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Prof. Rajaram S Pawar | Dr. Balaji Kalambe

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E-Commerce For Sustainable Development

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Abstract-

With the increased awareness about use of computers and communication technology E-commerce become everyday affair now. Gone are the days when we were carrying money in the pockets for purchasing the things. The new generation is extensively and smartly using the technology according to their convenience and ease. The e-commerce is the outcome of that smartness which made possible the things which were looking impossible few years ago. As “every rose had its thorn” the e-commerce industry also had its evil impacts on environment. The UN Sustainable Development Summit which adopted 17 sustainable development goals as an agenda to achieve till 2030 for the whole world had minutely studied and developed some guidelines to be implemented by every country of the world. These guidelines are needed to be followed by every entity that may be government organisation or private enterprise. E-commerce industry though working virtually is also not an exception to it. This paper thus analyses role of e-commerce industry towards achieving sustainable development goals.

Keywords- E-commerce, Sustainable development, Environmental impact

I. Introduction-

E-commerce or online shopping is an inevitable part of everybody’s life in present era. It had shown rapid growth after advancement of internet and technology in 20th century. Initially due to limited knowledge and limited access people shown less interest towards online shopping. But in 21st century when internet became affordable to masses everyone started transacting with the help of e-commerce websites online. The use of internet for online shopping achieved its momentum during the period of Covid-19 when people realized various advantages of online purchases over offline shopping. As per the current statistics of India, in 2023 the number of annual online shoppers was estimated to be about 250 million and this number is expected to rise up to 425 million in the year 2027. As per the Forbes statistics, the global e-commerce market is expected to grow to \$6.3 trillion in 2024. According to NASSCOM, India's e-commerce market is forecasted to cross a whopping \$200 billion by 2030.

E-commerce is the exchange of goods and services and the transmission of funds and data over the internet. E-commerce relies on technology and digital platforms, including websites, mobile apps and social media to make buying and selling possible. Electronic commerce or e-commerce refers to a wide range of online business activities for products and services. It also pertains to “any form of business transaction in which the parties interact electronically rather than by physical exchanges or direct physical contact.”

Online Vs Offline shopping-

1. Social and Economic impact-

It is human tendency that by nature man is ruled by two masters, pleasure and pain. Man always does the thing which gives him pleasure and avoids the one which pains. Therefore while making decisions and choices as well, man does the things which are more beneficial for him. Being a consumer the financial benefit drives him to making decisions and choices. While making of choice of marketplace also he thinks about many factors. Some of those factors which lead him towards online shopping these days are as follow. In traditional offline shopping there were limitations of accessibility. The commodities originated in other territories were not easily accessible and consumer has to satisfy himself with the local made products having similar specifications.

The online shopping is thus more beneficial as it brings versatile option of products on a single platform. It not only makes available variety of products but also saves the cost of transportation of consumer. If we wanted to purchase a specific unique product of a specific location previously then it was not possible in traditional offline marketplaces without investing on transportation cost and time. But due to online marketplaces it is now easy and affordable to purchase things from anywhere in the world. This eases the consumers to have access to every type of

literature, culture, food etc. available on the tip of finger which help an individual in overall social and economic wellbeing of the society.

2. Psychological impact-

E-commerce is providing consumers a hassle free platform of shopping where consumer can shop while sitting at their homes, offices or from any place of their convenience. This convenience will automatically improve the shopping experiences. When consumer goes to offline marketplaces the crowd surrounding put stressful impact on mind of customer which forces him to make wrong choices. Even at some occasions they purchase the things which does not suits them. The stress of returning the product by going again in the same crowdly market results into gathering of unnecessary stuff which later on thrown as a wastage.

No doubt shopping is a thing of pleasure for some, but majority of the population especially youth and men don't like shopping due to all such reasons. Also in case of old age people shopping in distant marketplaces is stressful. Therefore E-commerce is chosen as a better option by majority of the people.

II. Sustainable development and Sustainable Development Goal's-

Development is an integral part of human existence. The one who become stagnant cannot grow and develop thus development is inevitable for existence of any society. In society starting from its evolution different types of developments took place but after evolution of science and technology the development grown at its peak that it break open all the boundaries. Due to ever increasing greed and aggressive competition man reached at the level of deteriorating the natural resources up to the extent that the risk of scarcity of resources started to arose and there the need of thinking about sustainable development was first thought about by the world community in The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development which was held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 3-14 June 1992. The idea of using natural resources in limits was promoted and flourished which took shape of 17 Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. Sustainable development is essential for the ecological well-being of the world and requires executing environmental-friendly economic and business strategies. As defined in Brundtland Report "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Sustainable development is thus use of available resources in such a way that it should be available for future generations. It includes use without wastage and reuse as much as possible. The idea of sustainable development can't be completed without talking about environment as the basic source of all the natural resources is the environment. In overall development and growth of a nation, its natural resources plays very important role. The wealth of the nation determines the prosperity of its subjects. And therefore for achieving every Sustainable Development Goal, it is very essential to primarily focus on Environment protection.

III. Role of E-commerce in achieving Sustainable Development Goal's-

1. **Eradication of Poverty-** The first SDG of UNDP is Poverty eradication which is most important goal to be achieved for prosperity of a nation. Poverty eradication is helpful in eradication of many other problems like zero hunger, unemployment, good health and wellbeing, decent work and economic growth etc. The partnering of small and micro level businesses in E-commerce industry will make them available retail platform without investment of infrastructure and huge manpower. A single individual can be able to run his business from his home as well. The traditional networking requirements are now connected by internet and thus whole world is an open market now which is creating huge opportunities to new entrepreneurs to earn and grow economically. The E-commerce industry is thus not only useful for protecting socio-economic wellbeing of consumers but is also helpful in development of a nation. For growth of economy of country, the e-commerce industry is providing low investment options to small scale industries.

2. **Saving Resources-** The online platforms have included various services under its broad area of marketing. Now we not only purchase the household things but we can now order cooked food online, we can book our tickets online, we can take appointment of physicians online, we can avail many such other services online. So the cost of transportation and time is saved by doing all these activities just on a single click. It is saving time of working manpower which can use that saved time for other developmental activities. The resources such as fuel and energy are thus can be saved with the use of e-commerce.

3. Good health and wellbeing-The wellbeing of an individual depends on his physical and mental health. In today's era when parents are residing at remote places and their children are located in other locations, it is not possible for them to take care of parents or fulfill their daily requirements. But due to e-commerce platforms they can now make every facility available at the doorsteps of parents without doing many efforts and without affecting their own working hours. The medicines, doctors and ambulance services are also now available on doorsteps so it is not only saving physical health of parents but is also helping in maintaining stress free mental health of children of old age parents.

4. Responsible consumption and Production- With the help of E-commerce, it can be possible to put limitations on consumption and production. The online food delivery industry is the best example for cultivating the habit of responsible consumption. The cooking and wastage of large quantity of food can be saved with the help of it. For agricultural products as well many farmers developed their own websites to sell their food products. They grow and sell it through their own platforms on demand. The consumers also as getting products direct from farms they trust its credibility and thus try to utilize it with more responsibly. The Online sales facilitating better inventory management based on purchase data and automated system minimizes products, especially food, waste, and associated losses.

5. Ecological balance-The online marketing is not only saving the cost for construction of shops and storages of retailers but is also helping to maintain ecological balance. The Air conditioned shops are now replaced by virtual shops which are run through online applications resulting into reduction of carbon emission in the environment.

IV. Environmental impact of E-commerce-

Though e-commerce industry is beneficial for its consumers in every aspect but when we think of environmental hazards of it, it is having its dark side as well.

1. E-commerce waste- The online shopping products are coming from remote locations sometimes via ships or through air. For safe delivery of the products it becomes important to protect product from any type of damage with the help of extra packaging. Cardboard boxes made from wood pulp or bubble sheets made up of plastic materials are thus more extensively used to cause safe delivery of product. When product is coming from long distances the practice of doing massive packaging is utilised by seller and this huge packaging is causing biggest threat to the environment. Though most of the packaging material is recyclable but due to unavailability of recycling resources most of these materials will end up clogging drains and landfills. Additionally as wood pulp is the main raw material used for making packaging cardboard the cutting of forests for this wood is essential resulting into large scale deforestation.

If we look at various types of packaging materials required for delivery of a single parcel, it contains paper bills, envelopes, cardboard box, plastic bags, woven bags, tape, and buffer materials (bubble wrap). The global e-commerce industry estimated approximately 2.1 billion pounds of plastic packaging in 2019. According to the United Nations, over 8 million metric tons of plastic waste ends up in the oceans every year, which is equivalent to dumping a garbage truck full of plastic into the ocean every minute. According to a report by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, only 14% of the plastic packaging used globally is collected for recycling, and even less is actually recycled. The rest ends up in landfills or the environment, where it can take hundreds of years to break down and release harmful chemicals.

2. Transportation hazard- Global warming and climate change alarmed the world community towards health hazards of environmental pollution. The energy generated by burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas are responsible for emission of greenhouse gases leading to global warming. The increase in online shopping has also led to an increase in transportation, which further contributes to pollution and harm to the environment. For supply of goods e marketplaces use big logistic supply chains. Those logistic companies deliver big shipments via aircrafts or ships. In 2019, the business-to-consumer (B2C) e-commerce shipments per day in India were four million which is likely to increase to about 12 million in 2024. The greenhouse gases emitted by these ships, aircrafts and delivery truck are a big contributing factor causing climate change. The growing demand for same day delivery is also one of the upcoming opportunity for e-commerce and a posing threat for ecosystem.

3. Return policy Hazard- To attract consumer flow towards their products, online marketplaces widely framed easy and free return policy. By taking advantage of this free return policy most of the consumers purposely order

more products and after analysis and proper comparison return unwanted items. Near about 80% online consumers have this tendency of ordering. The product when delivered is properly packed but when we return the product the packaging will remain of no use and it became part of garbage which rarely happens in offline shopping.

V. Suggestions for Sustainable E-commerce-

Sustainable e-commerce means coming up with methods that have nonnegative environmental impact. It is universally accepted fact that traditional markets now unable to replace e-commerce due to its ever increasing benefits and therefore instead of thinking about option to e-commerce it is more beneficial to develop e-commerce into sustainable e-commerce. Following are some of the ways through which more sustainable e-commerce can be developed in existing framework.

1. Choose products with minimum packaging and reuse packaging material- The rapid growth of the fast delivery industry has led to huge waste and pollution concerns caused by overpackaging. Even many enterprises use packaging as part of their marketing strategy. To protect products from damage during the distribution process and avoid negative feedback from consumers, merchants often do overpackaging which resulting in environmental hazard causing large scale garbage which if flown into rivers and sea can endanger ecosystem at large.

2. Prefer Green Packaging- Green packaging means use of the materials and manufacturing techniques so as to diminish energy use and reduce the harmful impacts of packaging on the environment. In Green packing the biodegradable and recyclable materials are preferred over plastic materials for packaging whereas in green manufacturing the step were taken to reduce power outputs so as to decrease emission of greenhouse gases in the environment.

When world had shifted its focus from development to sustainable development and advised to frame policies to implement SDG's, the e-commerce companies are now focusing on sustainability and demonstrating commitment to environmental and social responsibility. By recognizing their responsibility many companies are employing recyclable and environmentally friendly packaging materials to reduce environmental impact. Still due to packaging cost majority of the companies avoiding to use green packaging. But green packaging is need of an hour for environment protection and reducing health hazards.

3. Sustainable Energy Sources and Energy Efficiency- Though e-commerce companies run via online platforms but for storage of products they too need big warehouses having extensive capacities. These warehouses need power supply to maintain goods in proper conditions. Energy is a source of power that is needed to operate logistics activities. The alternate sustainable energy resources, such as solar or wind power thus can be an effective option for power supply to e-commerce industry.

4. The green logistics- The reverse logistics and circular supply chains are mostly evolving concepts in green logistics. Reverse logistics can be utilised to overcome issue of extensive returns. At this stage, the product is returned from the point of sale to the manufacturer or distributor for recovery, repair, recycling, or disposal. Similarly in a circular supply chain the raw materials used are recycled back into the manufacturing operation. Both these methods can be used to reduce environment impact at logistic and supply chain level.

4. Last Mile operation- The greenhouse gases emitted through vehicles particularly CO₂ emission through road transportation is responsible for climate change. Transportation during the last mile is among the most energy consuming operations in the supply chain due to the high number of single-packed parcels carried in commercial vehicles or private cars to respective addresses. This transportation phase contributes approximately 30% carbon dioxide emission in environment. This last mile operation can be reduced by keeping single collection point for multiple parcels in nearby locations where customer or delivery boy can go by walk or on bicycle and can collect it without causing any harm to environment.

5. Promote Environmental Initiatives- Awareness is the key player in implementation strategy. All the stakeholders including companies must involve themselves in environmental initiatives. E platforms being impactful platforms those must be used to create awareness related to environment protection. The initiatives such as green packaging and green logistics must be promoted by government agencies via various benefits to attract enterprises to utilise environment friendly initiatives.

V. Conclusion-

Online marketplace is the key player in the socio-economic growth of the country. E-shopping platforms are very useful new generation technology which is not only helpful in saving time and money but is useful towards achieving sustainable development goals as well if used strategically. The online payment gateways also played its radical part in this evolutionary process of e-commerce development. E-commerce industry if streamlined in an environment friendly way then it will be a great step of mankind towards protection of ecology.

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A Study on Impact of CSR on Women Empowerment

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Abstract:

Even after passing of quarter of 21st century, women empowerment is still a matter of serious concern globally. Women empowerment is not matter of concern of State only, but all components of society must work hand in hand to accomplish the goal. Contribution for women empowerment largely depends on economic resources earmarked for the same and for this, the corporate sector can play pivotal role. The Companies act, 2013 under section 135 makes provision for corporate social responsibility stating constitution of Corporate Social Responsibility Committee to formulate and recommend corporate social responsibility policy for the company. Schedule VII under section 135 enumerates causes for which company shall be liable to spend CSR fund comprising poverty, hunger, illiteracy eradication, environment sustainability, gender equality, indigenous sports, protection of national heritage, etc. Women constitute around half of the human population but at the same time are on first step of vulnerability. Hence, women and girls need special attention for bringing them in main stream of development. In country like India where concept of gender justice is gripping roots, promotion of gender equality through CSR is great booster dose.

Key words: CSR, gender, women, empowerment

Introduction:

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a recent trend in India introduced legally in India in 2011, proposed Bill of the Companies Act, 2013. The objective of CSR is to recognize and draw share from corporate sector for the society in terms of money/finance. The legitimate expectation from the corporate sector to contribute to socially backward classes is need of the day. Transformation of State from laissez faire to welfare State has entrusted the State with multiple and diverse responsibilities towards people. In a State like India where poverty and illiteracy are prominent, the State is more accountable than others. Hence, the State must engage all possible stakeholders in discharging its burden of welfare State which is a herculean task. One such stakeholder is the corporate sector that can commendably contribute financially. The State by making legislative provisions can engage the stakeholders and to this end the Companies Act, 2013 through section 135 makes it necessary to earmark and spend part of their profit for social cause comprising various facets such as eradication of poverty, illiteracy, gender equality, environment sustainability, etc. One of the SDGs of UN is to achieve gender equality and to empower girls and women. Gender inequalities are still deep rooted in every society. Women suffer from lack of access to decent work and face occupational segregation and gender wage gaps. In many situations they are denied access to basic education and health care and are victims of violence and discrimination. They are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes.³ CSR can play pivotal role in eradication of gender discrimination and empowerment of girls and women.

Aims and Objectives of Study:

Present research work aims to study the impact of CSR on women empowerment in Maharashtra and has following objectives-

- i. To study impact of present provisions of CSR under the Companies Act, 2013 on gender equality.
- ii. To study or search uncovered areas through CSR with respect to gender equality.
- iii. To study barriers for utilization of CSR funds for gender equality.
- iv. To study scope of gender equality under CSR provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 in Maharashtra.

³<https://sdgs.un.org/topics/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment> accessed on 14/05/2024

Hypothesis:

Hypothesis is an assumption that is statement of expectation or prediction that will be tested by research. It is pre-determination of researcher on proposed research topic and for present research work, the researcher has formulated following hypothesis-

- i. Amount spent on gender equality and empowerment of girls and women needs to be increased.
- ii. Areas of gender equality and empowerment of girls and women need to be widened.

Methodology:

The researcher largely has considered data from reference books, data maintained by Ministry of Corporate Affairs, journals, online resources. The researcher bases its research on secondary data and has undertaken doctrinal research methodology. The researcher has also studied legislative provisions for CSR and gender equality.

Literature Review:

Mauricio Andres and others(2019) unveils historical literature on corporate social responsibility. Yuan Chang (2024) explains that gender diversity in board of directors has positive and wide impact on gender equality through CSR. Letizia Carrera (2022) explains leveraging role of CSR on solidarity and social trust between companies and territorial communities. V. Kasturi (2015) demonstrates effective use of CSR by Hindustan Unilever under the name Shakti. Seema Sharma (2009) studies travel of CSR in India post liberalization from philanthropy-based model to multi-stakeholder requiring satisfaction of stakeholders and ignoring them could jeopardize the company's prospects in the community and concludes that future of CSR is bright in India. Eva Velasco Balmaseda and others (2023) concludes that although gender issues are receiving increasing attention and are on the business agenda, there is no significant increase in gender equality standards.

Corporate Social Responsibility-An Overview

CSR is a strategy undertaken by companies to not just grow profits but also take an active and positive social role in the world around them⁴. CSR is a self-regulating business model that helps a company by socially accountable to itself, its stakeholders and the public⁵. CSR is generally understood as being the way through which a company achieves a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives (Triple-Bottom Line Approach) while at the same time addressing the expectations of shareholders and stakeholders.

In corporation, four stakeholders contribute in its functioning, firstly the landlord that is the State, secondly, its financier, thirdly, labour and lastly, the entrepreneur. In return, the State as landlord receives revenue from the company, financier or banker receives interest on its investment, labour receives wages for investment of his labour while entrepreneur receives profit for taking risk of running the corporation by bringing all the stakeholders together. Besides, investors of company receive dividend from company as return of their investment. However, consumers and those who are not consumers directly, but associated with profit of company are far away from benefits from the corporation. CSR is one such form of institution that takes care of its responsibility towards such people or causes and thus, CSR also expects to bear responsibility of those components of society who are not directly connected with the corporation.

One such major component of society is women who constitute around half of the population of the society but are neglected in every sphere of life, domestically, economically, politically, religiously, educationally, and socially too. Women empowerment and gender equality components need to be focused by all States and it can be well achieved through CSR. To engage the corporate sector in discharging its social responsibility, legislative provisions have been made through the Companies Act, 2013. Section 135 endows responsibility on eligible companies to constitute CSR Committees in its company that shall be responsible for drafting policy for CSR and its execution.

⁴[https://www.techtarget.com/searchcio/definition/corporate-social-responsibility-CSR#:~:text=Corporate%20social%20responsibility%20\(CSR\)%20is,the%20related%20term%20corporate%20citizenship](https://www.techtarget.com/searchcio/definition/corporate-social-responsibility-CSR#:~:text=Corporate%20social%20responsibility%20(CSR)%20is,the%20related%20term%20corporate%20citizenship) accessed on 11th May 2024

⁵<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/corp-social-responsibility.asp> accessed on 11th May 2024

Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013 describes causes for which the companies can spend CSR funds and one of such cause is gender equality and women empowerment.

Gender Equality and Women Empowerment-

Gender equality refers to equal rights responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys and does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born female or male. Gender equality implies that the interest and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, there by recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human right issue and as a precondition for and indicator of sustainable people centre development.⁶

Gender discrimination is not new to the society including developed countries especially when it is artificial. It needs to be healed as gender discrimination paralyses half of the population of the society and ultimately also affects productivity. Similarly, gender discrimination also results in exploitation of women in as well as out of the four walls, at home as well as at workplace. Thus, it violates human rights of women and is major human rights violation issue.

In view of these circumstances, Un has enumerated 'Gender Equality' as Sustainable Development Goal 5.

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but a necessary foundation for a peaceful prosperous and sustainable world. There has been progress over the last decades but the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. Sexual violence and exploitation, the unequal division of unpaid care and domestic work and discrimination in public office all remain huge barriers.⁷ SDG-5 expects following targets to be achieved by 2030,

5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

5.4 Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life

5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in a covenant with the program of action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences⁸

Almost all these targets find place in CSR policy making.

Problems Before SDG 5-

The Sustainable Development Goal Report of 2023 throws light on the achievements of the goal and hurdles faced. It also discusses estimated time span required for achievement of these goals.

⁶https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1059?language_content_entity=en accessed on 11th May 2024

⁷<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/> accessed on 14th May 2024

⁸Supra

At the current rate it will take an estimated 300 years to end child marriage, 286 years to close gaps in legal protection and remove discriminately loss 140 years for women to be represented equally in positions of power and leadership in the birthplace and 47 years to achieve equal representation in National parliament.⁹

CSR and Women Empowerment-

SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Gender equality is a fundamental human right and is essential for achieving sustainable development. However, gender-based discrimination and violence against women are prevalent in many parts of the world, including India. Corporate philanthropy can play a vital role in achieving SDG 5 target by 5 ways-¹⁰

1. Supporting women's empowerment programsthat aim to promote gender equality by providing women with the necessary skills knowledge and resources to participate in decision making processes and lead successful lives.
2. Promoting women's health and wellbeing-Women's health and wellbeing are critical in achieving gender equality. However, women in India face numerous challenges including limited access to healthcare, high maternal mortality rates and violence against women. Corporate women's health and wellbeing by providing funding and resources to organisations that promote women's health and wellbeing. The program can include awareness campaigns, hills camps and training for healthcare professionals.
3. Supporting women's entrepreneurship

Women's entrepreneurship can play crucial role in promoting gender equality and women's economic employment. However, women entrepreneurs in India face numerous challenges including limited access to finance technology and markets. Corporate philanthropy can support women's entrepreneurship by providing funding training and mentorship to women entrepreneur

4. Supporting women's education

Education is critical in promoting gender equality and empowering women. Corporate philanthropy can support women's education by providing funding and resources to organisations that promote girl's education. These programs can include scholarships, school infrastructure development, and teacher training

5. Supporting women safety and security

Women safety and security are critical in achieving gender equality. Corporate philanthropy can support women safety and security by providing funding and resources to organisations that promote women safety and security. The programs can include awareness campaigns self-defence training and legal support.

Areas of Gender Equality Uncovered by CSR-

CSR policy focuses on women's health, reproductive rights, financing SHGs, girl's education, safety of women, etc. These areas does not include political rights of women and does not take into account higher education of girl students.

Political participation of women in India is quite low and according to Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) women make up to 14.44% of the 17thLoksabha.Political representation ensures listening to the issues of women and taking decisions on it. Inadequate representation surely affects decision making and ultimately becomes hurdle in women empowerment.

CSR policies primarily focus on education of girls up to schooling education. However, higher education which is quite costly remains ignored. Higher education, if included in CSR focuses on professional education or entrepreneurship skills. This ultimately hampers facilities in higher education institutions.

⁹ Supra

¹⁰<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2023.pdf> accessed on 10th May 2024

Conclusion-

Women empowerment through gender equality can achieve SDG 5 set out by the UN and proactive role can be played by CSR in the same. Arena of gender equality and women empowerment through CSR can be enhanced by including political participation of women and funding for higher education. Political participation can be enhanced by awareness programmes in that regard. CSR funding for higher education of girl students can achieve economic capabilities of women through respectable employments of female students. It can be achieved by promoting participation of higher educational institutions.

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Constitutional Provisions for Environment Protection in India

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Abstract:

Environment Protection, climate change and sustainable development are correlated with each other. Environment issues are having global as well as local concern. Our environment has a direct impact on us. Environment protection is collective responsibility. At global level the United Nations takes effort for its protection. The United Nation organizes conferences, issues declarations for member states and members are obliged with declarations. The United Nation member states take measures for the enforcement of provisions made by the organization.

India as one of the responsible members of UNO, made provisions Laws for environment and its protection. Constitutional provisions for environment protection in India are highlighted in this paper. The paper discussed provisions under fundamental rights, directive principles of state policy and fundamental duties of Indian constitution. The paper takes review of these provisions and in conclusion suggest simple ways to protect environment around us.

Key Words – climate change, Sustainable development, constitutional provisions

Introduction:

Sustainable development is a key word regarding environmental issues from 1970s. since then it has become the trademark of international organizations working for environment protection climate change and sustainable development are two sides of the same coin. Sustainable development focuses for the benefit of future generation. The present generation should be modest in their exploitation of natural resources; whereas climate change refers to long term shifts in temperature and weather patterns.

Development is mainly responsibility of government, which includes agricultural, industrial, economic social, political and infrastructural development. While concentrating on development all the governments have been neglected the loss of environment. The natural resources are exploited under the name of development. This act of human being is responsible for climate change and effect on environment.

Sustainable Development and Climate Change Meaning –

“Sustainable development is an approach that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs.”¹

The above definition is given in the report of United Nations General Assembly on the environment development in 1987. Sustainable development is an action plan for protection of environment, natural resources and its elements.

“Sustainability is often thought of as a long-term goal, while sustainable development refers to many processes and pathways to achieve it.”²

Climates are the weather conditions that are typical in certain place. It contains humidity temperature and wind.

Climate change refers to long term shifts in temperature and weather patterns. Basically, human activities have been the main driver of climate change.

People generally think climate change mainly means warmer temperature, but temperature rise is only the beginning because the Earth is a system, where everything is connected. Change in one element causes changes in all others and that ultimately affects living beings and human society. The consequences of climate change include intense drought, water scarcity, severe fires, rising sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice catastrophic storms and declining biodiversity.

Connection between climate change and sustainable development:

There is significant connection between climate change and sustainable development. Climate change is issue which impacts on the environment, human society and individuals. Whereas sustainable development aims to reduce the impact of climate change that affect the environment and human being.

Climate change affects environment, it creates imbalance in temperature, rainfall which ultimately affects human life by increasing temperature, diseases, health issues, agricultural production, rise in water levels.

Scientists have been aware about the high concentration of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere since 1960s. the enhanced greenhouse gases effecting the Earth's climate equilibrium and has led to a warmer world. Warming temperature lead to the melting glaciers. Even the temperature of the oceans has also risen. Due to carbon dioxide the biodiversity of ocean is disturbed. The climate change has affected human life in various ways. Climate related disasters, causes for migration of people, "climate changes and disasters have always driven people to leave their homes. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, between 2008 to 2018 about 265 million people worldwide were internally displaced as a response to disasters."³

Sustainable development looks towards human needs and their present and future well-being. Sustainable development can be achieved through proper integration of human and environmental system. Sustainable development tries to find a balance between economic development, environment protection and social well- being. Sustainable development demands for reduce, reuse and recycle of the resources. Climate change issue has been taken consideration by international organizations following efforts are at international level for environment protection.

International Perspectives for Environment Protection –

United Nations organization has taken initiatives for the global environment protection since 1970s. There are many conventions that have been taken place for the improvement and protection of the environment.

United Nations Conference on Human Environment – 1972

"The United Nation Conference on Human Environment 1972 popularly known as Stockholm conference Sweden is a landmark step towards environment protection. It was the first world conference to make the environment as a major issue. 169 countries attended the conference."⁴ The participants of Stockholm conference adopted 26 principles and an Action Plan for human environment. It is said in the declaration that, "Man is both creature and molder of his environment, which gives him physical substance and affords him the opportunity for intellectual, moral, social and spiritual growth."⁵

Some important principles adopted in conference are as follows:

- 1) Man has the fundamental right to freedom equality and adequate conditions of life in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations.⁶
- 2) The Natural Resources of the earth including the air, water, land, flora and fauna and especially representative samples of natural ecosystems, must be safeguard for the benefit of present and future generation through careful planning or management as appropriate.⁷
- 3) The non-renewable resources of the earth must be employed in such a way as to guard against the danger of their future exhaustion and to ensure that benefits from such employment are shared by all mankind.⁸
- 4) The 7th principle sepalsabout state's role and said, "States shall take all possible steps to present pollution of the seas by substances that are liable to create hazards of human health to living resources and marine life to damage amenities or to interfere with other legitimate uses of the sea."⁹
- 5) The 11th principle is about, "The environmental policies of the states should enhance and not adversely affect the present of future development potential of developing countries nor should they hamper the attainment of better living conditions for all and appropriate steps should be taken by states and International organizations with a view to reaching arrangement on meeting the possible national and international economic consequences resulting from the application of the environment measures."¹⁰

- 6) The 17th principle of the declaration is, “Appropriate national institutions must be entrusted with the task of planning, managing or controlling the enhancing environmental quality.”¹¹

The United Nation conference declaration expected that environment protection efforts must be taken from three levels, at international level by committing conventions, at state level the member states of UNO should make provisions and laws within their sphere and at local level people, individuals should take measures towards it.

Considering this the next major step was taken by UNO for environment issue that was ‘The Earth Summit’ 1992.

The Earth Summit (Rio de Janeiro conference) 1992-

“The United Nation conference on environment and development was held in June 1992 at Rio-de-Janeiro, popularly known as ‘The Earth Summit,’ wherein more than 150 governments participated.”¹²

“The Earth summit focused and forced the people worldwide to rethink on environment issues and pollution. The Earth summit declared a document on environment, which is known as ‘Rio-declaration’ in which 27 principles consisted, which guided the behavior of nations towards environmental issues and sustainable development.”¹³

As the result of Earth summit, to enhance international cooperation on environment issues the United Nation has set up a commission on sustainable development on 16th February, 1993.¹⁴

United Nation is working at world level for environment protection, by organizing conferences, conventions, by setting up commission and its members passed provision laws for the enforcement of principles of Stockholm as well as Rio declaration.

As a member of the United Nations organizations, India has made various laws and provisions in constitution for environment protection.

Constitutional provisions and Environment protection in India-

In India, environment protection provision not only raised in constitution but also it has human rights approach. “The constitution of India obligates the state as well as citizens to protect and improve the environment.”¹⁵

Environmental laws in India has base of Indian constitution, “Article 253 of Indian constitution empowers the Parliament of India to make any law for the whole or any part of the territory of India for implementing any threaten, agreement or convention with any other countries or any decision made at any international conference, association or other body.”¹⁶

“Article 21 of Indian constitution under fundamental rights guarantees all persons a fundamental right to life and personal liberty.”¹⁷

“Article 21 guarantees a fundamental right to life, a life of dignity, to be lived in a proper environment, free of danger of disease and infection. It is an established fact that there exists a close link between life and environment.”¹⁸

“From the various decisions of cases the Supreme Court mentioned that thoughtless development can cause avoidable harm to the environment as well as it can deprive the people of their right to livelihood.”¹⁹

The slow poisoning by the polluted atmosphere caused by environmental pollution and spoliation should also be regard as amounting to violation of Article 21 of the constitution.²⁰

Article 19(1) of guarantees all citizens, ‘The right to practice any profession of to carry any occupation.’ But the right is not absolute one cannot carry the business which can become a health hazard to the entire society. Reasonable restrictions can be imposed in the interest of the public.

Directive Principles of State Policy and Environment Protection: -

The constitution of India lays down 15 principles as Directive Principles of state policy, which are fundamental in governance of the state and it is duty of the state to apply these principles in making laws.

Under Directive Principles government of India has taken steps towards making laws for environment protection and public health.

Article 47 of Directive principles provides “Nutrition standard of living and public health.”²¹ Public health must be improved through environment protection and development. “Article 48 stands for scientific agriculture and animal husbandry.”²²

Article 48A – “The state shall Endeavour to safeguard the countries forests and wildlife and to maintain and promote the environment.”²³

Article 48A – of Indian constitution added in 1976 (42nd Amendment) dealing specially with protection and improvement of environment.

Fundamental Duties & Environment Protection: -

Fundamental duties are the obligations which evens citizen of India has to fulfill. Article 51 (A)g– of this part specially deals with the fundamental duty with respect to environment. It provides “It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures.”²⁴

Article 51(A)j provides – “It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity, so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavor and achievements.”²⁵

India is one of the respective members of United Nation and to put into effect the Stockholm conference and Earth Conference declaration certain acts are passed for environment protection.

Conclusion: -

Human beings and Environment are closely related. Both affects and effects upon each other; hence it becomes one of the major responsibilities of us to protect our environment. No doubt, development is essential for human society but harming to nature, environment will ultimately harm human society and that isproven by Mother Nature time to time. Sustainable development is the pathway through which we can protect nature, environment and our future generation. Individuals can save environment by doing simple things like –

1. Using bicycles, common transformation which will help to reduce carbon dioxide and green gases.
2. Walking is also effective activity good for human health as well as protection for environment.
3. Tree plantation and taking its care helps to increase oxygen. It must be one of the legal duties of every person.
4. Switching every system from fossil fuels to renewable like solar and wind will reduce the emissions driving climate change.
5. Awareness can be create among people and young generation by adding environmental studies in curriculum at school and colleges.

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