

# Three Important Pillars Of The Future: Environment, Sustainable Development, And Local Self Government

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## **ABSTRACT:**

*Flora and fauna are the actual trinkets of the crown named "Biodiversity". We are running in the 21st century, the year 2020 and, of course, undergoing the lockdown period. The reason is best known to all humans', i.e., "unwarranted and undisciplined" interference with the system and norms of Mother Nature. Growth is a positive notion in the fields of mathematic and economics, so as the population is increasing, but there are no positive results of the same. The snowballing greenhouse gas emission, pollution, destruction of biodiversity, animal killings, maiming, frequent floods and droughts are the worrying alarming consequences of our mismanagement and interference.*

*The national and state governments are already hawking with unprecedented challenges; the population will not stop intensifying, so what should be our modus operandi in attaining the sustainable development goals? The urban cities are subjugating the leading sources of the earth; urbanization has affected every area of developing and developed countries. In this present scenario, we only have our villages and sub rural areas, which could maintain the biodiversity, flora and fauna. However, the problem is of proper skills and guidance. The only unit which can work from grass root level is "Local self-government" it seems that union and states are more formidable and have long-lasting effects on people's minds. Still, the grass-root government is getting into the grips with most questioning jobs.*

*The United Nations has always focused on the independence of local self-government because the trio of environment, sustainable development and local self-government are the rock-solid pillars of the future we want for the globe and Asia Pacific region.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Environment, Sustainable development goals, Local self-government, Environment pollution, biodiversity.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

*Man and Nature: A tale of exploitation*

Man is friends with nature, the Vedas and ancient texts suggest that man and nature have to go hand in hand for the planned development of society; the ancient philosophy voices about nature as "Prakriti" and man as "Purush" the relationship of both is interdependent and disciplined, nature is there for self-actualization of our basic needs. Then man has to reimburse the favor by taking care of nature. God has planned the cycle of nature and man accordingly, but human greed has surpassed all the limits so far; we all know a man is greedy by nature, human greed has no end, day by day, he is manipulating every single thing to fulfill his never-ending needs; man has gone blind in the limelight of greed.

Once upon a time, man and nature were friends, but today it has become a tale of exploitation, the way human beings have ransacked nature is the worst of all. The present scenario is giving chills in the spine to the environmentalist, scientists and other social workers, as they are observing the deterioration from very close; the situation is worsening and tensioning as the world is just one step away from the atom bomb named "destruction." The image of environmental destruction looks this way; Underneath the ocean, the precious coral reefs are vanishing, rainforests are parching into savannahs, forest fires are happening very casually and often along with this, nature is scorching at an extreme level.

The total biomass of wild mammals has fallen by 82%, and our ecosystem is suffering defeat in maintaining its area. The extinction of millions of species has taken place. Amphibian species are at risk of extinction (every two in five); marine species are on the verge of extinction the ratio is close to 1/3. Specifically, the insects required and necessary for plant pollination have also started becoming extinct with the ratio of (one in ten). Unfortunately, in some areas, the population has wiped out.

If we talk about manipulating land, then the soil has degraded so harshly that the production has reduced by 23% (global land).<sup>1</sup> The annual mean global temperature is likely to be at least 1° C above pre-industrial levels according to the United Nations environment program in the coming four years (2021-2024). There is a 20% chance that the temperature is going to rise by 1.5° C. It is a serious concern which has to be addressed as soon as possible.

- a) Except for southern oceans, all the oceans will become warmer by 2024 than recent past.
- b) Sea level pressure is rising day by day, which shall automatically affect the northern North Atlantic region, and strong westerly winds are expected to attack.
- c) The northern hemisphere is expected to become warmer by 0.8° C in the year 2020.<sup>2</sup>

These slight changes might seem slow but have long-lasting effects, and these effects are warning that what will be the future of future generations? In Arctic Siberia, the average temperature has risen to 10° C. It is above average for the arctic region; not only this, but Verkhoyansk observation station has recorded 38° C records high for the arctic. Due to this high temperature, forest fires and zombie fires are taking place worldwide and are degrading land quality by releasing carbon compounds; due to this carbon compound, the whole ecosystem gets affected. It takes 100 years to build such an ecosystem. Releasing CO<sub>2</sub> will destroy the small living beings of that particular area where such fires happen, due to these forest fires or zombie fires In June 2020 approx. 59 megatons of Co<sub>2</sub> were released into the atmosphere. It embarks the highest release in the past 13 years,<sup>3</sup> the situation is alarming, and only human efforts can improvise the situations; else, everything will finish with a question mark. Talking about efforts here, we mean and direct towards the role of self-governance and local participation.

*Local Self Governance – Protector Of Fundamental Rights Of Citizens:*

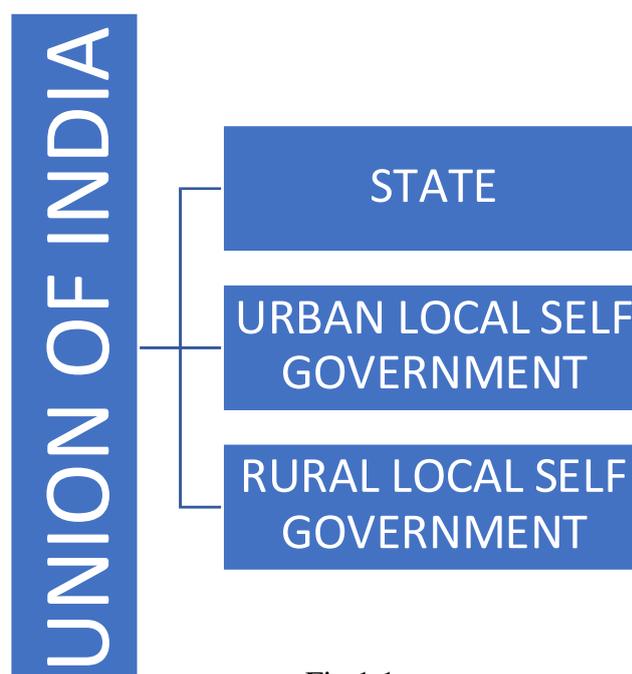


Fig 1.1

India is a union of states, and states are then bifurcated into two other urban local self-government governments, i.e., Municipality, Municipal corporations, and on the other hand, for villages, we have rural local self-government i.e., gram panchayat, panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad. Using the doctrine of federalism, we have successfully planned and organized three forms of government for our country. If ran adequately, then the last tier, local self-government, can do wonders in the areas of environment, education, development, and social work.

We may believe or not local governments play a very significant role in promoting and protecting the fundamental rights of Indian folks because their very concern is to provide public services and protect the individual and community rights of villagers, who are not able to fight for themselves, as it is very well known that illiteracy is an infectious disease and is prevailing in almost more than half of the villages of India. The human rights commission considers local government more effective and powerful when it comes to villagers. In India, we have our roots in villages. Because of this, wherever we may live, our heart and soul will lie in our soil.

From Lord Ripon to Acharya Vinobha Bhave, the main idea was to promote local self-governance and bequeath a life full of dignity and respect to the folks. The institutionalization of local self-government since 1990 has added significant momentum to the decentralization process.<sup>4</sup> This decentralization has shifted the ball in the court of local people of India; now, they take part in the election and connect themselves from developing India. Social transformation comes from whistleblowers; the constitutional mandate is all about equality, liberty, fraternity and social justice. Article 21, of the Indian Constitution (1950) talks about the "Right to life," and this fundamental right is so vast and broad that all other human rights are covered under this particular right. The right to have a healthy environment is also a fundamental right, and Supreme Court has time again declared that it is the responsibility of the state to protect the environment for its folks and the entire world.

In the case of *S. Jagannath vs. Union of India*<sup>5</sup> in this particular case, the petitioner,

chairman; Gram sabha Movement filed a petition in the Apex court under Article 32 for the upliftment of society; the petitioner was against the intensive and semi-intensive type of prawn (small fish) farming in the economic fragile coastal areas, prohibition from using the wasteland and wetlands for prawn farming and demanded that Constitution of National Coastal management authority should safeguard the coastal areas.

“The court held that setting up shrimp culture farms within the prohibited area and in the ecology fragile coastal areas have adverse effect on environment and coastal ecology, so it is the duty and function of gram panchayat to frame some necessary rules and regulations so that there shall be no adverse effect on environment.”

In the case of Rural litigation and entitlement, Kendra vs. State of U.P <sup>6</sup> in this case court asked for the closure of certain limestone quarries, as there were safety issues. The activity was hazardous to life and the environment. Hence, the court ordered the state government and local government to check on this activity and shut down such illegal mining.

In the two above precedents, the judiciary has talked about the role and responsibility of Local self-government; due to industrialization, factories and industries are setting up, and in the race of development, we forget the harm caused to the environment and people, Supreme Court has tried to make the point clear that “state” includes Local governments too, which have to play their role according to the Constitutional mandate.

The rural area is the backbone of Indian society, and the local government needs to maintain that sanctity of rural areas. Mahatma Gandhiji said that if we do not focus on our rural areas, then our urban areas will also perish; that is why he focused on “Swaraj” to understand that real power is in their hands, that rural areas are the real economy of Independent India. United Nations has always emphasized the role of local self-governance and the fundamental rights of its folks; it says that Local governance is not a new concept; it has a long history and tradition; the importance of this tier of government is that; it speaks in favor its people, it supports its people, it shall be a significant step to empower local government and protect the fundamental rights of the rural folks of every country.

#### *Glitches And Tribulations Faced By Environment:*

Several challenges are hitting climate change, weather deterioration, soil erosion etc. all these terms are used by us when we have to lecture on environmental problems or when some news hit the channel regarding environmental problems, else we are not even concerned about the same, environment, those problems are not as popular as Political news or some celebrity stuff. However, they are going to destroy the future and living quality of future generations.

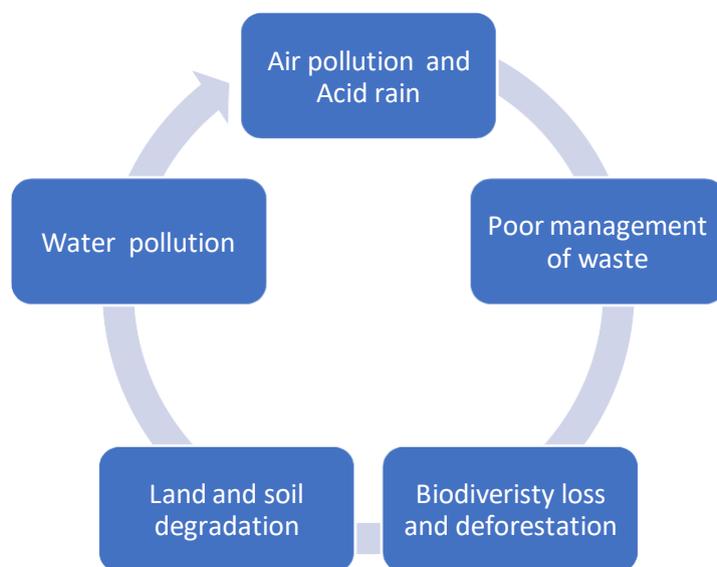


Fig 1.2

Above figure 1.2 shows the crucial problems faced by the environment and people today; these are the major problems and from this starts the other fatal consequences like Global warming, greenhouse gas effect, floods, tsunamis and other natural disasters, some of them were invited by the humans, for understanding the role of local self-governance in eradicating such issues, firstly these problems have to be discussed.

**A)** Air Pollution: Air pollution is caused due to excessive release of smoke into the environment; when industries and factories work under their AC built offices, at that time their workers release hazardous gas and smoke from their warehouses and factories, which reduces the quality of air and even disturbs the natural cycle of rainwater. The main source of air pollution is Industries, crackers, vehicles etc. due to the advancement of technology; the environment has become a scapegoat, environment and earth face the consequences of wrong human deeds. Air pollution causes one more problem, which is “Acid rain” pollution in the environment has degraded or spoiled the quality of our life-giving rain, the rainfall has become toxic in many parts of the country, according to the Institute of Tropical Meteorology has revealed the statistics for the rainwater level of Nagpur, Mohanbari, Allahabad and Vishakhapatnam and in comparison has noted that since 2001-2012, the pH of rainwater has been noted from 4.77 to 5.32.

This record directly shows that these places are the victim of acid rain. If the pH is below 5.65, then it is considered toxic.<sup>7</sup> Acid rain causes when rainwater gets mixed with polluting gases like Sulphur and Nitrogen, and the core source of such gases are Automobile industries, power plants and industrial plants. The consequences of acid rain results in a reduction of soil nutrition, aquatic life is in danger, and the water gets

concentrated with heavy metal, when the pollution will rise like this how we will safeguard the land and its beautiful aura for our upcoming generations.

**B)** Poor management of waste: Waste management is one of the hardest nuts to crack for the Indian authorities because of the large population and mismanagement prevailing in the country. Hyper consumption is the most significant problem, as well as a sizeable portion of waste, is released by the humans, the garbage heaps are in trillions which include every kind of thing whether saying microplastic, personal hygiene waste, recyclable and non-recyclable waste, renewable and non-renewable waste, all these things are thrown away by

the households in a casual manner without even thinking of environment and hygiene. In the big cities of India, where the population is exceptionally oversized, and still there is no sign of stop in increasing population, there the situation is so worse that masses below the poverty line are living with those garbage heaps.

The situation is unimaginable and painful too that in a country where somebody is living in the wealthiest house there, on the other hand, some are living with the garbage heaps. Some of the entrances in India start with garbage heaps; in Delhi (Nizamuddin), the outer area is covered with a big bulk of garbages and small huts near them. All the garbage is dumped in the landfills. It turns into methane and greenhouse gases; such toxic chemicals poison the land and spread diseases like Malaria, Diarrhea, Dengue and Plague, etc.

**C)** Loss of Biodiversity and deforestation: Deforestation and loss of biodiversity are becoming a new normal without tension, we are becoming habitual of the same, trees are disappearing, the world is becoming concrete, and habitations are destroying in abundance, and still there are big projects lined up for which large forest areas shall be destroyed without an explanation – Is this we call development?.

A study has been conducted in Arunachal Pradesh. It has been found that a high rate of deforestation is happening in the “HORNBILL HABITAT” approx... 1.604 sq. kilometers area shall be cleared which is adjoined with Pakke Tiger reserve, the reserve is also going to get affected. Papum RF is a habitat of large and beautiful hornbills, and there exist four species:

- a) Wreathed
- b) Oriental
- c) Pied.
- d) Rufus- Necked

The study has shown that from 2013 – 2017 - 76% of the forest has been cleared, and hornbills' habitat is under urgent threat. On the other hand, the state government is not paying attention; on the other hand, local authorities and farmers are showing great concern over the issue. From 2011 to 2019, the forest area has reduced to 21.94 sq. kilometers which were once 38.55 sq. kilometers. Hornbills are under significant threat because of their feathers, casqued and upper break. According to the survey of Global Forest Watch 2020 report, Arunachal Pradesh has already deprived of its 1,110 sq. kilometers of land from 2002-2019; <sup>8</sup>and if the same intrusion and illegal logging will continue, no forest shall exist in Arunachal Pradesh.

**D)** Land and Soil Degradation: “Desertification” is an expression used to explain the current situation of land and the quality of soil across the world. So when we discuss what desertification is, we exactly mean that "the land is degrading in the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. So basically, the soil productivity is reducing. In return, the land's capacity to produce a better quality of crops is also degrading; the productive lands are becoming desert land with dry characteristics. Due to all these conditions, the direct effect is again on the poor of the society, when they cannot get livelihoods and are not able to cultivate their lands. For example: from 1981 to 2003, the humans have lost a quarter of global land, in which 20% was productive, there are 169 countries and out of which India, China, vast swathes of the Sahel in Africa and few countries in Europe are majorly affected.<sup>9</sup>

**E)** Water pollution and scarcity: In India, water scarcity and abundance are different for different regions. We have different standards and different levels of rainfall across the country, which determines which state is in the abundance bucket and lacks. However, water pollution is a severe issue not only in urban areas but also in rural areas, where females of the house go to rivers and wash their clothes on the banks of the river, which pollutes the fresh running water of rivers coming from mountains, villagers take a bath in the river itself

and wash their body with soap and other chemicals which gets mixed with river water and becomes pollute.

Approximately 600 million folks face water issues, and nearly around 200,000 have died due to inadequate drinking water. According to the study – cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Delhi and Chennai will lose their groundwater by 2020, and 100 million people will be affected by the same. Not only environment is affecting, but also it has been estimated that India's GDP shall observe a loss of 6% due to the country's scarcity of water. 70% of water is contaminated,<sup>10</sup> these figures are a big headache because only deprivation is happening nothing good has been achieved by the states and people. When the religious procession is taken out, then all the oceans, rivers are attacked by submerging the idols into them, the POP colors destroy the quality of water and then the complaints are made against the government for not providing adequate relief resources to its subjects, which is directly unfair and unsatisfactory.

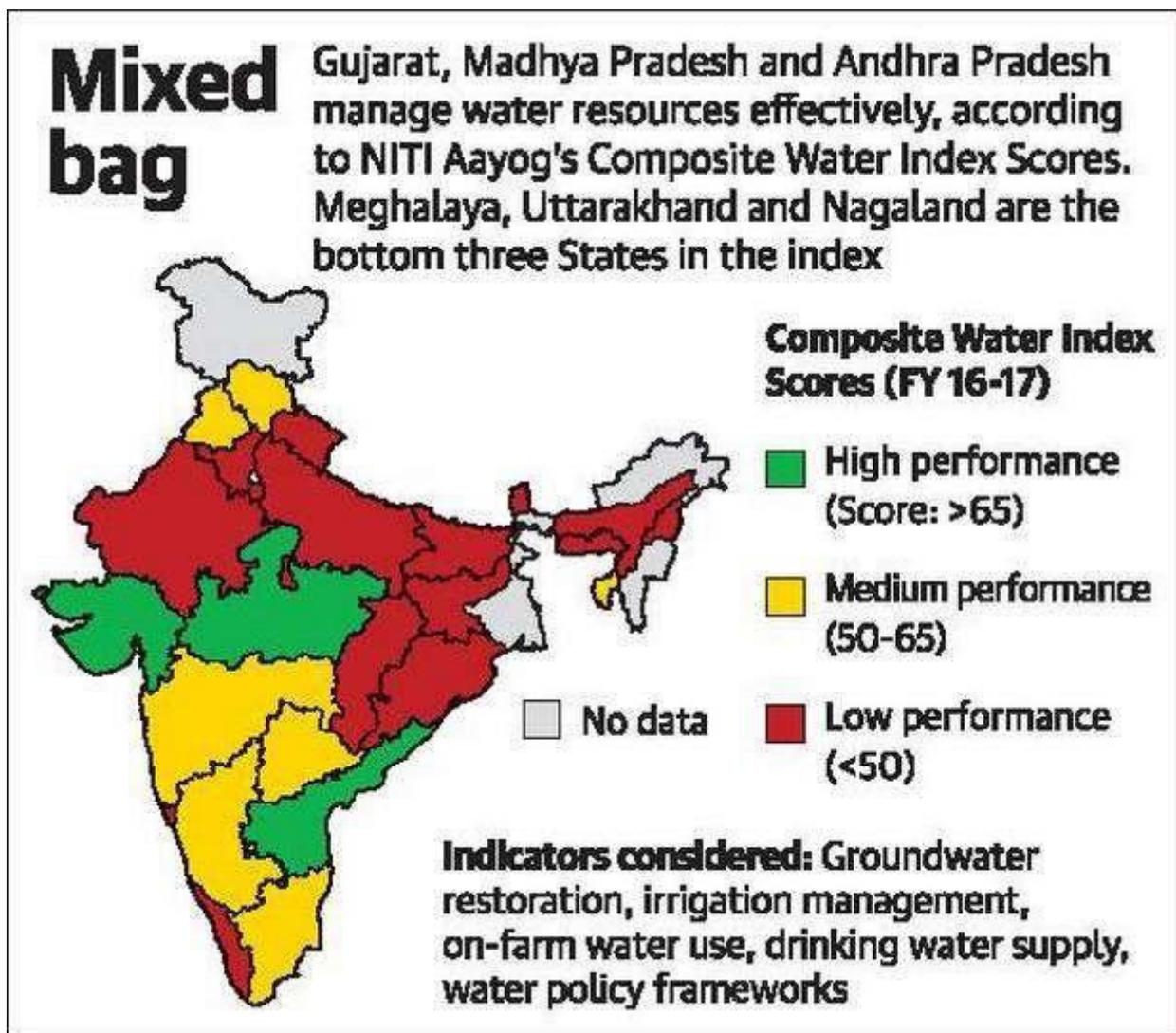


FIG 1.3<sup>11</sup>

NITI AAYOG OBSERVATIONS: The map 1.3 above shows data of the year 2016-17 of the areas where states have worked effectively to restore and preserve water and where states are not working correctly, and the grey shade indicates no data is available for those states.

A) THE GREEN AREAS: Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh have done wonders in preserving water, even after facing droughts; the states have provided ample

water to the natives.

**B) THE YELLOW AREAS:** The yellow areas are those areas that have performed moderately, they have done significantly less in preserving water but provided drinking water to the natives, and the states are:

- a) Maharashtra
- b) Karnataka
- c) Tamil Nadu
- d) Tripura
- e) Punjab
- f) Telangana
- g) Himachal Pradesh

**C) THE RED AREAS:** The red areas are those which have performed very poorly in water preservation and in providing fresh water to natives, and the states are

- a) Rajasthan
- b) Haryana
- c) Delhi
- d) Dehradun
- e) Bihar
- f) Jharkhand
- g) Chhattisgarh
- h) Odisha
- i) Sikkim
- j) Assam
- k) Meghalaya
- l) Nagaland

The policy framework of these states was very poor, with no proper planning that how to preserve rainwater and use the resources in the right direction; NITI AAYOG condemned the performance of these states.

#### *Shortcomings In The Governance Of Local Self-Government:*

After analyzing the situation of the environment and India, we know that only UNION and STATE governments are not able to improvise the scenario; we do need local- self-government for a better catch, but state governments have always demoralized the work and potential of our local self-government, and in consequence of which instead of doing wonders they are the ones who are lacking behind badly, there are few reasons that why local governments are lacking behind.

**A) Financial Powerlessness:** Even after 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments, the condition of local government is the same; the finances are provided to them but are never appropriately distributed by the concerned authorities. Corruption has corrupted every person in the chain, and all this creates a big fuss for the local people and government. The amount provided to them is insufficient to meet their needs. For awareness and other development activities, money is required, not allotted to them by the Main State government. When financial resources are not there, then the insufficiency of staff also happens, and due to this, achieving projects remains hanging.

**B) State's Monopoly:** The boss is always the state government. The state government is the one who is ruling the state and the one who gets expenditure from union and approvals

for every project; sometimes when state government is of X party and one village has made their sarpanch from Y party, then such in cases political benefits and rivalries take place, and the basic objective gets failed. The state government is strong as well as influential which is a threat to the local government related to grassroots working and environment.

C) Less of education and awareness: As it is crystal clear that rural areas are educationally backward, financially incapable, mentally stereotype, and in working, they are focused on physical labor in comparison to mental labor. To enhance the role of LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT in protecting the environment, we need to make them aware and literate about the subject we are talking about. To preserve water by rainwater harvesting and saving underground water, we have to show them the sun of education to understand the value of river water and biodiversity; we have to train them for individual purposes. All these professional qualities are lacking in them, which makes their working complex and ambiguous.

D) Role of Women: In villages, the participation of women is increasing by providing them reservations in seats for fighting an election, but in reality, the male of that house is the one who rules the ultimate government. Women's can address many issues like hygiene, the importance of making washrooms in house, they can tuition the other women's about waste management and smoke-related issues, they can lecture youth regarding their participation in the conservation of the environment, but the reality is that they never get a chance to represent and express their ideas. Then and there, the local governments fail.

#### *Advancement And Suggestions Of Local Self-Government:*

Although there are many shortcomings in the working and procedure of local government still, one should leave the path of light and improvement; through some active steps, local government can do wonders, and through these little steps, there will be a big wave of change and a sigh of relief for the environment.

A) Active role in Rainwater Harvesting: In some states, we have plenty of rainfall every year, because of inadequate and unplanned drainage system that water flows away and get wasted, for example, the city of Mumbai. Suppose we try to train our local government authorities regarding rainwater harvesting and underground water-saving. In that case, we can help the whole of India when the water crisis shows up. In villages, we have to encourage youth to preserve water, and some fun activities should be organized so that they can learn and enjoy the development of their country. Suppose Local government authorities are aware of people regarding water management and how to use extra water patiently and wisely. In that case, all these things can help India achieve Sustainable development goals by 2030.

B) Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and Local government: When Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Damodar Das Modi Ji addressed the whole nation and started a campaign 'SWACHH BHARAT ABHIYAN,' it was indeed a call for Local government. The main pointer is that we should start the improvisation from the last section of society, so when the local government will come out for popularizing the campaign, then local villagers will also start improving their neighborhood, and when such values are incorporated in them then when they will emigrate from their area they will carry

these values and will try to make their urban surroundings clean. Local government is very close to the main natives of the country; that is why we need the role of local government in social and moral campaigns.

C) No intrusion by foreign elements: Local governments have to take this responsibility on their shoulders that they have to stop unnecessary "intrusion and displacement" they have to speak for their people and their environment; only rural areas have clean and pure environments, and for maintaining that substance, decisive actions are

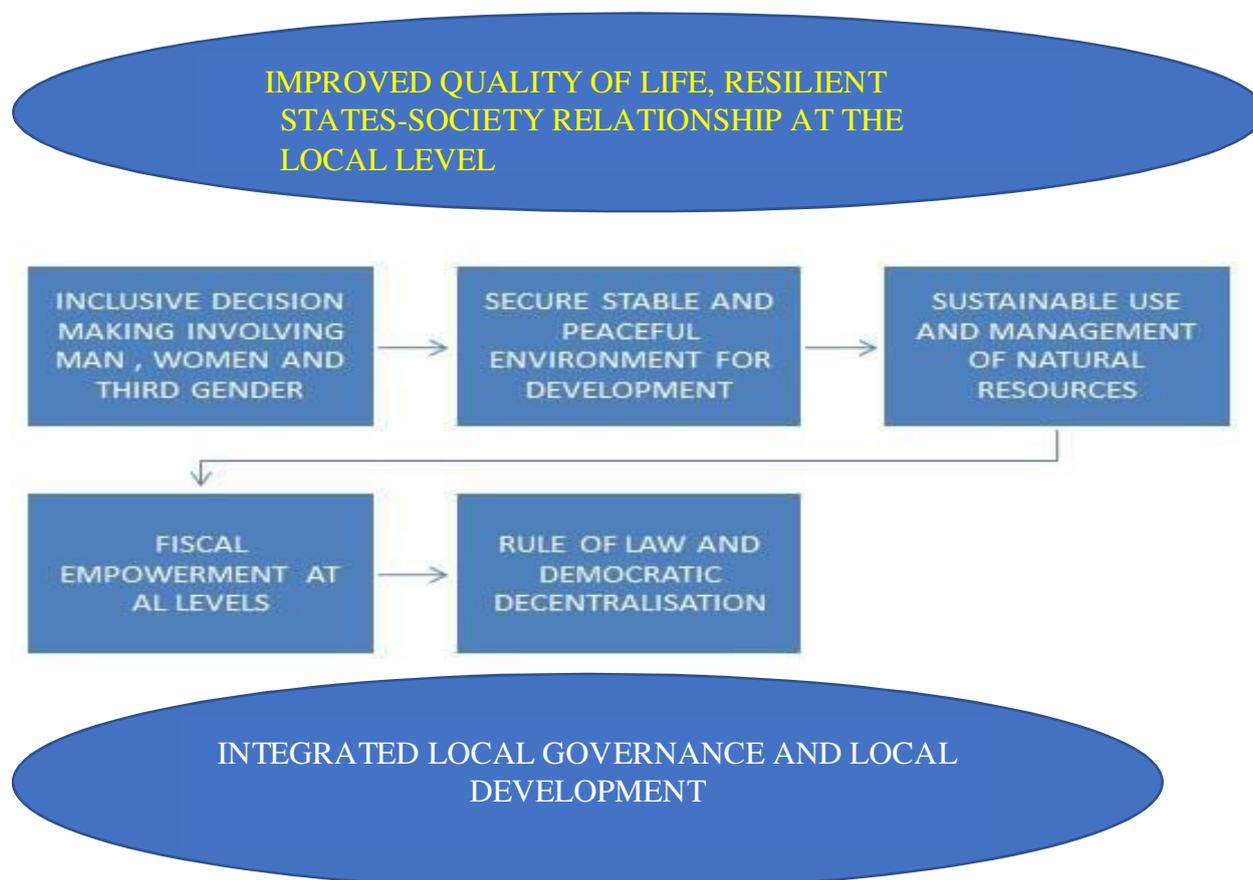
required. Such foreign development plans or industrialization will destroy the culture of rural folks, and forceful displacement takes place then. By setting up factories, biodiversity, and forests vanishes, the world will soon carry oxygen cylinders on its back if vital steps are not taken from the rural side. We cannot restrict development in urban areas, but the local government should stand and speak up for the environment, displacement issues, and biodiversity.

**D)** Restrict the use of traditional coal and mud stove: Traditional coal and mud stoves release an ample amount of smoke which directly affects the environment and health of women. Local governments should try to make people understand that they should start using Modern stoves and cylinders to be the minor release of smoke and women's shall also be safe. The role of women is required here; a woman well explains such topics. If women lecture each other, then the lower-level governance will improve, and women's confidence will also increase, which will benefit the nation.

**E)** Social Campaign and awareness for Youngistaan: Youth is the weapon of every developing country. Hence, as the case is with India, we need our Youngistaan to step forward and make changes. For that, local self-government has to ensure few points:

- a) Young students should get an up to the mark primary education.
- b) Social awareness campaigns shall be organized for youngsters.
- c) Fun activities should be there to involve them in planning and development
- d) New ideas should be asked from them so that they will put their efforts into the environment
- e) The importance of the environment must be taught (academically and non-academically).
- f) The local government should contact nearby law schools and ask for volunteers who can arrange some environment awareness programs for children.

*Sustainable Development And Local Self- Government:*



## 2. CONCLUSION

The basic idea for setting up Local self-government was to bring the local people into the limelight, the ones who are working really behind the stage should be given a chance to speak in the democratic process, and to an extent, we have achieved that goal, the rule of law prevails in India and everything happens according to the procedure, the subject environment and local self-governance need a detailed study, that how we can improve more and more. Sustainable development goals are the dream goals of every nation; we want a good and healthy environment, education, medical facilities, peace, love, and harmony. For achieving this, all the tiers of the government have to work hand in hand. By improvising local governments, we are automatically improvising our rural folks, and this improvisation will bring a wave of change for all of us. Inclusive decision-making will make local governments more independent and confident, and we need confidence and strength for developing India; this measure will surely help the future of our future generations.

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