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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ADDRESSING 'REGIONS' IN PURSUIT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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Abstract

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Re-reading 'region' and the challenges while addressing the issue of sustainable development goals is a paradigm shift that has gained attention and interest among the developmental researchers focusing on man-environment relationship. While defining developmental strategies understanding the space entity is inevitable in designing and maintaining regional uniformity. The challenges in pursuit are embedded in space and thereby understanding the socio-physical characteristic of a region has become inevitable in achieving sustainable developmental goals.

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Introduction:-

Series of global initiatives, in the past and recent decades, were taken in the path of achieving sustainable development. The United Nations Conference on Human Environment (UNCHE, 1972) popularly known as Stockholm Declaration, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, 1992) known as Earth Summit, World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) known as Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (2012) are some of the initiatives. In September 2015, United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 development agenda known as 'transforming our world'. These initiatives aim at achieving sustainable developmental goals that are discussed in Millennium Development Goals.

The main debate that centers' around in meeting sustainable development challenges are the contribution that Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide. Due to the fact that Millennium Development Goals (MDG) have over the last 10-15 years directed worldwide attention to neglected global social issues and have triggered much research in the wide range of disciplines. Though MDGs show positive results in some countries, the poorer countries are far from sufficient. Eight International Development Goals that were established following the Millennium Summit of UN in 2000 are; eradication of poverty and hunger, universal primary education, promote gender equality & empowerment of women, reducing child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS & other disease, ensure environmental sustainability, develop a global partnership for development.

According to millennium report, the world has made significant progress in achieving these goals between 1990 and 2002 average overall incomes increased by approximately 21 percent. The number of people in extreme poverty declined by an estimated 130 million, Child mortality rates fell from 103 deaths per 1,000 live births a year to 88. Life expectancy rose from 63 years to nearly 65 years. An additional 8 percent of the developing world's people received access to water. And an additional 15 percent acquired access to improved sanitation services (millennium report 2002-2006). But the mammoth challenges ahead in this regards is the progress has been far from uniform across the world. There are huge disparities within countries; poverty is greatest for rural areas, though urban poverty is also extensive, growing, and underreported by traditional indicators. Sub-Saharan Africa is the epicenter of crisis, with continuing food insecurity, a rise of extreme poverty, stunningly high child and maternal mortality

and large numbers of people living in slums, and a widespread shortfall for most of the MDGs. Asia is the region with the fastest progress, but even there hundreds of millions of people remain in extreme poverty, and even fast-growing countries fail to achieve some of the non-income Goals. Other regions have mixed records, notably Latin America, the transition economies, and the Middle East and North Africa, often with slow or no progress on some of the Goals and persistent inequalities undermining progress on others.

The millenniumgoals, among diversesoocio-economic and cultural entity, ensure an overall social development by reaching to the level reflecting positive approach in the concept of sustainable development. But the main argument lies with implementing the process ofdevelopmental strategies while maintaining uniformity across the regions. Particular type of developmental strategies existing in one region might not fit in other region due to the fact of socio-physical diversity. Understanding the geography of the region becomes utmost importance in dealing with the issue of developmental challenges. The challenges posed by many factor; social, political, economic as well as physical entity. Thus the present paper seeks to address the concept of region while explaining developmental strategies in pursuit of sustainable development.

Regions and Planning:-

Theconcept of regions has always been of central importance to geography and other discipline that study earth reference phenomena. It revolves around the central theme of man-environment relation. Although geographer's relative emphasis on ideographic description of unique places versus nomothetic explanation of abstract truth has varied greatly over time, the generalization understood broadly has remained importance.

A region is defined as a part of the Earth's surface with one or many similar characteristics that make it unique from other areas. Regional geography studies the specific unique characteristics of places related to their culture, economy, topography, climate, politics and environmental factors such as their different species of flora and fauna. Region is also defined as a mosaic due to the fact that different regions representing different pieces of colored glass joined together. Thus it represents physical features that is by nature distinct from one another, but intrinsically related to each other. Due to this diversity, a systematic and regional approach is required while dealing with the issue of sustainable development. The regional planning would help in identifying the spatial entity that is necessary for designing strategies in achieving goals.

Regional planning is an essential part of the new regional institutional architecture because sustainable development has been at the heart of recent debates about how best to develop regions over the next quarter century. Planning role is sometimes under-emphasized in the recent literature on regionalism, yet the continuing role in statutory regulatory apparatus of the state suggests that it should not be dismissed so casually. Another aspect in sustainable challenges is the regional attributes where the governance is localized. Increasing educational statistics by providing institutions and machineries has been initiated in many rural India reflecting the growth literacy rate. Initiative in cutting down uses of non-renewable resources, like coal, petroleum and so forth has also contributed to certain extent. But the strategies adopted in developed countries would not similar to that of the developing countries considering the economic status as well as the human resource. While deliberating on the issue of sustainable development goals in various fields in pursuit for meeting sustainable development challenges; understanding the geographical spatial attributes has become inevitable. In this regard the geographical space becomes the central theme in the regional planning.

Space,defined as a physical entity, has a close relationship with human activities that influence the attributes of social and economic aspect. Understanding the spatial distribution of resources in terms of human and economic becomes inevitable in defining the role of good governance. The regional development is unevenly distributed in many countries reflecting the need of achieving regional uniformity in developmental process for sustainable development. Indian, in particular, sustainable development goals in achieving food security, ensuring quality education, improving health sector and so forth are correlated with the country economic status. But within the country it represents diverse physical regions that affect the economy. For instances, western region comprising state of Punjab, Haryana are listed as productive due to physical factor while the eastern region represent subsistence agriculture due to physical factor. Statistics shows regional imbalances in regards to education, agricultural productivity, and industrial location and in the availability of resources, physical landscape as well. In this kind of diverse socio-economic and cultural set up the process of developmental strategies would differ from one region to the other.

Conclusion:-

World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987 popularly known as Brundtland commission envisage the 'ability' and 'human needs' as the main agenda, where it defined sustainable development as a 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. While the issue of 'development' is a holistic approach, the main feature is the close relationship of man and environment. Considering the 'needs of man' and ensuring the 'needs of the present' has become the developmental agenda. But measurement for the 'needs' is defined by the demographic feature of a particular region. This reflects the man-land relationship in the preview of developmental agendas not only related to environmental issue but the social relationship. The socio-political stability of a region becomes an important factor for ensuring sustainable development that reflects understanding and cooperation in achieving mutual goals. Thus a region expressed in terms of geographical space is not only a physical entity but also an important agent in understanding the various attributes of economic, social, ecological and institutional aspect that is required for implementation of developmental strategies in achieving sustainable development goals.

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