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## A STUDY ON YOUTH TOWARDS ADOPTING SUSTAINABLE LIFE IN THE CONTEXT OF INDIA

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### Abstract -

Amongst the G20 (The Group of 20 – Premier intergovernmental forum for international economic cooperation) goals, “Sustainable Development” is at the apex of all. Because of increase in population and also due to materialistic approach of humans towards life, there is a hike in pollution and increase in temperature on the earth. The whole world is facing sudden climate changes and their adverse impacts on human health. The population has crossed 8 billion and therefore sustainable survival of fellows on the earth is the requirement. <sup>[1]</sup> The entire scenario leads to the necessity to have rational equilibrium between commercial purpose and nature, in all human actions. An analysis of each human activity at individual level, in the light of cost, utility, harm to environment and impact on human life quality is the need before its implementation. This article analyses views about youth adopting steps towards living a sustainable life and the reasons behind non adoption of such lifestyle steps. It also gives a suggestive path to increase the contribution by youth towards sustainability.

Key words – youth, sustainable life

### Objectives –

- 1) To recognize the importance of adopting sustainable life routine by the youth
- 2) To notice the reasons behind non adoption to such lifestyle steps
- 3) To uncover ways to make youth adopt a sustainable lifestyle

Need of the study – The study is required to be done in the context of India, as the country is the most populated country having many cities, ranking in top 10 in the list of polluted cities in the world.<sup>[2]</sup>

Research methodology – The article is based on secondary data collected from various reports and previously published research papers. There is empirical data available on the subject, collected from the sample located at different geographical places in the world, which mirrors the base for this research paper.

### Literature Review –

- 1) Böhme, J., Walsh (2022), Sustainable lifestyles: towards a relational approach. *Sustain Sci* 17: 2063–2076 - It is, necessary to plan human developmental models with justice frameworks, and to have the healthy development of natural systems, instead of associating human development with economic and technological progress.<sup>[3]</sup>
- 2) <sup>1</sup>Cohen, Steven, 2017/12/01, ‘Understanding the Sustainable Lifestyle’, *The European Financial Review* - A sustainable environment and economy are possible only if they provide support to a sustainable lifestyle. This is a way of life that insists material consumption as a means rather than as an end and attempts to ensure that consumption has as little negative impact on the biosphere as possible.<sup>[4]</sup>
- 3) Anastazija Dimitrova, Antonín Vaishar and Milada Št’astná , *Sustainability* **2021**, Preparedness of Young People for a Sustainable Lifestyle: Awareness and Willingness, *13*(13), 7204 – The study conducted in 2021, shows that the young adults in Brno, a city in Czech Republic, Europe, understand and are aware of the benefits of living a sustainable and low impact lifestyle. But living such a life practically seems to be difficult. Young people state that it is attainable only if –
  - 1) Such behavior is normalized in the eyes of the society
  - 2) Sustainable opportunities to earn money are available as business
  - 3) Availability of infrastructure
  - 4) Availability of opportunities for implementing sustainable habits<sup>[5]</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Cohen is the Executive Director of Columbia University’s Earth Institute and Professor in the Practice of Public Affairs at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs

- 4) Piscitelli, A., D’Uggento, A.M. Do young people really engage in sustainable behaviors in their lifestyles?. *Soc Indic Res* **163**, 1467–1485 (2022)

The paper concludes that –

- 1) Level of education affects people’s ecological habits. As they become wealthy they consume more goods and also their concern about environment increases.
- 2) Well being of a community depends on safety and legality in the social environment in which they live. The community expects it to be guaranteed by the authorities & the Government.
- 3) Ecological practices are the charge of family and community in a wider perspective.
- 4) Educational institutions play a key role in raising people’s environmental awareness.
- 5) Internet/ Social media can be used as a pivotal tool to spread awareness about the same.<sup>[6]</sup>

### Sustainable lifestyle –

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global authority working on the environment issues defines sustainable lifestyle as -

**“Understanding and adopting ways of lifestyle that do not harm or destruct environment while human beings live their life on the earth.”**

It also mentions that -

**It has been observed that most people do not intent to harm the environment - nor to restore it.** They want to live their lives and use their potential to achieve self esteem, prestige and recognition. However while doing this, an imbalance between the amount of wealth and material that people own, is getting created. Some have excess, on the other side some are living with scarcity. The future now depends on behavior of people and how they choose to live, work and play as global consumers – how they run their homes, what food they eat, how they spend leisure time, how do they move around, what they buy and how do they care for the planet.<sup>[7]</sup>

Other definitions of Sustainable Lifestyle briefed by various bodies are –

- 1) Lifestyle that attempts to reduce the use of earth’s natural resources
- 2) Sustainability means making choices today that will positively impact the planet tomorrow. It suggests thinking of the needs of future generations by ensuring that they will receive a safe and healthy planet to live and flourish.

- 3) Sustainable living means prioritizing the use of natural and renewable resources. Sustainable living means finding ways that people can make the planet's resources last as long as possible, preferably forever.<sup>[8][9]</sup>

### History –

The concept finds its footprints since 1954. Helen and Scott – set down the beginning of the modern day sustainable living movement in the book 'Living the good life'. Before that the concept was not in books however was in practice in the form of numerous activities like use of durable goods which can be recycled, use of natural renewable resources in day to day life (wind/ solar etc.) and also ways to restore them (crop rotation) etc.

### Current scenario –

In 2015, member states of United Nations adopted 'The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', which provides 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), are at the top in the 'to do list of actions' by all developing and developed economies. The 17 goals talk about reduction in inequality, poverty along with improvement in health, education followed by economic growth. They also focus at collection of data regarding impact chain of problems faced by the world such as climate change, air pollution, aquatic pollution etc. and requirement of strategic planning, policy making by governments. Multilevel decisions are one of the UN's strategies to solve the issues. This multilevel structure includes –Individual, Local, Regional, National and Global. At global level, the annual high level political forum on Sustainable Development, serves as the central UN (United Nations) platform for the follow up and review of the SDGs.

In India at national and regional level the policy initiatives include National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC),<sup>2</sup>INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE (ISA), National Clean Air Programme, Satat Bharat - Sanatan Bharat etc.<sup>[11]</sup>. The authorities and Governments are on their toes to take an urgent call towards the issues. Nevertheless it is also the responsibility of citizens to take it to the productive results.

Speaking in that context, the 'Local' and 'Individual' level efforts towards SDG goals, consist of behavior of individuals to bring sustainability in day to day life actions. This term related to

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<sup>2</sup> ISA is the first treaty-based International Intergovernmental Organization launched by India and France on 30 November, 2015 in Paris and entered into force on 6 December, 2017

involvement all humans on the earth in the process of achieving SDGs can be recognized as ‘**Total Humanity Involvement**’. The discussion highlights the need of adopting a sustainable life by people, especially youth as they are going to be the future generation.

#### Discussion on reasons behind non adoption of sustainable lifestyle –

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) states about individual level behavior towards sustainability that –

“People do not change behavior based on what they *should do*. They do not respond to data and statistics, nor to negative future scenarios. People act to fulfill their needs and aspirations. They make decisions based on price, accessibility, effectiveness and additional criteria like well-being or trends. Sustainability is not the defining criteria. Even the people who want to live more sustainably often lack information and access to affordable and desirable products and services. This underscores that beyond people, it is up to governments and business (who are also consumers!) to provide more information and support positive behavior change, and to support and develop new business models to make sustainable living a default option.” [7]

The reasons behind non adoption of sustainable habits can be laid down as –

- 1) Social non acceptance – Exercising sustainable practices cost more time which becomes an hindrance in accepting the same in today’s fast pace of life
- 2) Lack of motivation – Most of the people concentrate only on personal growth, aspirations and monetary gains and therefore only few who insist on such practices get demotivated being aloof
- 3) Lack of information – The information about sustainable systems and products is available in the market however due to lack of glamour the same are ignored by young people
- 4) Lack of social and economic value to sustainable habits – Even though a business activity based on sustainable practices is set up, it needs to struggle a lot to make a place in the market and also to survive in the long run
- 5) Wrong portrayal of human life by media – It has been observed that the life of people portrayed by media is glamorous and glorious which shadows the thoughts of an individual related to sustainable practices

Conclusion – Today the terms “development” and “growth” are associated with only economic and technological progress. Youth as aspirants are using materials extravagantly to cope up with the same. It is leaning a little towards materialism knowingly or unknowingly. Researchers in past few decades have analyzed the concept of materialism from various aspects and the conclusions drawn frequently state that materialism has been showing negative consequences at individual as well as social level. <sup>[13]</sup> Therefore there is a need to mold youth, involved in the process of all developmental activities in the framework of sustainable practices. The discussion supports the fact that there is a need to chalk out an awareness strategy to motivate them to adopt steps towards sustainable development.

### Recommendations -

- 1) The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023, published by United Nations suggests that – ‘Give due consideration to the contribution of culture to the achievement of sustainable development in the formulation of national, regional and international development policies and international cooperation instruments.’

Cultural trends which materialize into sustainability actions by people, can be promoted by the influencers. <sup>[10]</sup>

- 2) Encouragement to social entrepreneurship –
  - a. Financial aid in the form of subsidiaries or concession in taxes by the Government to sustainable business opportunities,
  - b. Public sector can be the consumer to such business enterprises,
  - c. Availability of training, technical assistance and digital extension services to all those who want to run sustainable business opportunities,
- 3) Promotion of sustainable practices by Government.
- 4) Media, business tycoons, corporate entities, celebrities, fashion icons and other successful personalities can facilitate to set sustainable trends in the society.
- 5) Awareness and learning through formal education, information sharing platforms regarding importance of exercising sustainable routine

- 6) Sustainability goals to reflect in all policy decisions by the Government. For example the theme of India's G20 2023 presidency was – 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' meaning - 'One earth, One family, One future'. For the year 2024 Brazil as the host of G20 Summit expresses its commitment and desire to sustainability by having the slogan as – 'Building A Just World And A Sustainable Planet'.
- 7) Availability of scientifically tested ecological day to day life products, systems to live a sustainable life by individuals.
- 8) Availability of sustainable infrastructure based on renewable resources to exercise sustainable activities. <sup>[11]</sup>

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