basic education and health facilities.

India is a signatory to Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015 summit and is strongly committed to the 2030 agenda. Despite these obstacles Indian economy has committed to control greenhouse gases emission and achieving fast and inclusive growth. Over last two decades, Indian Government has launched many programs to encourage small scale businesses using renewable energy, handcrafted products and e-commerce businesses to boost equal regional growth across the country.

The present study is an attempt to analysis the major challenges faced by Indian economy towards achieving sustainable development, social equity and development in major areas of multidimensional poverty reduction, education and gender equality, availability of safe drinking water, access to electricity.

Key words- Sustainable Development, Multidimensional poverty, Renewable energy, social equity.

### Data analysis and interpretation:

**The present study is a descriptive study to examine the Challenges in pathways of Sustainable Development of India.** This study is based on quantitative data collected from secondary sources to provide meaningful results to the study; the techniques of percentage, averages, and trend analysis have been adopted for the purpose of analyzing data in the present study. Majorly challenges faced in key indicators such as poverty eradication, education and gender equality, health and hygiene, access to safe drinking water are reviewed.

**Source of data collection:** the data for present study is secondary collected through various official sites of NITI Aayog, United Nations, MoSPI, World Bank, NSSO, Election Commission of India, Ministry of Human

Resource Development, newspapers and a number of previous research have been examined for getting the latest data and information related to the study.

### Analysis and results:

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As premier think tank of Indian Govt., NITI Aayog, has been entrusted with the task of coordinating the SDGs. States have also been advised to undertake a similar layout of their schemes, including centrally sponsored schemes. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is also engaged in the process of developing national indicators for the SDGs. Government has launched major programmes such as

Swachh Bharat, Make In India, Skill India, and Digital India to create more sustainable business environment in the country to provide employment to youth at nearby places. State and local governments play a key role in many of these programmes. State governments are paying keen attention to visioning, planning, budgeting, and developing implementation and monitoring systems for the SDGs.

In addition, The UN Country Team in India helps NITI Aayog in its efforts to address the integration of the goals to ensure social equity and to advocate for adequate financing to achieve the SDGs. The UN in India currently supports five State governments (Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, and Odisha) in localizing the SDGs to address key development challenges at the state level. The progress of key indicators of SDGs is as under:

### Reduction of poverty:

Despite India's best efforts to reduce poverty it has the highest number of people living below international poverty line. 11.28% people still live in multidimensional poverty. As per the NITI Aayog report 2023, India's national multidimensional poverty has three equally weighted dimensions - health, education and standard of living. The report disclosed that there is a steep decline in poverty headcount ratio of 9.89 % over a period of five years (2015-16 to 2019-20). 135 million people escaped multidimensional poverty during these five years. Fastest decline of 13.31% of multidimensional poor is witnessed in rural areas comparing to urban areas where this rate was 3.38 % (2015-16 to 2019-20).

**Table no. 1. Multidimensional Poverty Index of India**

Year	Headcount Ratio(H)	Intensity of poverty (A)	MPI(H*A)
2015-16	24.85%	47.14%	0.117
2019-21	14.96%	44.39%	0.066

Source: National Multidimensional poverty index, NITI Aayog 2023.

The report also indicates that despite overall decline in MPI, state- wise there is a huge regional disparity in this ratio. UP, Bihar, MP, Odisha and Rajasthan recorded steepest decline in number of MPI Poor and Delhi, Puducherry, Lakshadweep were at bottom in the list. Further disaggregated estimates show that the most rapid Reduction in Proportion in Multidimensionally poor individuals occurred in district of states of Madhya Pradesh, Gujrat, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Regional disparity is still the biggest obstacle in creation of a welfare state where every individual has access to and availability of the basic human need's goods and services. Another major issue is concentration of wealth in the hands of top 1-2 % of total population. More than 40% of the wealth created in the country has gone to just top 1% of the population while bottom half of total population is owing only 3% of total national wealth.

### Education and Gender equality in Education:

Literacy level and educational attainment are necessary developmental indicators in a developing nation like India as they are key variable of measure of development as they indicate quality of life, awareness level and also level of skill of people in the society. Considering the importance of education, India has enacted Right to Education to ensure free and compulsory Education for children in the age group 6- 14 years under the Right to Education act 2009. Education is the foundation of every society's development. A well-educated society can use its resources for betterment of population. As remarked by Dr. A.P.J Abdul kalam – “learning gives creativity, creativity leads to thinking, thinking leads to knowledge and knowledge makes you great”.

According to Educational Statistical report released by MHRD in 2018 the overall literacy rate in India is 69.1 per cent, the literacy among females is 56.8 per cent and among males is 72.3 percent (the numbers pertain to 2014). Overall literacy in urban India is 79.5 per cent (male 83.7%, female 74.8%) and in rural India is 64.7 per cent (male 72.3 %, female 56.8%). It is clearly noticeable from the above data that there is wider disparity in literacy rates of males and females in rural India than in urban India.

To have a clearer view of literacy growth rate since Independency, we have examined the data collected through Census as follows:

**Table 2. Literacy Rates in Post Independent India**

Year	Female	Male	Total
1951	8.86	27.15	18.32
1961	15.35	40.4	28.31
1971	21.97	45.96	34.45
1981	29.76	56.38	43.57
1991	39.29	64.13	52.21
2001	53.63	75.26	64.83
2011	65.46	82.14	74.04
<b>% Increase in 2011 over 2001</b>	22	9	14

Source: Census of India, Office of Registrar General, India.

As per the census, the literacy rate of women had increased more than men in the country which is a good indicator. Percentage Increase in 2011 over 2001 in women literacy in rural areas is 26% as compared to the percentage of men which is 10% and in urban areas this increase is 9% comparing to men having 3% increase. Lack of vocational education and trainings limit the opportunities of getting better job offers and career advancement for the females.

According to the report of World Bank as per data collected by UNESCO Institute for Statistics as of Sept. 2020, the literacy rate of adults (% of people ages 15 and above) was 74 percent, whereas literacy rate of male adults was 82 percent as compared to female adult literacy rate that was 66 percent.

As per the same report Youth literacy rate (% of people ages 15-24years) was 92 percent, in this age group Male youth literacy rate was 93 percent and female literacy rate was 90 percent. So, we can say that literacy rate of women shows a significant growth but still far behind from that of man in the country.

#### **Availability of safe drinking water:**

Safe water supply is the necessity of healthy economy yet is under prioritized globally. India has around 18% of world population but only 4% of its water resources making it amongst most water- stressed countries. Two- third of India's districts are affected by extreme water depletion. The main concern is the high rate of groundwater depletion because ground water supplies around 85% of drinking water in rural areas and nearby half of water requirements in urban areas. In August, 2019 the Prime Minister announced a new national flagship programme 'The Jal Jeevan Mission' with main objective of providing piped water supply to every household in the country by 2024. As a result of this programme household tap connections in rural areas increased 32% between August 2019 to May,2022 itself. With the help, technical assistance and advocacy of UNICEF, safe drinking water and sanitation remain high on the priority of Indian Govt. Another important programme launched by Indian Govt. is 'Atal Bhujal Yojana' which is implemented in 8220 Gram panchayats across seven Indian States making is world's largest community-led groundwater management program. World bank has been also supporting Govt. of India's effort to rejuvenate the Ganga River since 2011 by helping in setting up the institutions to manage the river and in building the infrastructure to keep it clean,

Despite the necessary actions taken by Govt. the main concern is the contamination of fresh water as per the report of NITI Aayog 2018, 70% of the country's fresh water is contaminated. Majority of Indian population do not have access to treated water. official data indicates that out of 19.24 crore rural household in country approx. 71.51% have tap water supply in their homes, therefore were "on track" for the MDG goal on drinking water. But the number of waterborne diseases and deaths due to diarrhea and cases of fluorosis are quite high in India and is not documented properly.



## Access to electricity:

The fourth and fifth rounds of National Family Health Survey Report showed 97% of India's household have electricity (95% of rural and 99% of urban) till March 2021. The Govt. went on to strive to achieve 24\*7 electricity for all households in the country by 2022. New definition of energy access by world bank focus on reliability and quality instead of focusing on the availability of connections. In India most areas get electricity through distribution companies or discoms. Most states have primarily one discom supplying electricity to the entire state resulting high cost of supply to the distant villages. As per NITI Aayog's India climate and energy dashboard the transmission and distribution losses in power sector were about 15.8% in 2022-23. But there is some debate on Govt Definition of 'electrified villages and quality, affordability and reliability of the electricity being supplied. In most of rural areas majority of households experience long power cuts and even supply of power during Late hours of nights with frequent interruptions. To improve quality and availability Indian Govt. launched programmes to increase its capacity for renewable energy to 450 GW by 2030. Major problem with renewable energy (Solar power) is its intermittence because period of peak energy generation does not coincide with periods of peak load. This problem can be solved by installing batteries and allowing electricity to be shared between disparate areas for resilience and flexibility. Problem of High installation cost of solar panels is to be tackled by the Govt. to make sure adoption of this energy system at village level.

## Conclusion:

India has surpassed China to become the world's most populous country with over 140 crores of people. There are many challenges in the pathways of sustainable development of the country faced by policies makers. India is one of the fastest growing economies of the world still certain challenges persist e.g.; inequality in consumption, child malnutrition, increasing unemployment and real growth in wage, greenhouse gases emission. Indian Govt. has launched many programmes to attain sustainable development goals since 2015-16. As result of Govt.'s effort the key indicator such as reduction of multidimensional poverty, availability of electricity, education level, safe drinking water, health index has shown intensive improvements over last five years. One of the major challenges for India is devising suitable indicators to effectively monitor the progress of SDGs. India's past records reveal that it has not been very successful in setting relevant indicator of variables to measure outcomes e.g., drinking water, literacy rate, reach towards health facilities etc. The Indian government itself has admitted that non-availability of data (particularly in respect to sub-national levels), periodicity issues and incomplete coverage of administrative data, have made accurate measuring progress of even MDGs virtually impossible. More emphasis should be given on setting measures for key indicators of SDGs, boosting level of investment (public and private) in SDG related sectors, measuring progress and regular follow -up of various schemes. To make Indian economy more socially equitable and climate responsive the focus should be on making Villages self-sufficient micro economies so that basic facilities can be provided to every needy citizen at their doorsteps. There are many examples of Village panchayats, which adopted rain water storage systems, green waste management, modern eco-friendly schools, solar power generation system etc. to provide ideal living condition to their population and conserving the limited natural resources for future generations.

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