

ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT THREE LEVELHEADED PILLARS OF FUTURE WE WANT

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ABSTRACT:

*The flora and fauna are the real trinkets of the crown named “Biodiversity”. We are running in 21st century, year 2020 and of course undergoing the lockdown period and the reason is best known to all the 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 unparalleled 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 maximum sources of earth; the urbanization has actually affected every area of developing and developed countries. In this present scenario we only have our villages and sub rural areas which could do wonders in maintaining the biodiversity, flora and fauna. But 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 in people’s mind, but actually the grass root government is getting into the grips with most questioning job. 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 future we want for the globe and Asia pacific region.*

Key words: Environment, Sustainable development goals, Local self -government, Environment pollution, Biodiversity.

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, and then man has to reimburse the favor by taking care of nature. God has planned the cycle of nature and man accordingly, but the human greed has surpassed all the limits so far, we all know 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 man and nature were friends but today it has become a tale of exploitation, the way human beings have ransacked the nature it is the worst of all. **The present scenario is giving chills in the spine to the environmentalist, scientist 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 environment 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 biomass of wild mammals have fallen by 82% and our ecosystem is suffering defeat in maintaining its area due to which the extinction of millions of species has taken place. Amphibian species are at risk of extinction (every two in five) marine species are at verge of extinction the ratio is close to 1/3, specifically the insects which are required and necessary for plant pollination have also started becoming extinct with the ratio of (one in ten) and unfortunately in some areas the population has wiped out.

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

- a) Except 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 year 2020.²

These slight changes might seem slow but are having long lasting effects and these effects are warning that what will be the future of future generations? In Arctic Siberia average temperature has rose to 10° C and it is above normal for arctic region, not only this but Verkhoyansk observation station has recorded 38° C records high for the arctic. Due to this high temperature the forest fires and zombie fires are taking place all around the world and are degrading the quality of land by releasing carbon compounds, due to this carbon compound the whole ecosystem gets affected and it take 100 years to build such an ecosystem. Releasing CO₂ 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 Co₂ was released into the atmosphere and it embarks the highest release in past 13 years,³ the situation is alarming and only the 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.

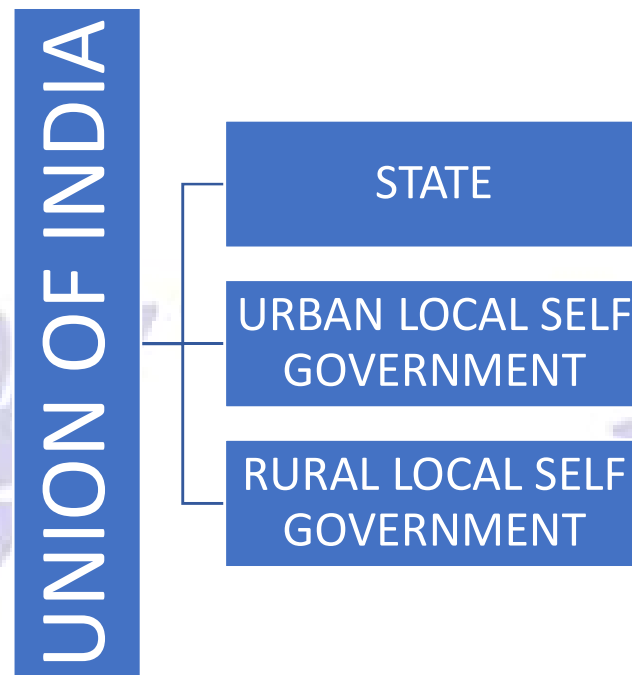
LOCAL SELF GOVERNANCE – PROTECTOR OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF CITIZENS:

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¹ Jonathan Watts “Global Environment Editor” THE GUARDIAN (May. 6, 2019, 11:59 IST) <http://www.theguardian.com>.

² “New climate predictions assess global temperature in coming five years” (Jul.8,2020) <https://www.wmo.int>.

³ Niklas Hagelberg “Record Temperature Trajectory Threatens To Breach 1.5° C Global Heating Threshold” UNEP (Jul.10,2020, 1:02 IST) <https://www.unep.org>.



Fig

1.1

India is a union of states, and states are then bifurcated in two other governments that is urban local self-government – 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. By using the doctrine of federalism we have successfully planned and organized three forms of government for our country and if ran properly then the last tier that is Local self-government can do wonders in the areas of environment, education, development and social work.

We may believe or not local governments plays a very significant role in promoting and protecting 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. Human right commission considers local government more effective and powerful when it comes to villagers, because in India we have our roots in villages and because of this wherever we may live but 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 great momentum to the decentralization process.⁴ This decentralization has shifted the ball in the court of local people of India, now they take part in 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 Indian Constitution of, 1950 talks about “Right to life” and this fundamental right is so wide and broad that all other human rights are covered under this particular right. The right to have healthy environment is also a fundamental right and Supreme Court has time**

⁴ P.V.V Satyanaryana, *Local Self Government and Human Rights In India*” RESEARCH GATE, (Sep.2014, 11:09 IST) <https://www.researchgate.in>.

again declared that it is the responsibility of state to protect the environment for its folks and the entire world.

In the case of S. Jagannath vs. Union of India⁵ 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 intensive and semi- intensive type of prawn (small fish) farming in the economic fragile coastal areas, prohibition from using the waste land and wet lands 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”

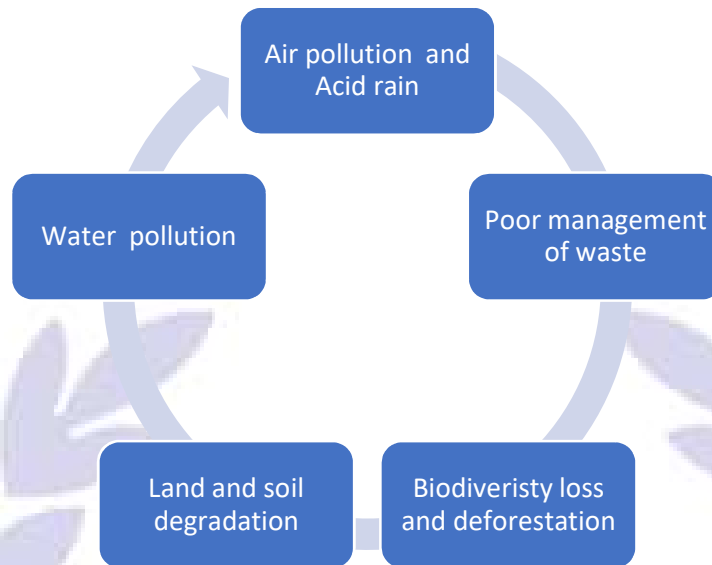
In the case of **Rural litigation and entitlement Kendra vs. state of U.P**⁶ in this case court asked for the **closure of certain limestone quarries**, as there were safety issues, and the activity was hazardous to life and environment, so the court ordered the state government and local government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

In 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 are forgetting the harm caused to 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 it is very important for local government to maintain that sanctity of rural areas. Mahatma Gandhiji said that if we will not focus upon our rural areas then our urban areas will also perish, that’s why he focused on “**Swaraj**” so that masses can understand that real power is in their hands, that rural areas are the real economy of Independent India. United Nations has always emphasized on the role of local self- governance and 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 the 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: Environment, climate change, weather deterioration, soil erosion etc. all these terms are used by us when we have to lecture on environment problems or when some news hit the channel regarding environmental problems, else we are not even concerned about the same, environment is being hit by several challenges, those problems are not as popular as Political news or some celebrity stuff but are going to destroy the future and living quality of future generations.

⁵ S. Jagannath vs Union of India, (1997) S.C.C.811 (India).

⁶ Rural litigation and Entitlement Kendra vs. State of U.P (1985) 2 S.C.C 431 (India).



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 in 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 rain water. 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 are facing the consequences of human wrong 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 and this record directly shows that these places are the victim of acid rain. If the pH is below 5.65 then it is considered as toxic.**⁷ Acid rain causes when rain water 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 into reduction of soil nutrition, the aquatic life is in danger and the water gets

⁷ Neha Madaan “Pollution turning country’s rainfall acidic, says study” TOI, (Mar,4,2017,14:28 IST) <https://www.timesofindia.in>

concentrated with heavy metal, when 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 oversized population and mismanagement prevailing in country. Hyper consumption is the greatest problem as well as a sizeable portion of waste is released by the humans, the garbage heaps are in trillions which includes every kind of thing whether say micro plastic, 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. The big cities of India, where population is extremely oversized and still there is no sign of stop in increasing population, there the situation is so worse that masses below 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 richest house there on the other hand, some are living with the garbage heaps. Some of the entrances in India, starts with garbage heaps, in Delhi (Nizamuddin) the outer area is covered with big bulk of garbage's and small huts near them. All the garbage is dumped in the landfills, and then it turns into methane and greenhouses gases, such toxic chemicals are poisoning the land and spreading the diseases like, Malaria, Diarrhea, Dengue and Plague etc.

C) Loss of Biodiversity and deforestation: Deforestation and loss of biodiversity is 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 in which it has been found that high rate of deforestation is happening in the “HORNBILL HABITAT” approx... 1.604 sq. kilometer 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 exists four species :**

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

The study has shown that from 2013 – 2017 - 76% of forest has been cleared and the habitat of hornbills is under urgent threat. 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 was once 38.55 sq. kilometers. Hornbills are under great threat because of their feathers, casqued and upper break. According to the survey of Global Forest Watch 2020 report, Arunachal Pradesh has already deprived from its 1,110 sq. kilometers of

land from 2002-2019; ⁸and if the same intrusion and illegal logging will continue then no forest shall exist ever in Arunachal Pradesh.

- D) Land and Soil Degradation: “Desertification”** is an expression used to explain the current situation of land and quality of soil across the world. So when we discuss about what desertification is then 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 and in return of which the capacity of land to produce better quality of crops is also degrading, the productive lands are becoming desert land with dry characteristics and due to all these conditions the direct effect is again on the poor of the society, when they are not able to get livelihoods and are not able to cultivate their lands. **For example : since 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 Sahel In Africa and few countries in Europe are majorly affected.** ⁹
- E) Water pollution and scarcity:** In India, water scarcity and abundance is different for different regions, we have different standards and different level of rainfall across the country which in last determines that which state is in abundance bucket and which state is lacking behind. But the water pollution is a very serious 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 river, which pollutes the fresh running water of rivers coming from mountains, villagers take bath in river itself and wash their body with soap and other chemicals which gets mixed with river water and becomes pollute. **Approximately 600 million folks are facing the water issues and nearly around 2, 00,000 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 Country’s scarcity of water. 70% of water is contaminated,**¹⁰ these figure are a big headache because only deprivation is happening nothing good has been achieved by the states and people. When religious procession are taken out then all the oceans, rivers are attacked by submerging the idols into them, the POP colors destroys the quality of water and then the complaints are made against government for not providing adequate relief resources to its subjects, which is directly unfair and unsatisfactory.

⁸ Rahul Karmakar “ Forest Cover loss threatens hornbills in Arunachal” THE HINDU (Aug, 13 ,2020, 2:03 IST) <https://www.thehindu.in>

⁹ KPM Basheer “ Over 2 Billion People Impacted By Land Degradation” THE HINDU (Jul,08,2019, 18:58 IST) <https://www.thehindu.in>

¹⁰ Jacob koshy “ India Faces worst water crisis : NITI AAYOG” THE HINDU (Jun.14,2018,23:13 IST) <https://www.thehindu.in>

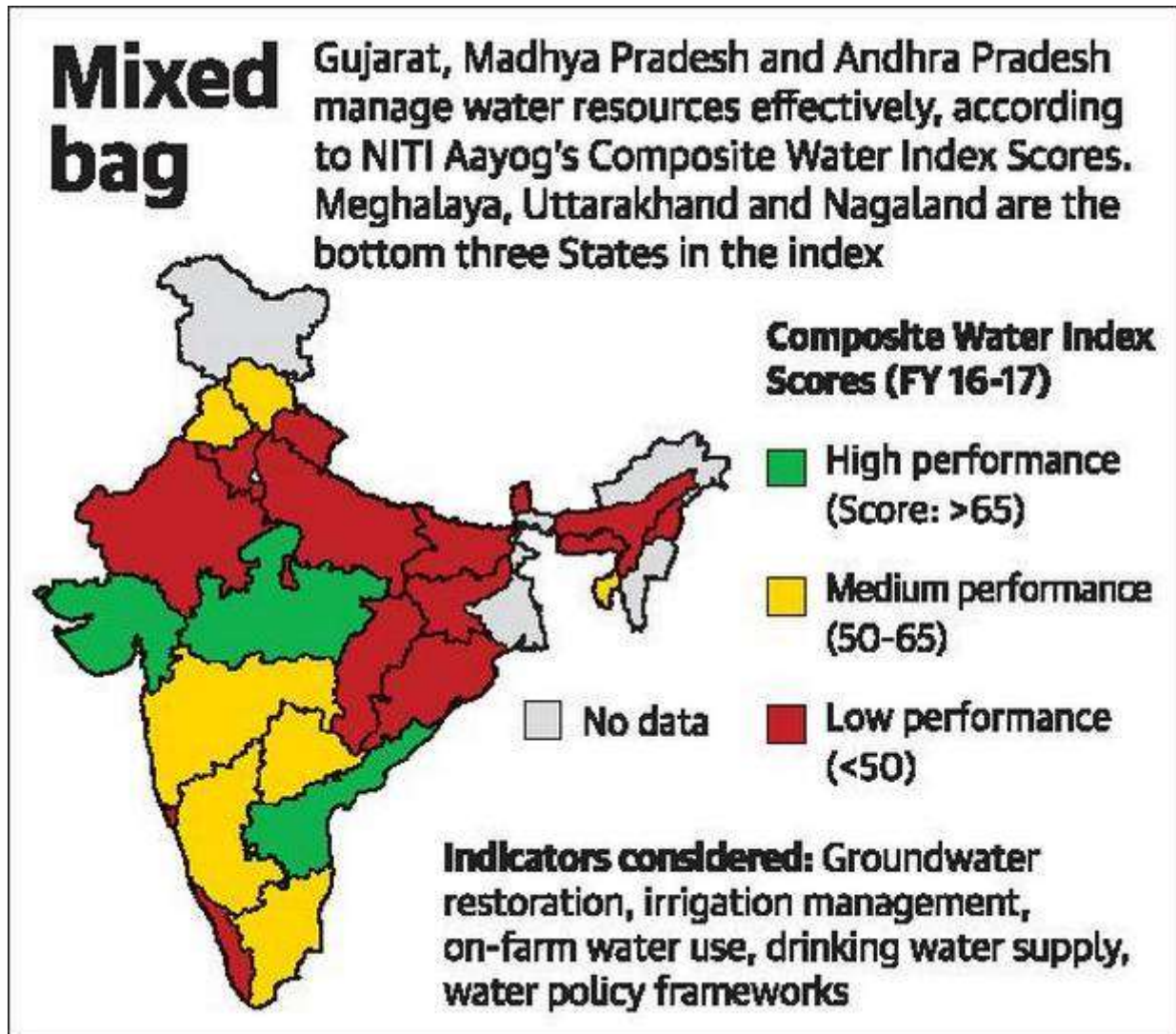


FIG 1.3

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NITI AAYOG OBSERVATIONS: The map 1.3 above shows data of year 2016-17 of the areas that where states have worked effectively for restoring and preserving water and where states are not working properly and 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 amount water to the natives.

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

- a) Maharashtra
- b) Karnataka

¹¹ Jacob koshy “ India Faces worst water crisis: NITI AAYOG, THE HINDU , (Jun.14,2018,23:13 IST) <https://www.thehindu.in>

- c) Tamil Nadu 'Tripura
- d) Punjab
- e) Telangana
- f) 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 rain water and use the resources in right direction, NITI AAYOG condemned the performance these states.

SHORTCOMINGS IN THE GOVERNANCE OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT:

After analyzing the situation of 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- governments, and in consequence of which instead of doing wonders they are the ones who lacking behind badly, there are few reason that why local governments are lacking behind.

- A) Financial Powerlessness:** Even after 73rd and 74th amendment, the condition of local government is 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 which is provided to them is insufficient to meet their needs and for awareness and other development activities, money is required which is 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, to be 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 takes place and the basic objective gets failed. The state government is strong

as well as influential which is a threat to the local government which related to grassroots working and environment.

- C) Less of education and awareness:** As it is crystal clear that rural areas are educationally backward, financial incapable, mentally stereotype and in working they are focused on physical labor in comparison to mental labor. For enhancing the role of LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT in protection of environment, we need to make them aware and literate about the subject we are talking. For preservation of water by rainwater harvesting and saving underground water, we have to show them the sun of education, for making them understand that what is the value of river water and biodiversity, we have to train them for respective purposes. All these professional qualities is lacking in them, which makes their working difficult and ambiguous.
- D) Role of Women:** In villages, the participation of women is increasing by providing them reservation in seats for fighting 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, 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 environment, but the reality is that they never get a chance to represent and express their ideas, and then and there the local governments fails.

ADVANCEMENT AND SUGGESTIONS OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT:

Although, there are many shortcomings in the working and procedure of local government but 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 sigh of relief for environment.

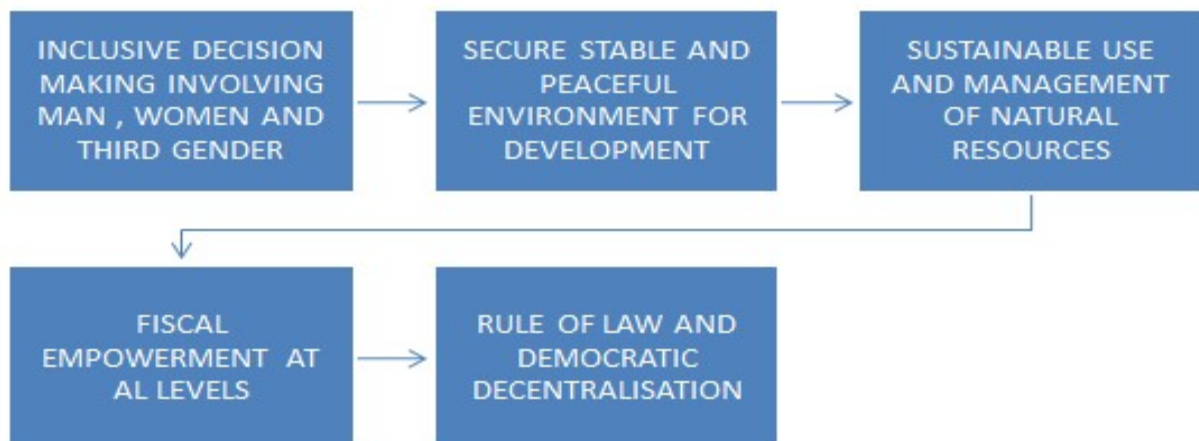
- A) Active role in Rain water Harvesting:** In some states we have plenty of rainfall every year, because of bad and unplanned drainage system that water flows away and get wasted for e.g.: Mumbai. If we try to train our local government authorities regarding rain water harvesting and underground water saving then we can help whole India when water crisis will show up. In villages we have to encourage youth for preserving water and some fun activities should be organized so that they can learn and enjoy the development of their country. If Local government authorities will aware people regarding water management, and how to use extra water patiently and wisely then all these things can help India in achieving the Sustainable development goals till 2030.
- B) Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and Local government:** When Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Damodar Das Modi 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 last section of society, so when local government will come out for popularizing the campaign then local villagers will also start improving their neighborhood, and when such values will be 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, strong 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, forests are vanishing and soon the world will carry oxygen cylinders on their back if strong steps not taken from rural side. We cannot restrict development in urban areas, but 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 stove release an ample amount of smoke which directly affects the environment and health of women’s. Local governments should try to make people understand that they should start using Modern stoves and cylinders, so that there shall be less release of smoke and women’s shall also be safe. Role of women is required here; such topics are well explained by a woman. If women’s will lecture each other than the lower level governance will improve and confidence of women’s will also increase which shall benefit the nation.
- E) **Social Campaign and awareness for Youngistaan:** Youth is the weapon of every developing country so as the case is with India, we need our Youngistaan to take a 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 for environment**
 - e) **Importance of environment must be taught (academically and non-academically).**
 - f) **Local government should contact nearby law schools and ask for some volunteers who can arrange some environment awareness programs for children.**

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL SELF- GOVERNMENT:

IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE, RESILIENT STATES- SOCIETY RELATIONSHIP AT THE LOCAL LEVEL



INTEGRATED LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

CONCLUSION: The basic idea for setting up Local self- government was to bring the local people into the limelight, the one who are working really behind the stage should be given a chance to speak in 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. The sustainable development goals are the dream goals of every nation; we want a good and healthy environment, education, medical facilities, peace, love and harmony and 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 definitely 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 the developing India, this measure will surely help the future of our future generations.