



web: <https://rlgjaar.com> ISSN: 2998-4459

April 2026 | Volume 3 | Issue 4(III)

ROYAL INTERNATIONAL GLOBAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCE AND APPLIED RESEARCH

*Double-blind peer-reviewed /refereed, open access
online International journal*

Chief Editor
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Published By :

Royal International Global LLC



web: <https://rlgjaar.com> ISSN: 2998-4459

April 2026 | Volume 3 | Issue 4(III)

*Double-blind peer-reviewed /refereed, open access
online International journal*

Published By :

Royal International Global LLC

16192 Coastal Highway, County of Sussex,
Lewes, Delaware 19958

United States of America (USA)

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Name of Journal	Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research
Frequency	Monthly (Jan to Dec) {12 issues per year}
ISSN	2998-4459
Publisher	Royal International Global LLC 16192 Coastal Highway, County of Sussex, Lewes, Delaware 19958 USA Email: rlgjaar.com@gmail.com Website: https://royaligllc.us
Chief Editor	Santosh P. Mane
Copy right	Royal International Global LLC
Starting Year	July 2024
Subject	Multi-Disciplinary (Science, Social Science, Commerce etc. Subject)
Review Process	Double Blind Review Process
Language	English
Publication Format	online
Access	
License	 Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)
Phone No.	(+1) 3023033026
Email	rlgjaar.com@gmail.com
Journal Website	https://rlgjaar.com CEO Royal International Global LLC 16192 Coastal Highway, County of Sussex, Lewes, Delaware 19958 United States of America (USA) Email: ceo@royaligllc.us
Registered office Address	CEO Royal International Global LLC 16192 Coastal Highway, County of Sussex, Lewes, Delaware 19958 United States of America (USA) Email: ceo@royaligllc.us
Admin. Office Address	16192 Coastal Highway, County of Sussex, Lewes, Delaware 19958 United States of America (USA) Email: ceo@royaligllc.us

Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research

Volume No-3, Issue-4(III), April-2026

Publication Language – English

Periodicity of Publication- Monthly

Email: rlgjaar.com@gmail.com

Journal Website: <https://rlgjaar.com>

Mob: (+1) 3023033026

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Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research

Volume No-3, Issue-4(III), April-2026

Publication Language – English

Periodicity of Publication- Monthly

Email: rlgjaar.com@gmail.com

Journal Website: <https://rlgjaar.com>

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Royal International Global LLC

16192 Coastal Highways, County of Sussex, Lewes, Delaware 19958 USA

Email: subarti2024@gmail.com website: <https://royaligllc.us>

About the Conference

Sustainable Development, Governance and Human Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Perspective

Under the guidance of the **Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)**, the Departments of **Geography, Economics, Political Science, and Psychology** of **Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Saswad** jointly organized the National Conference on “**Sustainable Development, Governance and Human Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Perspective.**” The conference was conceived as an academic forum to facilitate dialogue among researchers, academicians, students, and policymakers on contemporary issues related to sustainable development from an interdisciplinary perspective. In recent decades, challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, economic inequality, social justice, governance, and technological transformation have increased the importance of adopting integrated approaches to sustainable development. Recognizing the interrelationship among these issues, the conference provided a platform for discussions on a broad range of themes, including sustainable development, environmental management, public policy, the green economy, inclusive development, social responsibility, human behavior, and the role of technology in addressing emerging societal challenges. The conference brought together participants from diverse academic disciplines to present and discuss their research findings. The papers included in these proceedings reflect a variety of perspectives on issues related to sustainability, governance, and human behavior. Through interdisciplinary engagement, the conference encouraged academic dialogue, the exchange of ideas, and collaborative approaches to understanding contemporary social, economic, environmental, and governance-related challenges. The research papers published in this volume are intended to serve as a useful academic resource for researchers, academicians, students, and policymakers. Collectively, these contributions represent ongoing scholarly engagement with issues of sustainable development and are expected to encourage further research, interdisciplinary collaboration, and informed academic discourse in the relevant fields.

About the College



Established in 1972, Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Saswad, Pune, is spread across a 9-acre campus and has been providing quality higher education for over five decades. Guided by its vision of imparting value-based education, the college empowers students, particularly from rural and hilly areas, and nurtures responsible citizens with strong moral values and national spirit. The college has received DST-FIST grants and DBT-STAR Status, and was accredited by NAAC with B++ Grade in the Fourth Cycle in 2024. It offers B.A., B.Com. B.Sc, BCS, BBA, BBA (CA), 12 PG programmes, UGC-sponsored B.Voc. Courses, and has Research Centres in English, Chemistry, and Commerce, catering to over 5,000 students

Best Wishes.....



Hon. Sunetra Ajitdada Pawar
Deputy Chief Minister, Government of Maharashtra
President, Pune District Education Association, Pune

In the present era, sustainable development is not merely a concept but a shared responsibility of society, governance, and citizens. Achieving a balance between environmental conservation, social equity, economic progress, and human well-being has become an essential prerequisite for sustainable growth. The National Conference on **“Sustainable Development, Governance and Human Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Perspective”** represents a commendable academic initiative in this direction. Bringing together scholars from diverse disciplines to deliberate on contemporary issues provides an important platform for the exchange of ideas and academic dialogue. Such initiatives promote research that contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with sustainable development. I am confident that the research papers published in these conference proceedings will serve as a valuable academic resource and encourage further scholarly engagement in the fields of sustainable development, governance, and human behavior. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the organizers, researchers, academicians, and all the participants for the successful organization of this conference. I convey my best wishes for the publication and hope that it will inspire continued research and academic excellence.

Best Wishes.....



Hon. Rajendra Ghadage
Vice President, Pune District Education Association, Pune

Promoting a strong research culture in higher education institutions is essential for building a knowledge-based society. Research not only contributes to the generation of new knowledge but also provides a scientific approach to understanding contemporary challenges and exploring appropriate solutions to issues affecting society. The National Conference on **“Sustainable Development, Governance and Human Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Perspective”** brings together researchers from the disciplines of Geography, Economics, Political Science, and Psychology, providing a common platform for interdisciplinary academic interaction. Such collaborative initiatives encourage the integration of diverse perspectives and contribute to a broader understanding of issues related to sustainable development and governance. The research papers included in these conference proceedings reflect the scholarly efforts of the contributors and present a range of perspectives on contemporary issues. It is expected that this publication will serve as a useful academic resource for students, researchers, academicians, and other readers interested in interdisciplinary studies. I extend my sincere congratulations to the organizers, contributors, and all those associated with this publication, and convey my best wishes for its success.

Best Wishes.....



Adv. Sandeep Kadam

Hon. Secretary, Pune District Education Association, Pune

Education is a powerful instrument of social transformation. Higher education institutions play a vital role in nurturing critical thinking, social awareness, and a sense of responsible citizenship among students through a variety of academic and research-oriented initiatives. National conferences and conference proceedings constitute an important part of this academic process, providing opportunities for scholarly interaction and knowledge dissemination. The National Conference on **“Sustainable Development, Governance and Human Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Perspective”** has provided researchers and students with an opportunity to present their ideas, exchange perspectives, and engage with emerging concepts across multiple disciplines. Such academic initiatives encourage research aptitude, strengthen scholarly engagement, and contribute to the enhancement of academic quality. I am confident that the research papers published in these conference proceedings will serve as a useful reference for students, researchers, academicians, and other readers interested in interdisciplinary studies. I congratulate the organizers, faculty members, researchers, and students for the successful organization of the conference and extend my heartfelt best wishes for this publication.

Principal's Message



Dr. Pandit Nivrattirao Shelke

Principal, Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Saswad

It gives me immense pleasure to present the conference proceedings of the National Conference on **“Sustainable Development, Governance and Human Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Perspective,”** organized by Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Saswad. The primary objective of this conference was to bring together researchers from various disciplines within the social sciences to facilitate academic discussions on contemporary social, economic, environmental, and governance-related issues. The conference provided a platform for the exchange of ideas and research findings through an interdisciplinary approach, encouraging meaningful academic dialogue among participants. The enthusiastic participation of researchers, academicians, and students, along with the quality of the papers presented, contributed significantly to the successful conduct of the conference. The papers included in these proceedings reflect a wide range of research perspectives and academic inquiries related to the conference theme. I am confident that this publication will serve as a useful reference resource for students, researchers, academicians, and policymakers. It is expected to encourage further research and contribute to the advancement of interdisciplinary academic discourse. I sincerely congratulate all the Heads of Departments, Coordinators, faculty members, researchers, students, and members of the organizing committee whose dedicated efforts made this conference a success. I hope that these proceedings will strengthen the culture of research and knowledge sharing within the academic community.

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**Principal Dr. Pandit Nivrattirao Shelke
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Principal Dr. Pandit Nivrattirao Shelke is a prominent Indian academic and administrator serving as the Principal of PDEA's Waghire College, Saswad, Pune. He is an active physics researcher. His expertise focuses on multidisciplinary physics, specifically in material science, gas sensors, and solar technology. He is recognised M.Phil and Ph.D. research guide in Savitribai Phule Pune University. 1 student has been awarded Ph.D. degree and 6 students are pursuing Ph.D. under his guidance. He has more than 32 years administrative experience as principal, Member of BOS in Physics, Director, Board of Students' Welfare, SSPU, Pune, Program Coordinator NSS, SPPU, Pune and many other committees. He has presented and published more than 54 research papers in National & International Seminars and Conferences in India and Abroad. More than 500 lectures delivered on different issues in various colleges affiliated to SPPU for Students' Personality Development and Carrier Guidance. He has author of 37 text and reference books. He is recipient of Best Teacher, Best Principal and many other awards from various institutions.



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Dr. Sanjay Haribhau Zagade is the Vice-Principal, Professor and Head of the Department of English, and Coordinator of the Ph.D. Research Centre at Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Saswad, Pune. He has 27 years of undergraduate and 21 years of postgraduate teaching experience. A recognized Ph.D. Guide, he has guided two Ph.D. scholars and is currently supervising seven doctoral candidates. A recipient of the Best Teacher Award (2021) conferred by the Maharashtra Marathi Sahitya Parishad, he serves as a Board of Studies (BoS) Member at H.V. Desai College, Pune, and as an External Expert on the School of Research Committee at JSPM University. Dr. Sanjay Haribhau Zagade has held several key academic and administrative positions, including IQAC Coordinator, Controller of Examinations, NSS Programme Officer, and Nodal Officer for AISHE. He has published 46 research papers in reputed national and international peer-reviewed journals and is a sought-after resource person, delivering lectures and conducting workshops on the NAAC accreditation framework, quality assurance, and higher education at various colleges and institutions. He has made significant contributions to teaching, research, academic administration, and quality enhancement in higher education.



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Dr. Tushar Balmohan Ghorpade is Associate Professor and Head of the Geography Department at Waghire College Saswad. He has published 11 research articles in various national and UGC peer-reviewed journals. His area of interest is dam sedimentation and Fluvial Geomorphology. He has conducted various workshops on GIS and RS. He has conducted workshops on uses of Drones in advanced surveying methods & techniques.

He has conducted various Field surveys and and Socio-economic survey using advanced GPS techniques. He has organized various documentary shows to motivate students on various Geographical phenomena. He has held various academic and administrative post such as CEO and NSS program officer. Convener of Post Graduation syllabus. Presently, he held the post as a CDC member.



Dr. Sarange Ananda
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Dr. Sarange Ananda He has been working currently as a head of Economics department in PDEAs waghire college in saswad. So far he has 16 years experience in PDEAs as a assistant professor in economics. He has published different types of reasearch papers in national seminar and conference.

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Prof. Nitin Lagad
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Prof. Nitin Lagad is an Assistant Professor of Political Science and currently serves as the Head of the Department of Political Science at Waghire College, Saswad, under the Pune District Education Association. His primary areas of academic interest are the Indian Constitution and Public Administration. He completed his M.Phil. research on the topic “Nationalist Congress Party in Pune City: A Study”, and he is presently pursuing his Ph.D. research. He has authored and published books on the Indian Constitution and Public Administration. He has also worked as a mentor and guide at several competitive examination coaching centers. His research articles have been published in numerous reputed national and international journals. He holds office-bearing positions in prestigious organizations such as the Maharashtra Sahitya Parishad and the Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Natya Parishad. He is actively associated with various social organizations and movements. His mission is to contribute to the development of responsible and capable Indian citizens by integrating education with social values in a practical and meaningful way.



Prof. Sunil Shinde
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Prof. Sunil Shinde is working as Head and Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at PDEA's Waghire College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Saswad. He has successfully qualified both the State Eligibility Test (SET) and National Eligibility Test (NET) in Psychology and is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in the field of Psychology. He has more than 16 years of teaching experience at both Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate (PG) levels. Throughout his academic career, he has been actively involved in teaching, research, student mentoring, and academic administration. His areas of interest include Psychological Assessment, Mental Health, Counselling Psychology, Research Methodology, Educational Psychology, and Positive Psychology. Prof. Shinde has contributed significantly to curriculum development, research activities, and extension programs. He has guided numerous student research projects and actively participates in seminars, workshops, conferences, and faculty development programs. His commitment to academic excellence and student-centered learning has made him a respected educator among students and colleagues. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, he is actively engaged in research and community outreach initiatives aimed at promoting mental health awareness and psychological well-being. His dedication to the field of Psychology continues to inspire students and contribute to the advancement of psychological education and research.



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Dr. Siddharth Sahadu Ghongade is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics at PDEA's Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Saswad, Pune. He has more than eight years of teaching experience in higher education and has been teaching undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Economics since 2017. He holds an M.A. in Economics, has qualified the State Eligibility Test (SET), and earned a Ph.D. in Economics. His major areas of research include the Indian Economy, Banking, Financial Systems, and Health Economics. He has presented and published research papers at State, National, and international conferences. He is also the author of four textbooks on Banking and Finance. His contributions to teaching, research, and academic writing reflect his commitment to academic excellence and the advancement of Economics education and research.



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Original Article

Inclusive Development: A Pathway to Equitable and Sustainable Growth

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030401

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 1-4
April 2026

Submitted: 05 Mar. 2026
Revised: 10 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 10 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21546432

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21546432>



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Abstract

Inclusive development addresses socio-economic inequalities and ensures sustainable growth it emphasizes equitable access to opportunities, resources, and benefits of economic progress for all segments of society, particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups. This research paper examines the role of inclusive development as a strategy to achieve balanced economic growth while fostering social justice and environmental sustainability. The study integrates both primary and secondary data to analyse how inclusive policies impact economic outcomes, social equity, and environmental resilience. Primary data was collected through structured Questionnaires administered to 120 respondents from urban and semi-urban areas, focusing on employment access, education, healthcare, and financial inclusion. Secondary data sources include government reports, policy documents, academic journals, and international development frameworks. The findings suggest that inclusive development significantly contributes to poverty reduction, improved living standards, and social cohesion. However, disparities still persist due to unequal access to education, skill development, and financial services. The study identifies a strong positive correlation between inclusive policy implementation and indicators such as employment generation, income equality, and human development. Despite notable progress, the research reveals critical gaps in policy execution, especially in rural outreach, gender inclusion, and digital accessibility. Structural challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited awareness, and institutional inefficiencies hinder the effectiveness of inclusive development strategies. The paper concludes that inclusive development is not merely a social objective but an economic necessity for sustainable growth. It recommends strengthening governance frameworks, enhancing public-private partnerships, investing in human capital, and promoting digital inclusion. The integration of environmental sustainability into development policies is also highlighted as essential for long-term growth. Overall, the study reinforces that inclusive development provides a comprehensive pathway toward equitable and sustainable growth, ensuring that no section of society is left behind in the development process.

Keywords: Inclusive Development, Sustainable Growth, Economic Equality, Financial Inclusion, Policy Execution.

Introduction

Inclusive development ensures equal opportunities regardless of socio-economic background. It is rooted in the idea that economic growth alone is insufficient unless its benefits are distributed equitably across society. The concept emphasizes fairness, social justice, and the active participation of all sections of society in the development process. In recent decades, many economies have experienced rapid economic growth driven by globalization, technological advancements, and industrial expansion. While globalization has driven growth, it has also widened income inequality and limited access to essential services. Such as education, healthcare, and employment. These disparities have led to social exclusion, poverty traps, and unequal opportunities, particularly for marginalized communities such as women, rural populations, and economically weaker sections. As a result, the need for a more inclusive approach to development has gained prominence in both academic discourse and policy-making.

True sustainability requires integrating economic progress with social justice and environmental protection. It ensures that development is broad-based, benefiting all segments of society rather than a select few

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How to cite this article:

Kashide, R. & Dupargude, P. (2026). Inclusive Development: A Pathway to Equitable and Sustainable Growth. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 3(4(III)), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21546432>



The approach not only focuses on increasing national income but also emphasizes improving the quality of life, enhancing human capabilities, and promoting equal access to opportunities. It recognizes that sustainable development cannot be achieved without reducing inequalities and ensuring social inclusion.

Furthermore, inclusive development is closely linked with human development, which involves expanding people's freedoms and choices. Access to quality education, healthcare services, skill development, and financial resources plays a crucial role in empowering individuals and enabling them to contribute productively to the economy. Financial inclusion, in particular, has emerged as a key component of inclusive development, as it provides individuals with access to banking, credit, insurance, and other financial services that can improve their livelihoods and economic security.

The role of government policies and institutional frameworks is critical in promoting inclusive development. Effective implementation of social welfare programs, employment generation schemes, and poverty alleviation initiatives can significantly reduce disparities and enhance social well-being. At the same time, the participation of the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and local communities is essential in ensuring that development initiatives are comprehensive and sustainable.

Another important dimension of inclusive development is environmental sustainability. Economic activities that degrade natural resources and harm the environment can disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. Therefore, inclusive development must incorporate sustainable practices that protect the environment while promoting economic growth. This includes the adoption of renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and responsible resource management.

In the context of developing countries like India, inclusive development holds particular significance due to the presence of large socio-economic disparities. Despite significant economic progress, challenges such as unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, and regional imbalances continue to persist. Bridging these gaps requires targeted policies and inclusive strategies that focus on uplifting disadvantaged groups and ensuring equal opportunities for all.

Moreover, technological advancements and digital transformation have created new opportunities for inclusive development. Digital platforms can enhance access to education, healthcare, financial services, and employment opportunities, especially in remote and underserved areas. However, the digital divide remains a challenge, as not all individuals have equal access to technology and digital literacy. Addressing this gap is essential for achieving true inclusivity in the modern economy.

Inclusive development also contributes to social cohesion and political stability. When individuals feel included and have access to opportunities, they are more likely to participate actively in economic and social

activities, leading to a more harmonious and productive society. Conversely, exclusion and inequality can lead to social unrest and hinder long-term development.

In conclusion, inclusive development represents a holistic approach to growth that balances economic progress with social equity and environmental sustainability. It is not only a moral imperative but also an economic necessity for achieving sustainable and equitable growth. By ensuring that no one is left behind, inclusive development paves the way for a more just, stable, and prosperous society.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the concept and importance of inclusive development.
- To analyse the relationship between inclusive development and economic growth.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of inclusive policies in reducing inequality.
- To identify challenges in implementing inclusive development strategies.
- To suggest measures for achieving equitable and sustainable growth.

Hypotheses

1. H1: Inclusive development positively influences economic growth.
2. H2: There is a significant correlation between inclusive policies and reduction in income inequality.
3. H3: Access to education and employment is directly related to inclusive development.
4. H4: Financial inclusion significantly improves living standards.
5. H5: Inclusive development contributes to environmental sustainability.

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

The study uses a **Descriptive and analytical** design to examine how inclusive development impacts equitable and sustainable growth. Descriptive analysis captures the current status of inclusion, while analytical methods explore relationships between variables like education, income, and financial inclusion. Empirical data from respondents ensures practical insights.

2. Data Sources

Primary Data: Collected via structured questionnaires and interviews, focusing on education, employment, healthcare, financial inclusion, and awareness of government schemes.

Secondary Data: Sourced from government reports, international organizations, research journals, books, and credible online databases.

3. Sampling Design

- Population: Urban and semi-urban individuals
- Sample Size: 120 respondents (58% Urban, 42% Semi-Urban)
- Multi-stage Stratified Sampling



Sample Distribution:

Category	Respondents	%
Urban	70	58%
Semi-Urban	50	42%
Male	65	54%
Female	55	46%

4. Variables

Independent: Education access, employment, financial inclusion, policy awareness

- Dependent: Income level, living standards, social inclusion, perception of economic growth

5. Data Analysis Tools

- Percentage Analysis: Demographics and response trends
- Correlation Analysis: Relationships between education, employment, income, and policy access (Karl Pearson method)
- Tabulation & Graphs: Tables, bar charts, and pie charts
- Comparative Analysis: Before-and-after evaluation of inclusive policies

6. Reliability & Validity

- Pre-tested questionnaires ensured clarity and consistency
- Data cross-verified for accuracy
- Questions aligned with research objectives for content validity

7. Scope & Limitations

Scope: Focuses on urban/semi-urban populations and indicators like education, employment, and financial inclusion. Limitations: Small sample size, geographic restriction, and potential respondent bias.

8. Ethical Considerations

Data Analysis

Table 1: Access to Basic Services

Service	Yes (%)	No (%)
Education	78	22
Healthcare	65	35
Employment	58	42
Financial Services	60	40

Table 2: Income Level Improvement

Income Category	Before (%)	After (%)
Low	55	30
Middle	35	50
High	10	20

Correlation Analysis

1. Inclusive Policies vs Income Equality: **+ 0.72**
(Strong positive relationship)
2. Education Access vs Employment: **+ 0.68**
3. Financial Inclusion vs Living Standards: **+ 0.75**
(Significant impact on poverty reduction)

8. Findings and Suggestions

Findings

1. Inclusive development significantly improves access to basic services.

Participation was voluntary, responses were confidential, and data was used solely for research purposes.

9. Conceptual Framework

Inclusive Development (Education, Employment, Financial Inclusion, Policies) → Improved Income & Living Standards → Equitable & Sustainable Growth

Review of Literature

Various scholars have emphasized the importance of inclusive development:

- Studies highlight that inclusive growth reduces poverty and enhances social stability.
- Research indicates that education and skill development are key drivers of inclusion.
- Financial inclusion has been recognized as a major factor in reducing inequality.
- Some studies argue that without proper implementation, inclusive policies fail to reach target groups.

Research Gap

Despite extensive research on economic growth, limited studies focus on the integration of inclusivity and sustainability simultaneously. Additionally:

- Lack of localized primary data.
- Insufficient focus on implementation challenges.
- Limited analysis of rural-urban disparities.

2. There is a strong positive relationship between inclusion and economic growth.
3. Financial inclusion plays a critical role in poverty reduction.
4. Inequality persists due to uneven policy implementation.
5. Rural areas continue to lag behind in development benefits.

Suggestions

1. Strengthen governance and policy execution frameworks.



2. Promote digital inclusion to bridge the accessibility gap.
3. Encourage public-private partnerships for infrastructure development.
4. Improve rural infrastructure and connectivity.
5. Promote digital inclusion.
6. Encourage public-private partnerships.
7. Integrate environmental sustainability into development planning.

Conclusion

Inclusive development is essential for achieving equitable and sustainable growth. It ensures that economic progress benefits all sections of society and reduces disparities. While progress has been made, significant challenges remain in implementation and accessibility.

The study highlights that inclusive development is not just a policy choice but a necessity for long-term stability and growth. Governments, institutions, and communities must work collaboratively to ensure inclusive and sustainable development.

Acknowledgment

The authors express their sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the successful completion of this research paper entitled "Inclusive Development: A Pathway to Equitable and Sustainable Growth."

We are deeply thankful to the management and Principal of Pune Jilha Shikshan Mandal's Annasaheb Waghire College, Otur, Tal. Junnar, Dist. Pune, for providing the necessary academic support and facilities to carry out this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Sustainable Economic Growth: An Analytical Review and Strategic Direction for the Global and Indian Economy

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030402

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 5-7
April 2026

Submitted: 05 Mar. 2026
Revised: 10 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 10 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.21546968

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21546968>



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Abstract

Sustainable economic growth has emerged as the most critical imperative and strategic challenge for the global economy in the 21st century. Historically, economic progress relied on the intensive extraction of natural resources and focused solely on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth. However, escalating climate change, environmental degradation, and rising social inequalities have necessitated a paradigm shift. This research paper analyzes the evolution of the concept of sustainable growth, its scope, and its global significance. It reviews the trajectory from the 1987 Brundtland Report to the 2025 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) progress assessments. From a theoretical perspective, this study examines the foundations of sustainability through the Solow Growth Model, Endogenous Growth Theory, and the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC). Globally, it compares developed and developing nations through case studies like Germany's Energiewende and China's green finance systems. With a specific focus on India, the paper utilizes data from the NITI Aayog SDG India Index 2023–24 (Composite Score: 71) and the Union Budget 2026–27 to highlight progress in renewable energy and green technology. [1, 2] The report further analyzes the transition toward a Circular Economy based on NITI Aayog's 2026 strategic reports. Finally, it provides policy recommendations for achieving "Viksit Bharat @ 2047" through inclusive and resilient economic frameworks.

Keywords: Sustainable Economic Growth, Green Budget 2026, NITI Aayog SDG Index, Circular Economy, Net Zero 2070, Technical Innovation, Viksit Bharat @ 2047.

Introduction

Economic growth has historically been the primary metric for measuring national prosperity. However, the late 20th century revealed that growth achieved at the expense of natural capital is inherently unsustainable. Sustainable economic growth is not merely about environmental protection; it is an integrated nexus of economic stability, social justice, and technological advancement. Globally, the climate crisis is no longer a future threat but a present reality. 2024 was recorded as the hottest year on record, with global temperatures temporarily surpassing the threshold. In this context, pursuing development at the cost of the environment is counterproductive. Sustainable growth allows current generations to meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. This concept rests on three pillars: economic efficiency, social inclusion, and environmental resilience. For a rapidly growing economy like India, sustainability is mandatory to realize the vision of "Viksit Bharat @ 2047". While India has achieved 92% electricity availability and significant digital penetration by 2025, balancing this momentum with the "Net Zero 2070" target remains a complex challenge.

Growth, it has also widened income inequality and limited access to essential services. Such as education, healthcare, and employment. These disparities have led to social exclusion, poverty traps, and unequal opportunities, particularly for marginalized communities such as women, rural populations, and economically weaker sections. As a result, the need for a more inclusive approach to development has gained prominence in both academic discourse and policy-making. True sustainability requires integrating economic progress with social justice and environmental protection. It ensures that development is broad-based, benefiting all segments of society rather than a select few.

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How to cite this article:

More, B. P. (2026). Sustainable Economic Growth: An Analytical Review and Strategic Direction for the Global and Indian Economy. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 3(4(III)), 5–7. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21546968>



Literature Review

1. The Brundtland Report (1987)

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) published "Our Common Future," which defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". It established the interdependence of social equity, economic growth, and environmental health.

2. Economic Growth Theories

Solow Model (1956): This neoclassical model emphasizes capital accumulation and exogenous technological progress. In the context of sustainability, it suggests that technological advancement can substitute for depleted natural resources (Weak Sustainability)

Endogenous Growth Theory:

Developed by Paul Romer and Robert Lucas, this theory posits that growth is driven by internal factors like human capital, innovation, and R&D. It suggests that knowledge-based investment is the key to overcoming environmental limits.

* **Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC):** The EKC hypothesis suggests an inverted U-shaped relationship where environmental degradation initially increases with income but starts to decline after reaching a certain threshold.

3. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Adopted by the UN in 2015, the 17 SDGs provide a comprehensive roadmap for global development. By 2025, while progress in health (SDG 3) and energy (SDG 7) is notable, goals related to "Reduced Inequalities" (SDG 10) and "Climate Action" (SDG 13) face significant hurdles due to geopolitical conflicts and economic shocks.

5. Research Objectives

- * To analyze the theoretical foundations of sustainable economic growth.
- * To study global success models of sustainability (Germany and China).
- * To evaluate India's progress using the NITI Aayog SDG Index and renewable energy statistics.
- * To examine the impact of the Union Budget 2026–27 on green growth.
- * To identify challenges and provide strategic policy recommendations.

6. Research Methodology

This research utilizes a multi-dimensional analytical framework based on secondary data:

- * **Qualitative Analysis:** Deep review of international reports (UN SDG Report 2025, OECD Economic Outlook) and government policy documents. [3, 6, 7]
- * **Quantitative Analysis:** Use of statistical data from NITI Aayog (SDG Index 2023–24), renewable energy data from MNRE (up to November 2025), and financial allocations from the Union Budget 2026–27. [1, 8, 9]

Key Determinants of Sustainable Growth

1. Environmental Determinants: Natural Capital

Environment is the bedrock of sustainability. India has adopted "Natural Capital Accounting" through the

EnviStats India 2024 report, measuring stocks of energy, soil nutrients, and biodiversity. [6, 10] Protected areas in India increased by 16% between 2000 and 2023.

2. Economic Determinants: Green Finance

Green finance is the economic engine of sustainability. India's Union Budget 2026 includes a ₹20,000 crore incentive for Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS). [9, 11] To attract capital, investment caps for individual foreign investors were doubled from 5% to 10%.

3. Social Determinants: Inclusivity

Growth is only sustainable if it is inclusive. India has moved 24.8 crore people out of multidimensional poverty between 2013 and 2023. However, the gender gap (SDG 5) remains an area requiring targeted intervention.

4. Technical Determinants: AI and Digital Transformation

The digital economy is projected to contribute 13.42% of India's GDP by 2024–25. AI is being leveraged for "Social Good" (AI4SG), with machine learning reducing fertilizer-related emissions by up to 38% through precision management.

Global Perspective

1. Developed vs. Developing Nations

Developing nations face a "Climate Finance Gap," requiring an estimated \$6 trillion by 2030. High-income nations carry a greater responsibility for decarbonization given their historical emissions.

2. Case Study: Germany's Energiewende

Germany aims for 80% renewable energy in power consumption by 2030.

* **Economic Impact:** The transition created 430,000 new jobs and added 1% to GDP by 2020.

* **Strategy:** Phase-out of nuclear and coal, coupled with a massive smart-meter rollout for grid flexibility.

3. Case Study: China's Green Transformation

China's clean energy sector contributed 40% to its GDP growth in 2023.

* **Leadership:** China's BYD became the world's top EV seller, and renewables now account for 50% of China's total power capacity.

* **Finance:** China maintains the world's largest market for green loans and bonds.

Sustainable Economic Growth in India (2020–2026)

1. Renewable Energy Statistics (Latest Data 2025)

As of November 30, 2025, India has achieved historic growth in clean energy [8, 14]:

* **Total RE Capacity:** 253.96 GW (including large hydro).

* **Solar Power:** 132.85 GW (crossed 100 GW in January 2025).

* **Wind Power:** 53.99 GW (crossed 50 GW in March 2025).

* **Record:** On July 29, 2025, renewables met 51.5% of India's daily peak electricity demand.

2. Union Budget 2026–27 Interventions

The first budget prepared in Kartavya Bhawan focuses on three duties (Kartavyas), primarily accelerating economic growth and building resilience:

* **Biopharma SHAKTI:** ₹10,000 crore outlay to position India as a global biopharma manufacturing hub.



* Bharat-VISTAAR: An AI-driven multilingual platform to provide customized advisory to farmers. [9]

* City Economic Regions (CER): ₹5,000 crore per CER to map and drive urban economic drivers. [9]

3. Circular Economy (NITI Aayog 2026 Reports)

In January 2026, NITI Aayog released reports focusing on three waste-to-wealth streams:

* End-of-Life Vehicles (ELVs): Projecting 50 million ELVs by 2030; recovery of 98 million tonnes of steel.

* Waste Tyres: Managing 1.5–2 million tonnes annually through formal recycling.

* Lithium-ion Batteries (LIBs): Demand to rise from 29 GWh (2025) to 248 GWh (2035); focusing on "Urban Mining" for Lithium and Cobalt.

Challenges and Barriers

* Climate Chaos: Frequent floods and heatwaves (like the 2024 heatwave) are reducing agricultural productivity and straining infrastructure.

* Financing Shortfall: India requires \$6 trillion by 2030 for climate goals; current funding remains episodic.

* Inequality Regression: The "Reduced Inequalities" (SDG 10) score dropped from 67 to 65, reflecting wealth concentration and limited rural consumption.

Policy Recommendations

1. Short-Term Measures (2026–2027)

* Incentivizing Formal Scrapping: Reduce GST for formal vehicle scrapping to compete with the informal sector.

* Inflation and Supply Management: Maintain calibrated procurement (e.g., 30MT wheat target) to keep consumer inflation subdued (1.33% in Dec 2025)

* Smart Metering: Accelerate smart meter rollout to unlock grid flexibility, following the German model.

2. Long-Term Strategic Initiatives (2030–2047)

* R&D and Deep Tech: Effective utilization of the ₹1,00,000 crore RDI scheme (approved July 2025) to jump-start the innovation ecosystem.

* GST 2.0: Implement a simplified two-rate structure (5% and 18%) to lower tax incidence on renewable equipment and essential services.

* Human Capital: Shift focus from job quantity to "quality of employment," aligning skilling with green and mechatronic roles.

Conclusion

Sustainable economic growth is the foundation of human survival and prosperity in the 21st century. The transition from the Brundtland definition to the data-driven SDG framework highlights that growth must be qualitative, not just quantitative. Germany and China provide templates for integrating industrial competitiveness with climate resilience. India, with an SDG score of 71 and over 253 GW of renewable capacity, is on a positive trajectory. However, achieving Viksit Bharat @ 2047 requires bridging the finance gap and addressing social inequalities. By embracing a Circular Economy and leveraging AI for social good, India can ensure that its growth is shared, resilient, and enduring for future generations.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all those who directly and indirectly contributed to the successful completion of this research paper entitled "Sustainable Economic Growth: An Analytical Review and Strategic Direction for the Global and Indian Economy (2025–2047)". Special appreciation is extended to the management and Principal of Vidya Pratishthan's Arts, Science and Commerce College, Baramati, for providing a supportive academic environment and necessary facilities for carrying out this study. The author is deeply thankful to colleagues, fellow academicians, and researchers whose valuable discussions and suggestions enriched the quality of the work.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Sustainable Economic Growth

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030403

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 8-9
April 2026

Submitted: 05 Mar. 2026
Revised: 10 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 10 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web. <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21547325

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21547325>



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Abstract

Sustainable economic growth refers to the process of increasing economic output while ensuring the efficient use of natural resources, environmental protection, and social well-being. It aims to balance present developmental needs with the requirements of future generations through resource efficiency, technological innovation, and inclusive development. Sustainable growth emphasizes environmental stewardship, long-term economic stability, and equitable distribution of benefits across society. Governments, businesses, and consumers play a vital role in achieving sustainability through policy reforms, investment in green technologies, and responsible consumption patterns. The concept encompasses four pillars—environmental, economic, social, and human sustainability—which together contribute to a resilient and prosperous future. In the context of increasing environmental challenges and resource scarcity, sustainable economic growth has become essential for achieving balanced development and fulfilling the objectives of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, adopting sustainable practices is crucial for ensuring economic prosperity while preserving ecological balance and improving the quality of life for present and future generations.

Keywords: Sustainable Economic Growth, Resource Efficiency, Environmental Sustainability, Inclusive Development, Technological Innovation, Renewable Energy, Green Growth, Circular Economy, Sustainable Consumption, Policy Reforms, Social Sustainability, Human Sustainability, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Introduction

Sustainable economic growth is the process of increasing a nation's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over the long term without depleting natural resources, causing severe environmental damage, or creating insurmountable economic imbalances.

It balances immediate needs with future viability by investing in renewable energy, innovation, and resource efficiency.

Objectives:

1. To ensure environmental stewardship.
2. To maintain a long-term focus.
3. To promote inclusive development.
4. To improve resource efficiency.
5. To encourage technological innovation.

Key Principles of Sustainable Economic Growth:

1. Resource Efficiency:

Shifting from non-renewable to renewable energy sources and promoting recycling and circular economy practices to protect natural capital.

2. Long-term Focus:

Ensuring that economic policies and production methods do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

3. Environmental Sustainability:

Decoupling economic growth from environmental harm by reducing pollution and protecting ecosystems, aimed at achieving net-zero emissions.

4. Inclusive Development:

Promoting social equity, improving living standards, and ensuring that economic benefits are shared across society.

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How to cite this article:

Sarange, A. (2026). Sustainable Economic Growth. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 3(4(III)), 8–9. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21547325>



5. Technological Innovation:

Investing in new technologies, such as carbon capture and efficient agricultural practices, to foster green growth.

Importance:

Sustainable growth is crucial for avoiding environmental crises like global warming and resource depletion. It supports long-term stability and aligns economic prosperity with ecological balance, often highlighted in the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Strategies for Implementation:

1. Policy Reforms:

Governments should implement policies that prioritize green infrastructure and sustainable agriculture.

2. Investment in Technology:

Developing advanced technologies for energy efficiency and reducing waste.

3. Sustainable Consumption:

Encouraging consumers to consider environmental, social, and cultural aspects of products.

Best Example:

Economic sustainability refers to optimal practices of running a business with minimum waste. An example of economic sustainability includes creating systems that minimize waste. Other examples of economic sustainability are renewable energy sources and water treatment devices.

Types of Sustainability:

There are four pillars of sustainability:

1. Environmental
2. Economic
3. Social
4. Human

The four pillars of sustainability support future sustainability, which means meeting the needs of the present without compromising those of future generations.

Conclusions:

The concept of sustainable economic growth is one of the most important in economics. There are four types of sustainability: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, social sustainability, and human sustainability.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all those who directly and indirectly contributed to the successful completion of this research paper entitled "Sustainable Economic Growth." Special thanks are extended to the management and faculty members of Waghire College, Saswad, Pune, for providing the necessary academic environment and support. The author is deeply indebted to colleagues, scholars, and researchers whose valuable suggestions and encouragement helped in enriching the study. Appreciation is also extended to various authors, journals, books, and online resources that served as important references for this work. Finally, heartfelt gratitude is expressed to family members and well-wishers for their constant support, motivation, and encouragement throughout the preparation of this paper.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

A Critical Study of the Political Representation of Scheduled Caste Women in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Elections

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030404

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 10-15
April 2026

Submitted: 05 Mar. 2026
Revised: 10 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 10 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21547803

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21547803>



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Abstract

This study critically examines the political representation of Scheduled Caste (SC) women in the Maharashtra Assembly Elections 2024, situating it within the broader discourse on caste, gender, and democratic inclusion. Despite the constitutional provisions for political reservation and the increasing visibility of women in electoral politics, the representation of SC women remains limited and uneven. This paper seeks to analyse the extent and nature of their representation by focusing on key dimensions such as electoral participation, party nomination patterns, and electoral success. Adopting a descriptive and analytical research design, the study is based on secondary data drawn from election reports, party records, and official statistics. The paper employs the framework of Intersectionality to understand the multiple layers of marginalisation experienced by SC women, arising from the interplay of caste and gender. It further engages with theories of political representation to assess whether the presence of SC women in the legislative assembly translates into meaningful or substantive representation. The findings suggest that while SC women are present in the electoral arena, their overall representation remains disproportionately low, reflecting structural constraints such as patriarchal party structures, limited access to resources, and symbolic candidatures. The study argues that mere numerical inclusion does not ensure effective political empowerment, and highlights the need for more inclusive party strategies and institutional reforms to strengthen the substantive participation of SC women in legislative politics.

Keywords: Political Representation, Scheduled Caste, Women, Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, Intersectionality, Caste, Gender, Electoral Politics, Democratic Inclusion, Social Justice, Dynastic Politics.

Introduction

India's democratic framework is deeply rooted in the principles of equality, social justice, and inclusive representation, as enshrined in the Constitution of India. Recognising the historical marginalisation of certain communities, the Constitution provides for political reservation to ensure adequate representation of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in legislative bodies. Articles 330 and 332 specifically mandate the reservation of seats for SCs and STs in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, respectively. These provisions aim to promote political inclusion and enable historically disadvantaged groups to participate in governance and decision-making processes. At the national level, out of 543 seats in the Lok Sabha, 84 seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes. In the context of Maharashtra, the state elects 48 members to the Lok Sabha, of which 5 seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes. Similarly, in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, which comprises 288 seats, 29 constituencies are reserved for Scheduled Castes. These constitutional arrangements are intended to ensure political access and representation for historically marginalised communities. However, within these reserved structures, the representation of women—particularly Scheduled Caste women—remains limited and uneven. While reservation has enabled the entry of SC communities into legislative politics, it has not necessarily ensured equitable gender representation within these groups. The intersection of caste and gender produces a layered form of marginalisation, where SC women face multiple structural barriers, including limited access to political resources, party support, and electoral opportunities.

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How to cite this article:

Kharat, S. S. & Aghav, V. (2026). A Critical Study of the Political Representation of Scheduled Caste Women in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Elections. *Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 3(4(III)), 10–15. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21547803>

In this context, the present study focuses exclusively on the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Elections 2024 and seeks to critically examine the political representation of Scheduled Caste women. The study is confined to the 2024 electoral cycle and does not undertake a comparative analysis with previous elections. It aims to provide a focused and contemporary assessment of representation patterns, party strategies, and electoral outcomes concerning SC women candidates. By addressing questions related to the extent, nature, and effectiveness of SC women's representation, this study contributes to the broader discourse on democratic inclusion, social justice, and political empowerment in India.

Research Hypothesis

1. The political representation of Scheduled Caste women in the Maharashtra Assembly Elections 2024 is significantly low.
2. Political parties provide limited nominations to Scheduled Caste women candidates, which adversely affects their electoral success.
3. Various socio-political factors significantly affect the political representation of Scheduled Caste women.
4. The representation of Scheduled Caste women in the Maharashtra Assembly Elections 2024 is predominantly symbolic rather than substantive.
5. The level of political representation of Scheduled Caste women in the 2024 elections is significantly influenced by party strategies, which in turn affects their electoral outcomes.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the extent of political representation of Scheduled Caste women in the Maharashtra Assembly Elections 2024.
2. To analyse the pattern of party-wise nomination and electoral success of Scheduled Caste women candidates.
3. To study the factors affecting the political representation of Scheduled Caste women.
4. To evaluate whether the representation of Scheduled Caste women is merely symbolic or substantively meaningful.
5. To examine the causes and consequences of the limited or increased political representation of Scheduled Caste women in the Maharashtra Assembly Elections 2024, with special reference to the role of political parties.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the political representation of Scheduled Caste women in the Maharashtra Assembly Elections 2024. The research is primarily based on secondary data sources, as the study focuses on analysing electoral patterns and representation trends.

Data Sources

The study relies on secondary data collected from official and credible sources such as reports of the Election Commission of India, party documents, election result databases, government publications, and relevant academic literature including books, research articles, and policy reports.

Method of Data Collection

Data has been systematically collected from publicly available electoral records, statistical reports, and authenticated digital sources. The information includes details regarding the number of candidates, party-wise nominations, reserved constituencies, and electoral outcomes of Scheduled Caste women candidates.

Method of Analysis

The collected data is analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative analysis is used to measure the extent of representation, including numerical distribution and electoral success rates. Qualitative analysis is employed to interpret the role of political parties, identify factors affecting representation, and examine the nature of representation—whether symbolic or substantive.

The study is also guided by the theoretical framework of Intersectionality, which helps in understanding the overlapping impact of caste and gender on political representation.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study is confined to the Maharashtra Assembly Elections 2024 and does not include a comparative analysis with previous elections. It focuses specifically on Scheduled Caste women and does not extend to other categories such as Scheduled Tribes or Other Backward Classes. The analysis is limited to available secondary data and does not include primary fieldwork.

Historical Background

The evolution of political reservation in India is closely linked to the broader struggle for social justice and democratic inclusion. Its origins can be traced back to the colonial period, particularly with the introduction of group-based representation for marginalised communities. A significant milestone in this process was the Poona Pact, which replaced separate electorates for the Depressed Classes with reserved seats within a joint electorate, thereby laying the foundation for the modern system of political reservation. Following independence, the Constitution of India institutionalised political reservation as a corrective mechanism to address historical exclusion. Articles 330 and 332 provide for the reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, respectively. These provisions ensured the inclusion of historically marginalised communities within legislative institutions.

However, women's political reservation was not part of the original constitutional framework. The demand for women's representation gained momentum over time, leading to a major development through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1992–93), which introduced 33% reservation for women in local self-government institutions. The demand for reservation for women in Parliament and State Assemblies continued for decades and culminated in the enactment of the The Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023, popularly known as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam. This landmark legislation provides for 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies,

including within seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. However, its implementation is contingent upon delimitation and census processes.

Thus, while caste-based reservation has been an integral feature of India's constitutional framework since independence, women's reservation has emerged much later as a significant reform. Despite these constitutional provisions, the political representation of Scheduled Caste women remains limited, highlighting the continuing challenges at the intersection of caste and gender.

SC Women Representation in Reserved Constituencies (2024)

In Maharashtra, out of the total 288 Assembly constituencies, 29 constituencies are reserved for Scheduled Castes. An analysis of these Scheduled Caste reserved constituencies in the Maharashtra Assembly Elections 2024 indicates a clear predominance of the ruling alliance (Mahayuti). Out of the total 29 reserved constituencies, the Mahayuti secured approximately 23 seats, reflecting a significant electoral presence within SC-reserved segments. Among its constituent parties, the BJP won 10 seats, followed by the Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction) with 8 seats and the Nationalist Congress Party (Ajit Pawar faction) with 5 seats. In contrast, the opposition alliance, Maha Vikas Aghadi, secured around 6 seats, with the Indian National Congress winning 4 seats, while the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray faction) and the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar faction) secured 1 seat each. Compared to the 2019 elections, the Congress experienced a reduction in its seat share within SC-reserved constituencies. These electoral outcomes suggest a shift in party dominance and indicate evolving voting patterns among Scheduled Caste electorates in Maharashtra.

It is also noteworthy that out of these 29 reserved constituencies, only 3 women were elected, while the remaining representatives are men. The three elected Scheduled Caste women MLAs are Jyoti Gaikwad from Dharavi, Saroj Ahire from Deolali, and Namita Mundada from Kej. This highlights the continued gender imbalance within caste-based political representation.

A detailed constituency-wise analysis of these three representatives is presented below.

1. Dharavi (Mumbai) – Jyoti Gaikwad

Party: Indian National Congress

Region: Urban

Dharavi, located in Mumbai, is one of the most densely populated urban constituencies in India. It is widely known for its extensive slum settlements and complex socio-economic conditions. The constituency is characterised by persistent challenges such as inadequate housing, poor sanitation, informal employment structures, and ongoing redevelopment debates. These factors make Dharavi a politically significant constituency within the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Jyoti Gaikwad was elected to the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly for the first time in 2024, marking her formal entry into state-level electoral politics. Her electoral success is closely linked to her strong political lineage. She is the daughter of Eknath Gaikwad, a former

Member of Parliament, and the sister of Varsha Gaikwad, a prominent political leader in Maharashtra.

Belonging to the Buddhist community within the Scheduled Castes, her representation highlights the role of political legacy, urban organisational networks, and social capital in facilitating the political entry of Scheduled Caste women into legislative institutions.

In the 2024 Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections, Jyoti Gaikwad secured 70,727 votes and defeated Rajesh Shivdas Khandare of the Shinde faction of Shiv Sena by a margin of 23,459 votes.

2. Deolali (Nashik) – Saroj Ahire

Party: Nationalist Congress Party (Ajit Pawar faction)

Region: Rural

Deolali, located in Nashik district, is a predominantly rural constituency with an economy largely dependent on agriculture and allied activities. The region has a significant presence of Scheduled Caste and tribal populations and faces persistent developmental challenges such as inadequate irrigation facilities, limited rural infrastructure, and constrained livelihood opportunities. These structural issues shape the political discourse and electoral behaviour in the constituency.

Saroj Ahire is an experienced political leader currently serving her second term as a Member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly. She belongs to the Chamar community within the Scheduled Castes. Her continued electoral success indicates the presence of a stable voter base and sustained engagement with local political processes.

Her political trajectory reflects effective grassroots mobilisation, strong constituency-level leadership, and the ability to consolidate support across social groups—factors that are particularly crucial in rural electoral politics. In the 2024 Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections, Saroj Ahire secured 81,683 votes and defeated Dr. Rajshri Ahirrao of Shiv Sena by a margin of 40,679 votes.

3. Kej (Beed) – Namita Mundada

Party: Bharatiya Janata Party

Region: Rural

Kej located in Beed district of the Marathwada region, is a predominantly rural constituency characterised by recurrent drought conditions. The region faces persistent structural challenges such as water scarcity, agrarian distress, and limited economic opportunities, all of which significantly shape its political dynamics and voter behaviour.

Namita Akshay Mundada is serving her second term as a Member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly and belongs to the Chamar community within the Scheduled Castes. Her political trajectory also reflects elements of familial political linkage, as her mother-in-law had previously served as a legislator from the same Kej constituency.

Her continued electoral success indicates the presence of Scheduled Caste women's representation in rural constituencies; however, such instances remain limited and are often shaped by local political networks, kinship ties, and broader socio-political conditions.

In the 2024 Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections, Namita Akshay Mundada secured 1,17,081 votes and defeated Pruthviraj Sathe of Nationalist Congress Party



(Sharad Pawar faction) by a margin of 2,687 votes, retaining her seat in the constituency.

The above constituency-level analysis clearly indicates that the political representation of Scheduled Caste women in the Maharashtra Assembly Elections 2024 remains significantly low. Out of the 29 reserved constituencies, only three women were elected, accounting for approximately 10.34% of the total representation. This highlights a substantial gender gap within caste-based political representation. The limited presence of SC women in legislative politics reflects the multiple challenges they face, including socio-cultural constraints, limited access to resources, and barriers within political party structures. Despite constitutional provisions for representation, these structural and institutional limitations continue to restrict their effective participation.

In this context, the enactment of the The Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023, which provides for 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, holds significant potential to improve women's political representation. Once implemented, this provision may contribute to increasing the participation of women, including those from Scheduled Castes. Therefore, there is a need for comprehensive reforms, including greater political party commitment, institutional support mechanisms, and capacity-building initiatives, to enhance the representation of SC women. Strengthening these dimensions can contribute to increasing their participation and ensuring more inclusive and substantive democratic representation.

Causes of Low Political Representation of SC Women

1) Electoral Merit (Winnability Bias)

Political parties prioritise candidates based on their perceived chances of winning elections. Due to prevailing social biases and existing power structures, male candidates are often considered more "winnable," resulting in fewer opportunities for women, especially SC women.

2) Patriarchal Social Structure

Deep-rooted patriarchal norms in society restrict women's participation in public and political life. Women are often excluded from decision-making spaces and leadership roles, which affects their political visibility and opportunities.

3) Party-Level Bias in Candidate Selection

Political parties tend to allocate fewer tickets to women or field them in less competitive constituencies. This institutional bias reduces their likelihood of electoral success.

4) Tokenism

Women are sometimes nominated merely to fulfil symbolic representation. Such candidates are often fielded in constituencies where the chances of winning are limited.

5) Resource Inequality (Financial and Organisational Constraints)

Electoral politics requires substantial financial resources, campaign infrastructure, and organisational support. Structural inequalities often limit women's access to these resources.

6) Electoral Professionalisation

Modern electoral politics has become highly professionalised, involving media management, strategic planning, and data-driven campaigning. Unequal access to such institutional support systems can disadvantage women candidates.

7) Dynastic Entry Bias vs Grassroots Exclusion

Women's entry into politics is often facilitated through political families, while those from non-political or grassroots backgrounds face greater barriers in accessing opportunities.

8) Narrative-Representation Gap

While political campaigns increasingly target women as voters through welfare schemes and narratives, this does not translate into proportional representation in candidate selection.

9) Political Risk and Violence

The presence of political violence, intimidation, and social resistance discourages women from participating in electoral politics, particularly in certain regional contexts.

10) Intersectional Marginalisation

Intersectionality explains how SC women face overlapping disadvantages based on caste and gender, which significantly restricts their political participation.

Findings of the Study

1) Disparity between Quantitative Representation and Gender Inclusion

In the Maharashtra Assembly Elections 2024, although 29 constituencies are reserved for Scheduled Castes, only three women were elected, accounting for merely 10.34% representation. This indicates that while quantitative representation is ensured through reservation, it does not automatically translate into gender-inclusive political outcomes, thereby highlighting a significant imbalance within the system.

2) Influence of Dynastic Politics and Restricted Entry

The electoral outcomes suggest that the majority of elected SC women candidates come from established political families or backgrounds. This reflects the continuing influence of dynastic politics, which restricts access for women from ordinary or non-political families and limits the democratisation of political representation.

3) Intra-Group Inequality within SC Reservation

While reservation policies ensure representation of Scheduled Castes as a group, they do not guarantee equitable participation within that group. As a result, male candidates continue to dominate SC-reserved constituencies, leading to the persistence of gender inequality within the reserved category.

4) Centrality of Party Candidate Selection

The representation of SC women is largely shaped by decisions taken at the level of political parties. The allocation of tickets is controlled by party leadership, and the limited nomination of women candidates indicates that political parties continue to act as primary gatekeepers of representation.

5) Dominance of Electoral Merit over Inclusion

Candidate selection in the 2024 elections is predominantly guided by perceived winnability. This emphasis on electoral

merit often favours male candidates due to existing socio-political advantages, thereby limiting opportunities for women, especially from marginalised backgrounds.

6) Marginalisation within Marginalisation

SC women experience multiple layers of exclusion, as they are marginalised not only within the broader political system but also within their own social group. This intersection of caste and gender disadvantages significantly constrains their access to political representation.

7) Urban–Rural Variation in Representation

The nature of political representation differs across urban and rural constituencies. In urban areas, factors such as visibility, networks, and political connectivity play a crucial role, whereas in rural areas, local leadership structures, community dynamics, and socio-economic conditions are more influential.

8) Gap between Women as Voters and Women as Representatives

Although there has been a noticeable increase in the participation of women as voters, this has not translated into a proportional increase in their representation as elected representatives. This highlights a disconnect between electoral participation and political empowerment.

9) Competitive Politics without Gender Inclusion

Despite the increasing competitiveness of elections and the dominance of major alliances in SC-reserved constituencies, this has not resulted in improved gender representation. This suggests that electoral competition alone is insufficient to ensure inclusive representation.

10) Persistence of Structural and Institutional Constraints

Structural barriers such as unequal access to financial resources, hierarchical party structures, and socio-political constraints continue to limit the effective participation of SC women in electoral politics. These constraints are systemic rather than individual.

11) Gap between Constitutional Intent and Electoral Outcomes

Although constitutional reforms such as the The Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023 aim to enhance women's representation through 33% reservation, the outcomes of the 2024 elections indicate that the intended impact is yet to be realised in practice.

12) Limited Substantive Political Representation

Even when SC women are elected, their role is often confined within party structures, limiting their independent political agency and decision-making power. This raises concerns about the substantive nature of their representation.

13) Potential Impact of Women's Reservation on Future Representation

The implementation of 33% reservation is likely to significantly increase the quantitative presence of women in legislative bodies. However, whether this increase will lead to meaningful and qualitative political participation, particularly for SC women, remains dependent on institutional and social factors.

14) Emerging Scope for Inclusive Political Transformation

The evolving political discourse and policy environment indicate a growing recognition of gender inclusion. This

creates a potential pathway for gradual improvement in the representation of SC women in future electoral cycles.

15) Role of Societal Attitudes in Enhancing Women's Political Representation

Enhancing women's political representation cannot be achieved solely through governmental policies and constitutional provisions; it also requires a significant transformation in societal attitudes and mindsets. Deep-rooted patriarchal values, gender-based prejudices, and traditional expectations regarding women's roles continue to shape perceptions about their leadership capabilities, creating social barriers to political participation. A positive shift in societal attitudes can foster acceptance of women's leadership, encourage broader participation, and promote more equitable representation. Therefore, alongside institutional reforms, social transformation remains equally essential.

Conclusion

The present study on the political representation of Scheduled Caste women in the Maharashtra Assembly Elections 2024 reveals a significant gap between formal inclusion and substantive representation. While the constitutional framework ensures quantitative representation through reserved constituencies, the findings clearly demonstrate that such provisions do not automatically translate into gender-inclusive political outcomes. The presence of only three women out of 29 SC-reserved constituencies (10.34%) highlights the persistent under-representation of SC women within the legislative framework. The study further establishes that political representation is shaped not merely by constitutional provisions but by a combination of party strategies, electoral considerations, and structural constraints. Political parties continue to function as key gatekeepers, where candidate selection is largely influenced by perceived winnability, often to the disadvantage of women candidates. The influence of dynastic politics and the concentration of representation among socially and politically advantaged group's further limit the entry of women from ordinary backgrounds.

A critical insight emerging from the analysis is the phenomenon of "marginalisation within marginalisation," wherein SC women remain excluded not only within the broader political system but also within their own reserved category. This layered exclusion underscores the limitations of existing reservation policies in addressing intersectional inequalities. Additionally, the study highlights a persistent gap between women's growing participation as voters and their limited presence as elected representatives, indicating that electoral mobilisation does not necessarily lead to political empowerment. Despite increased political competition and evolving electoral dynamics in 2024, there is little evidence of structural transformation in gender representation within SC politics. The continued dominance of male candidates, coupled with institutional and socio-economic barriers, reinforces the need for deeper reforms. In this context, legislative measures such as the The Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023 hold potential for improving representation; however,



their impact will depend on effective implementation and complementary reforms at the party and institutional levels.

In conclusion, the study argues that the issue of SC women's political representation extends beyond numerical inclusion and requires a re-examination of the structural, institutional, and electoral dynamics that shape access to political power. Ensuring meaningful and equitable representation will require not only policy interventions but also a transformation in party practices and broader socio-political attitudes. "The challenge, therefore, lies not in creating spaces of representation alone, but in ensuring equitable access to those spaces for historically marginalised groups such as Scheduled Caste women."

Acknowledgment

The authors express their sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed, directly and indirectly, to the successful completion of this research paper entitled "A Critical Study of the Political Representation of Scheduled Caste Women in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Elections, 2024." We are deeply grateful to the Election Commission of India, various government agencies, and scholarly institutions whose reports, publications, and statistical data provided valuable support for this study. We also acknowledge the contributions of researchers and academicians whose works on political representation, gender studies, and social justice have enriched the theoretical and analytical framework of this research.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Tourism Potential Aspects of Harishchandragad Plateau and Fort in Ahilyanagar District, Maharashtra

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030405

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 16-21
April 2026

Submitted: 05 Mar. 2026
Revised: 10 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 10 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21734234

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21734234>



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Abstract

The Harishchandragad Plateau and Fort, located in the Akole Tehsil of the Ahilyanagar district, Maharashtra, represents one of the most multifaceted geographical and historical landmarks within the Northern Western Ghats. This research report provides a comprehensive evaluation of its tourism potential by synthesizing geomorphological, ecological, historical and socio-economic data. The study utilizes secondary data sources, including government reports, forest department statistics, and multi-temporal satellite imagery, to analyze the region's evolution from a strategic military bastion to a major ecotourism hub. A central focus is placed on the plateau's unique geomorphology, particularly the semi-circular Konkan Kada cliff and the Taramati Peak, alongside its integration within the Kalsubai Harishchandragad Wildlife Sanctuary. Using Geographic Information System (GIS) and Remote Sensing (RS) methodologies, the report quantifies land use and land cover (LULC) changes between 1991 and 2020, revealing a significant 6.12% decline in core forest area due to anthropogenic pressures. The socio-economic analysis explores the transition of the indigenous Mahadeo Koli tribal communities from subsistence agriculture to tourism-based livelihoods, noting both the economic windfalls of the firefly and monsoon seasons and the challenges of carrying capacity violations. The report concludes with evidence-based policy recommendations for sustainable adventure tourism, emphasizing carrying capacity regulation, community-led conservation, and infrastructure safety.

Keywords: Harishchandragad, Western Ghats, Ecotourism, GIS Analysis, Forest Fragmentation, Cultural Heritage, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

Tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors contributing to regional development, employment generation, and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage. In recent decades, the concept of sustainable and eco-tourism has gained increasing importance, particularly in environmentally sensitive and historically significant areas. The Western Ghats of Maharashtra, recognized as a global biodiversity hotspot, possess immense tourism potential owing to their unique landscapes, rich flora and fauna, and numerous historical monuments. Harishchandragad Plateau and Fort, situated in Akole Tehsil of Ahilyanagar District, Maharashtra, is one of the most prominent destinations in the northern Sahyadri ranges. Renowned for its spectacular geomorphological features such as the Konkan Kada cliff and Taramati Peak, the region also holds considerable historical, religious, and ecological significance. The fort has witnessed the rule of various dynasties and has played an important role in the military history of Maharashtra. Moreover, its location within the Kalsubai-Harishchandragad Wildlife Sanctuary enhances its importance as a center of biodiversity and ecotourism. Against this backdrop, the present study examines the tourism potential of the Harishchandragad Plateau and Fort from geographical, ecological, historical, and socio-economic perspectives. By utilizing secondary data and geospatial techniques, the study seeks to assess the existing tourism resources, identify emerging challenges, and suggest strategies for promoting sustainable tourism development in the region. The increasing popularity of trekking, camping, nature photography, and adventure tourism has transformed Harishchandragad into a major tourist attraction for visitors from Mumbai, Pune, Nashik, and other parts of the state.

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How to cite this article:

Pacharane, S. R. (2026). Tourism Potential Aspects of Harishchandragad Plateau and Fort in Ahilyanagar District, Maharashtra. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 3(4(III)), 16–21. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21734234>



Regional Geographical Context and Site Location

The Harishchandragad Plateau is a prominent physiographic feature situated in the Akole Tehsil of the Ahilyanagar district, serving as a critical junction in the northern Sahyadri range of Maharashtra. Geographically, the fort is positioned at the intersection of the boundaries of the Thane, Pune, and Ahilyanagar districts, a location that historically conferred upon it a unique strategic vantage point overlooking the Konkan plains to the west and the Deccan Plateau to the east. The plateau is centrally located within the Kalsubai Harishchandragad Wildlife Sanctuary, an area designated as an eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) due to its high levels of endemism and floral diversity.

The geographical coordinates of the sanctuary area extend approximately from Latitude $19^{\circ}25'57''$ to $19^{\circ}34'04''$ North and Longitude $73^{\circ}37'51''$ to $73^{\circ}46'25''$ East. The fort reaches an elevation of approximately 1,424 meters (4,671 feet) above Mean Sea Level (MSL), positioning it among the highest peaks in the state of Maharashtra, only slightly lower than the nearby Kalsubai Peak, the state's highest point.

Accessibility to the plateau is primarily achieved through three base villages: Khireswar, Pachnai, and Belpada. The Pachnai route is recognized as the most accessible, involving a 5 km. uphill trek that is favored by casual tourists, whereas the Khireswar route involves a more challenging ascent through the Tolar Khind, and the Belpada route via NalichiVaat is reserved for extreme adventure tourism due to its technical difficulty. This geographical setting makes Harishchandragad a pivotal site for regional tourism development, acting as a bridge between the metropolitan centers of Mumbai and Pune and the rugged wilderness of the Sahyadris.

Geomorphological Evolution and Terrain Characteristics

The geomorphological framework of the Harishchandragad Plateau is an exemplary manifestation of the Deccan Traps volcanic province, which originated from massive fissure eruptions during the late Cretaceous and early Cenozoic periods, approximately 65 million years ago. The landscape is characterized by its distinctive "staircase" topography, a result of the erosion of horizontally stratified basaltic lava flows of varying resistance.

Relief Landmark	Elevation (m)	Geomorphic Character
Taramati Peak	1,431	Basaltic Peak / Mesa
Harishchandragad Fort	1,424	Plateau Core
Konkan Kada Top	~1,400	Concave Escarpment
Tolar Khind	~1,200	Mountain Pass / Notch
Mula River Origin	~1,300	Headward Spring

Hydrological Systems and Water Management

The Harishchandragad Plateau acts as a major hydrological divide within the Sahyadri range, separating the eastward-draining rivers of the Deccan from the westward-draining coastal rivers. Specifically, it serves as the water divider between the Godavari and Krishna river basins.

Basaltic Stratification and Plateaus

The Western Uplands of the Deccan Plateau, where Harishchandragad is situated, represent the higher reaches of this volcanic pile, with dissected headlands and flat-topped mesas known as "Tables". These plateaus are capped by weathered basalt and, in some areas, laterite deposits, which are characteristic of the high-rainfall zones of the Western Ghats. The structural doming of the crust prior to eruption and the subsequent rifting between India and the Seychelles have contributed to the extreme relief and the sharp escarpments that define the western edge of the plateau.

The Konkan Kada Cliff

The most spectacular geomorphological feature of Harishchandragad is the Konkan Kada, a massive, semi-circular cliff that faces west towards the Konkan coastal belt. This feature is characterized by a concave structure and a significant overhang, where the top of the cliff extends outward beyond its base. This vertical wall drops more than 300 meters into the valley below, providing a direct vertical cross-section of the basaltic layers.

The unique geometry of Konkan Kada leads to rare atmospheric and optical phenomena. During the monsoon, the orographic lift of moisture-laden winds hitting the vertical wall creates "vertical cloud bursts," where clouds appear to shoot upward from the valley. Additionally, the "Brocken Spectrum" or circular rainbows are frequently observed when sunlight interacts with the mist at specific angles, making it a primary destination for landscape photographers and geomorphology enthusiasts.

Taramati Peak and Relief Heterogeneity

Taramati Peak, standing at 1,431 meters, is the highest point on the fort and the sixth highest in Maharashtra. The relief of the district exhibits immense variety, driven by its westerly location immediately adjoining the Sahyadri crest. This ruggedness is quantified by high ruggedness indices ($MR_n = 28.99$) in the nearby Pravara River Basin, indicating a landscape in a mature stage of tectonic and erosional evolution. The terrain transitions rapidly from these high peaks to deep, narrow gorges, such as the 2.8 km long and 100 meter deep gorge carved into hard basalt near Sandhan Valley.

Ancient Water Harvesting: Cisterns and Caves

One of the defining features of Harishchandragad is the Kedareshwar Cave, which houses a five-foot-high Shivalinga perpetually surrounded by ice-cold, waist-deep water. The presence of water year-round at such high altitudes is a result of natural groundwater seepage through basaltic fissures, which has been augmented by ancient rock-cut cisterns. These cisterns were expertly carved into the solid



rock by various dynasties to ensure a continuous water supply for the fort's inhabitants and pilgrims during the eight-month dry season. The Saptatirtha Pushkarni, a temple tank near the Harishchandreshwar temple, further demonstrates the sophisticated medieval understanding of high-altitude water management and the integration of hydrological features into religious architecture.

Ecological Profile and Biodiversity Analysis

The ecological significance of Harishchandragad is derived from its position within the Kalsubai Harishchandragad Wildlife Sanctuary, a critical segment of the Northern

Western Ghats UNESCO World Heritage site. The sanctuary covers an area of approximately 361 square kilometres, characterized by high-altitude plateaus, steep escarpments, and moist deciduous to semi-evergreen forests.

Floral Diversity and Endemism

The region receives an average annual rainfall of up to 600 cm, sustaining a lush green landscape with high levels of endemism. The vegetation patterns are strongly seasonal, with the monsoon and post-monsoon phases transforming the plateau into a carpet of wild flowers, including several rare and endemic herbaceous species.

Floral Group	Representative Species	Economic/Ecological Role
Medicinal Trees	Hirda, Beheda, Avali	Traditional Medicine / Livelihood
Timber/General	Siras, Lokhandi, Parjambhual	Ecosystem Structure
Flowering Plants	Gulchavi, Kharvel, Aashind	Biodiversity / Aesthetics
High Altitude	Bifarious-leaved trees (15-ft high)	Rare Endemics

The forest types transition from semi-evergreen in the sheltered ravines to stunted, wind-swept "shola" like vegetation on the higher peaks. These forests act as repositories for medicinal plants and wild relatives of crop plants, which are vital for long-term food security and pharmacological research.

Faunal Assemblage

The sanctuary hosts a wide variety of wildlife, including several apex predators and rare mammals. The Leopard (*Panthera pardus*) is the primary predator in the region, occasionally moving into the surrounding agricultural lands during the dry season. **Other notable mammalian species include:**

- Indian Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa indica*), a flagship species of the Western Ghats.
- Striped Hyena, Golden Jackal, and Indian Fox.
- Barking Deer, Sambar, and Wild Boar.
- Palm Civet, Jungle Cat, and various species of Mongoose.

The region is also a haven for avifauna and herpetofauna. Monitor lizards and fan-throated lizards are

common on the basaltic outcrops, while the dense canopy supports numerous hill and grassland bird species. The seasonal appearance of fireflies (Glow Worms) in the foothills near Bhandardara and Harishchandragad attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists annually, representing a unique seasonal ecological phenomenon.

Spatiotemporal Analysis Using GIS and Remote Sensing

The application of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing (RS) technologies has allowed for a precise quantification of the land-use changes on the Harishchandragad Plateau over the last three decades. Using multi-temporal satellite data from Landsat 5 (1991) and Landsat 8 (2020), researchers have mapped the extent of forest cover loss and fragmentation.

Land Use and Land Cover (LULC) Dynamics

Between 1991 and 2020, the study area (225 sq. km) experienced significant shifts in its physical landscape. The non-forest categories, including agriculture, barren land, and water bodies, saw substantial increases, primarily at the expense of the core forest area.

LULC Class	1991 Area (%)	2020 Area (%)	Net Change (ha)
Total Forest	60.40%	49.59%	-2,430.45
Agriculture	12.72%	16.07%	+755.00
Water Bodies	-	-	+834.00
Barren Land	-	-	+499.00
Scrubland	-	-	+433.00
Settlements	-	-	+18.00

The 3.71% increase in water bodies is largely attributed to the development of dam infrastructure, such as the Wilson Dam, while the expansion of agriculture (+3.36%) reflects the increasing population pressure in the base villages.

Forest Fragmentation Analysis

Using the Landscape Fragmentation Tool (LFT), the forest cover was classified into four distinct categories:

core, perforated, edge, and patch forest. The analysis reveals a concerning trend of degradation:

- Core Forest:** Decreased by 6.12% (1,376 hectares) between 1991 and 2020. This loss indicates a reduction in the "interior" habitat that is critical for sensitive species like the Leopard and the Giant Squirrel.
- Edge Forest:** Increased by 3.14% (707 hectares), signifying that the forest is becoming more porous and exposed to human-induced disturbances.

- Perforated Forest: Experienced a gross loss of 7.76%, further illustrating the internal degradation of the forest canopy.

This fragmentation is driven by uncontrolled human interference, including firewood collection, expansion of tourism infrastructure, and the conversion of forest land into small-scale agricultural plots. The resulting isolation of forest patches inhibits animal movement, exacerbating human-wildlife conflicts and threatening the sustainability of the region's biodiversity.

Digital Elevation Model (DEM) and Terrain Mapping

Digital Elevation Models, such as the Cartosat-1 DEM (30 m resolution), provide the foundation for slope and accessibility mapping. The elevation within the Harishchandragad complex ranges from 465 m in the lower valleys to nearly 1,600 m at the peaks. Slope analysis shows that the terrain's steepness varies from 0% on the plateau tops to as much as 73.33% on the western escarpments. These high gradients are essential for planning safe trekking routes and identifying zones for extreme adventure sports like rappelling and rock climbing.

Historical and Cultural Significance

The history of Harishchandragad is a complex tapestry that spans from the 6th century to the colonial era, making it one of the most culturally significant forts in the Western Ghats.

Historical Era	Key Architectural/Political Development
6th Century	Foundation by Kalachuri Dynasty; rock-cut caves
9th-11th Century	Harishchandreshwar Temple (Hemadpanthi Style)
17th Century	Maratha Fortification under Shivaji Maharaj
1747-48	Recaptured from Mughals by Marathas
1818	Capture by the British Empire

The mythological significance of the fort is also profound; it is believed to be the place where the sage Harishchandra meditated, from whom the fort derives its name according to local folklore.

Socio-Economic Context and Local Communities

The Harishchandragad Plateau is not just a destination for urban tourists but a vital economic landscape for the local tribal communities, primarily the Mahadeo Kolis and Thakars. Approximately 45% of the population in Akole Tehsil is tribal, and the region is categorized under the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) Area due to its socio-economic backwardness.

Transition from Agriculture to Ecotourism

Traditionally, the livelihoods of these communities centered on subsistence agriculture, specifically paddy cultivation on small, undulating plots. However, the development of Harishchandragad as a trekking hub has triggered a transition toward hospitality and ecotourism.

- Accommodation and Catering: Residents of base villages like Khireswar, Pachnai, and Samrad have established homestays and camping sites. During the firefly season or monsoon weekends, families providing

Ancient and Medieval Roots

The fort's origins are associated with the Kalachuri dynasty, dating back to the 6th century. During this early period, the various rock-cut caves were excavated, which exhibit characteristics of Buddhist era architecture. These caves served as dwelling places for ascetics and monks, highlighting the fort's early role as a site of spiritual seclusion.

The Harishchandreshwar temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, is a stunning example of 9th-11th century Hemadpanthi architecture. Built without mortar using precisely carved basaltic blocks, the temple stands 16 meters high and features intricate sculptures of deities. The temple is a focal point for pilgrims, especially during festivals like Mahashivratri.

Strategic Role in the Maratha Empire

During the medieval period, Harishchandragad became a critical military asset due to its panoramic view of the Konkan district. It functioned as a lookout and protection station for the trade routes passing through the Western Ghats. Under Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the fort's natural defenses were strengthened, turning its massive cliffs and high elevation into a central component of the Maratha military strategy. The fort was later held by the Mughals before being reconquered by the Marathas in 1747-48, who appointed Krishnaji Shinde as the guardian. It was eventually captured by the British in 1818 during the Third Anglo-Maratha War.

food and tents can earn between ₹60,000 and ₹80,000 per season.

- Guiding Services: Local youth leverage their traditional knowledge of the Sahyadri terrain to serve as guides, ensuring the safety of trekkers on difficult routes like Nalichi Vaat.
- Agro-tourism: There is a growing interest in experience-based tourism, where visitors participate in tribal agricultural practices or consume local produce like berries and wild honey.

Tourism Potential and Activity Spectrum

Harishchandragad is widely regarded as a "trekker's paradise" due to the diversity of its terrain and the breadth of activities available. The site offers a "complete package" that combines religious pilgrimage, historical exploration, and extreme adventure.

Potential Valuation Model

The tourism potential of a site can be mathematically assessed by combining its social and physical attributes. Using a weighted formula derived from regional studies:

Where:

- V_s (Social Potential) depends on annual tourist influx (50%), average duration of stay (33%), and local



market strength (17%). * V_p (Physical Potential) depends on physical accessibility (28.5%), food and water (19.0%), transport (23.8%), and tourist information (14.3%).

For Harishchandragad, the physical potential (V_p) is enhanced by its multiple routes, while the social potential (V_s) is driven by its high popularity on digital and social media platforms.

Diverse Trekking Routes

Route Name	Starting Point	Difficulty Level	Time	Key Feature
Pachnai Route	Pachnai Village	Easy	2-3 hrs	Shortest and easiest for families
Khireswar Route	Khireswar Wadi	Moderate	5-6 hrs	Scenic; via Tolar Khind and 7 hills
NalichiVaat	Belpada Village	Extremely Hard	8-10 hrs	Steep gorge; requires rock climbing

Extreme Adventure and Niche Tourism

The unique geomorphology of the plateau facilitates specialized tourism activities:

- Rock Climbing and Rappelling, Landscape Photography, Stargazing and Camping, Firefly Tourism.
- Secondary Data Analysis of Tourist Trends

Tourism data for the Harishchandragad region reveals an exponential growth trend in the post-2020 period. However, this growth is accompanied by a severe seasonal imbalance.

Yearly and Seasonal Flux

While state-level tourism in Maharashtra saw a sharp decline in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic—dropping from 14.2 crore domestic arrivals in 2019 to 3.9 crore in 2020—the recovery in rural adventure sites like Akole has been rapid.

- **Peak Period (June to August):** This period sees the highest influx due to the monsoon landscape and the firefly festival. Bhandardara and Harishchandragad can draw up to 200,000 tourists in these three months.
- **Shoulder Period (September to November):** Tourist arrivals decline slightly but remain high as travelers visit to see the wildflower blooms and waterfalls.
- **Winter Period (December to February):** A secondary peak occurs during school and college holidays, primarily for overnight camping and stargazing.
- **Lean Period (March to May):** Tourism is almost negligible due to the extreme heat and water scarcity on the plateau, which can reach temperatures of 38°C .

Demographic Trends

The tourist profile is predominantly male (85%), with most visitors arriving from Mumbai (150 km), Pune (180 km), and Nashik (80 km). There is an increasing trend of "slow travel" and biking expeditions, with travelers seeking to escape urban pollution and light. However, the rise of "amateur" tour operators—often people who attend a few treks and then begin organizing their own—has led to a surge in untrained groups that lack ecological awareness.

Challenges and Constraints

The rapid growth of tourism at Harishchandragad has outpaced the development of regulatory and physical infrastructure, leading to several critical challenges.

Carrying Capacity and Overcrowding

The most pressing issue is the severe violation of the plateau's ecological and psychological carrying capacity during peak monsoon weekends. The influx of thousands of visitors onto a fragile high-altitude ecosystem leads to:

- **Soil Compaction:** Trampling by large numbers of tourists damages the soil structure, inhibiting the growth of endemic wild flowers.
- **Wildlife Disturbance:** The noise and light pollution from campers disrupt the nocturnal patterns of the sanctuary's fauna, including the fireflies and the Leopard.

Environmental Degradation and Waste

Solid waste management remains a major failure. The accumulation of plastic bottles, food wrappers, and glass bottles on the plateau is a visible sign of degradation. High-altitude sites are difficult to clean, and the waste often finds its way into the water cisterns or is washed into the river basins below, impacting the water quality for the downstream communities.

Safety and Infrastructure Gaps

The extreme terrain of Harishchandragad poses significant safety risks. The trails are slippery during the monsoon, and the vertical drops at Konkan Kada are hazardous for the inexperienced.

- **Lack of Emergency Infrastructure:** There is a notable absence of emergency evacuation points or basic medical facilities on the plateau.
- **Unregulated Technical Activities:** Rappelling and rock climbing are often conducted without proper certification or safety protocols by private agencies.
- **Water Scarcity:** Despite the ancient cisterns, the plateau faces severe potable water shortages during the dry season, limiting the duration of stay and increasing the dependency on bottled water brought from the base villages.

Suggestions and Sustainable Development Strategies

To preserve the tourism potential of Harishchandragad while ensuring the ecological integrity of the sanctuary and the welfare of the local communities, several strategic interventions are required.

Regulatory and Economic Models

- **Carrying Capacity Regulation:** The Forest Department should implement a mandatory e-ticketing system with a daily cap on the number of visitors. This would ensure that the ecological footprint of tourists



remains within manageable limits.

- **Zoning Models:** The plateau should be divided into zones. A "Core Sanctuary Zone" where camping and loud activities are strictly prohibited, and a "Designated Camping Zone" with basic facilities like pit toilets and waste bins.
- **Community-Led Conservation:** Local tribal youth should be officially certified as "Eco-Guides" and "Conservation Wardens". A portion of the entry fees should be directed toward a community fund for village infrastructure and waste management.

Infrastructure and Safety Enhancements

- **Waste Management Protocols:** A "Deposit-Refund System" should be established at the base villages, where trekkers pay a deposit for each plastic item they carry up and receive it back only when they present the waste at the base village upon return.
- **Safety Signage and Railing:** While maintaining the aesthetic of the fort, essential safety railings at high-risk points and standardized trail markings would reduce the frequency of accidents.
- **Emergency Response Units:** Establishing a rescue unit at Pachnai village, equipped with stretchers and basic trauma kits, would significantly improve the safety of the adventure circuit.

Policy Recommendations for Sustainable Tourism

- **Experience-Based Tribal Tourism:** Promoting tourism that emphasizes the culture of the Mahadeo Koli tribe—such as traditional food festivals and agricultural workshops—can diversify the tourism product and reduce the pressure on extreme peaks.
- **Watershed Management:** Implementing watershed development and the "Jalyukta Shivar" scheme in the base villages will ensure year-round water availability, supporting both agriculture and the hospitality industry.
- **Sustainable Land-Use Planning:** Using GIS tools to monitor and control forest fragmentation and preventing the expansion of permanent concrete structures on the plateau are vital for preserving the region's status as a biodiversity hotspot.

The Harishchandragad Plateau represents a unique intersection of geological history, medieval heritage, and ecological richness. Its potential for tourism is immense, but its long-term viability is currently threatened by unregulated growth and ecological fragmentation. By transitioning to a regulated, community-led sustainable tourism model, the Ahilyanagar district can ensure that Harishchandragad remains a sanctuary for both wildlife and seekers of adventure for generations to come.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all the individuals and organizations whose support and cooperation made this research possible. Special thanks are extended to the Department of Geography, S.B.B. alias Appasaheb Jedhe College, Pune, for providing the necessary academic environment and institutional support to undertake this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Sustainable Urban Development: A Study of Smart Cities

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030406

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 22-25
April 2026

Submitted: 05 Mar. 2026
Revised: 10 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 10 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21734384

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21734384>



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Abstract

Sustainable urban development has become a critical global priority as rapid urbanization places increasing pressure on resources, infrastructure, and the environment. Smart cities have emerged as an innovative solution, integrating information and communication technologies (ICT) to enhance urban efficiency, sustainability, and quality of life. This paper explores the concept of sustainable urban development, the role of smart cities, key components, challenges, and future prospects. It concludes that while smart city initiatives offer promising pathways, their success depends on inclusive planning, governance, and environmental responsibility.

Keywords: Sustainable Urban Development, Smart Cities, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Internet of Things (IoT)

Introduction

Urbanization is accelerating worldwide, with more than half of the global population living in cities. In countries like India, urban growth has created challenges such as pollution, congestion, housing shortages, and resource depletion. Sustainable urban development aims to balance economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity. The concept of smart cities integrates digital technologies, data-driven governance, and citizen participation to address urban challenges effectively.

Concept of Sustainable Urban Development

Sustainable urban development refers to the planning, development, and management of cities in a manner that meets the needs of the present population without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It emphasizes a balanced integration of environmental protection, economic growth, and social well-being.

In practical terms, sustainable urban development focuses on creating cities that

- I) Minimize environmental impact by reducing pollution, promoting renewable energy, conserving natural resources, and enhancing green spaces.
- II) Promote economic efficiency by supporting innovation, infrastructure development, and productive employment opportunities while ensuring optimal use of resources.
- III) Ensure social inclusion and equity by providing equal access to housing, education, healthcare, transportation, and basic services for all sections of society. This concept is closely aligned with global development frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, which aims to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Overall, sustainable urban development seeks to create urban environments that are not only economically viable and environmentally responsible but also socially just and inclusive.

Smart Cities: Definition and Features

A smart city is an urban area that leverages advanced technologies such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the Internet of Things (IoT), and data analytics to enhance the efficiency, sustainability, and quality of urban services and infrastructure.

The goal is to create a connected and responsive urban environment where data-driven decision-making improves governance, resource management, and citizens' quality of life. Smart cities are also aligned with global development frameworks like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 11, which promotes sustainable and inclusive urban growth.

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How to cite this article:

Pise, H. R. (2026). Sustainable Urban Development: A Study of Smart Cities. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 3(4(III)), 22–25. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21734384>



Key Features of Smart Cities:-

I) Smart Governance (E-Governance Systems)

Smart governance involves the use of digital platforms to improve transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. E-governance enables efficient delivery of public services, online grievance redressal, and real-time communication between governments and citizens.

II) Smart Transportation (Traffic Management and Public Transit)

This feature focuses on developing efficient, safe, and eco-friendly transportation systems. It includes intelligent traffic management systems, integrated public transit networks, electric vehicles, and smart parking solutions to reduce congestion and pollution.

III) Smart Energy (Renewable Energy and Smart Grids)

Smart cities promote sustainable energy use through renewable sources such as solar and wind energy. Smart grids help in efficient energy distribution, monitoring consumption, and reducing energy losses.

IV) Smart Infrastructure (Intelligent Buildings)

Smart infrastructure includes the development of intelligent buildings equipped with automated systems for lighting, heating, security, and energy management, improving efficiency and comfort.

V) Smart Environment (Waste Management and Pollution Control):-

This feature focuses on environmental sustainability through proper waste management, pollution monitoring, water conservation, and the development of green spaces to enhance urban livability.

Overall, smart cities integrate technology with urban planning to create efficient, sustainable, and citizen-friendly environments, addressing the challenges of rapid urbanization.

Components of Smart Cities:-

Smart cities are built on multiple interconnected components that collectively enhance urban efficiency, sustainability, and quality of life.

I) Smart Governance

Smart governance uses digital platforms and ICT tools to improve decision-making processes, transparency, and accountability. E-governance systems enable citizens to access public services online, participate in policy-making, and provide feedback, thereby strengthening democratic processes and trust in government institutions.

II) Smart Mobility

Smart mobility focuses on developing efficient, safe, and environmentally friendly transportation systems. These systems help reduce congestion, travel time, and carbon emissions through

- Intelligent traffic systems that optimize traffic flow using real-time data
- Public transit networks such as metro, buses, and shared mobility services
- Electric vehicles (EVs) to promote cleaner transportation

III) Smart Environment

Smart environment emphasizes sustainable management of natural resources and reduction of environmental impact. It focuses on:

- Renewable energy use (solar, wind, etc.)
- Waste management systems using smart technologies
- Pollution monitoring through sensors and data analytics
- Green spaces such as parks and urban forests

IV) Smart Economy

Smart economy promotes economic growth through innovation, entrepreneurship, and digital transformation. It supports startups, fosters a knowledge-based economy, and encourages the use of digital technologies in business and industry.

V) Smart Living

Smart living aims to improve the overall quality of life for citizens by integrating technology into daily urban life. It includes:

- Healthcare systems (telemedicine, digital health services)
- Education technologies (e-learning platforms, smart classrooms)
- Safety and security systems (smart surveillance, emergency response systems)

Overall, these components work together to create a sustainable, efficient, and citizen-centric urban ecosystem.

Smart Cities in India:-

The Smart Cities Mission, launched in 2015 by the Government of India, aims to promote sustainable and inclusive urban development by developing 100 smart cities across the country. The mission focuses on improving infrastructure, enhancing the quality of life, and using technology-driven solutions to address urban challenges such as congestion, pollution, and inefficient service delivery.

The initiative adopts an area-based development approach (retrofitting, redevelopment, and Greenfield development) along with pan-city solutions that use smart technologies for better governance and service delivery.

Examples of Smart Cities in India

I) Pune – Smart Mobility and Waste Management

Pune has implemented intelligent traffic management systems, improved public transport, and introduced smart waste collection and segregation practices. The city emphasizes sustainable mobility and efficient solid waste management.

II) Surat – Efficient Water and Energy Systems

Surat is known for its advanced water supply management, 24/7 water distribution, and energy-efficient systems. The city has also adopted renewable energy and smart grid technologies to ensure sustainability.

III) Bhopal – Smart Governance Initiatives

Bhopal has focused on strengthening governance through digital platforms, including integrated command and control centers, e-governance services, and smart surveillance systems to enhance public safety and administrative efficiency.



Overall, the Smart Cities Mission in India demonstrates how technology-driven urban planning can improve service delivery, sustainability, and citizen engagement, while addressing the challenges of rapid urbanization.

Benefits of Smart Cities:-

Smart cities offer a wide range of benefits by integrating technology with urban planning and governance. These benefits contribute to sustainable development, economic progress, and improved living standards.

I) Improved Urban Efficiency

Smart cities use data-driven systems and digital technologies to optimize urban services such as transportation, water supply, electricity, and waste management. This leads to faster service delivery, reduced delays, and better coordination among city departments.

II) Reduced Environmental Impact

Through the use of renewable energy, smart grids, efficient waste management, and pollution monitoring systems, smart cities help reduce carbon emissions and environmental degradation, promoting ecological sustainability.

III) Enhanced Quality of Life

Smart cities improve citizens' daily lives by providing better healthcare, education, housing, transportation, and public safety. Access to digital services and real-time information enhances convenience and overall well-being.

IV) Economic Growth and Job Creation

The development of smart infrastructure and digital technologies fosters innovation, entrepreneurship, and investment. It creates employment opportunities in sectors such as IT, construction, renewable energy, and urban services.

V) Better Resource Management

Smart cities enable efficient use of resources like water, energy, and land through real-time monitoring and data analytics. This reduces wastage and ensures sustainable utilization for future generations.

Overall, smart cities play a crucial role in creating sustainable, efficient, and livable urban environments by balancing technological advancement with environmental and social needs.

Challenges in Implementation:-

Despite their many advantages, the development of smart cities faces several significant challenges that can hinder effective implementation and long-term sustainability.

I) High Cost of Infrastructure

Establishing smart infrastructure—such as digital networks, sensors, smart grids, and intelligent transport systems—requires substantial financial investment. For developing countries like India, limited financial resources and budget constraints can slow down the pace of smart city projects.

II) Data Privacy and Cybersecurity Concerns

Smart cities rely heavily on data collection and digital systems, which raises concerns about data privacy and security. Protecting sensitive citizen information from

cyber threats and ensuring secure digital infrastructure is a major challenge.

III) Digital Divide and Inequality

Not all citizens have equal access to digital technologies. The digital divide between different socio-economic groups can lead to unequal access to smart services, thereby increasing social inequality rather than reducing it.

IV) Governance and Coordination Issues

Effective implementation requires coordination among multiple government agencies, private sector stakeholders, and citizens. Lack of proper governance structures, bureaucratic delays, and poor coordination can hinder project execution.

V) Environmental Sustainability Concerns

While smart cities aim to promote sustainability, rapid infrastructure development and increased use of electronic devices can lead to environmental issues such as e-waste, energy consumption, and ecological imbalance if not managed properly.

Overall, addressing these challenges requires strong policy frameworks, inclusive planning, technological safeguards, and sustainable practices to ensure that smart cities achieve their intended goals.

Future Prospects:-

The future of smart cities is shaped by rapid technological advancements and an increasing focus on sustainability, resilience, and inclusivity. As urban populations continue to grow, cities must evolve to address complex challenges through innovative and adaptive solutions.

I) Integration of AI and Big Data

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and big data analytics will enable cities to make real-time, data-driven decisions. These technologies can improve traffic management, energy consumption, public safety, and service delivery by predicting patterns and optimizing resources efficiently.

II) Expansion of Renewable Energy

Smart cities will increasingly rely on renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power. The expansion of smart grids and energy-efficient systems will help reduce dependence on fossil fuels and lower carbon emissions, contributing to environmental sustainability.

III) Citizen-Centric Planning

Future smart cities will prioritize the needs and participation of citizens. Through digital platforms and inclusive governance, people will play an active role in decision-making processes, ensuring that urban development is equitable and responsive to community needs.

IV) Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

With the growing impact of climate change, cities will focus on building resilient infrastructure capable of withstanding natural disasters such as floods, heatwaves, and storms. This includes sustainable urban drainage systems, green buildings, and disaster management technologies.



V) Role of Emerging Technologies

Technologies such as 5G and the Internet of Things (IoT) will significantly enhance connectivity and efficiency in smart cities. These advancements will support faster communication, real-time monitoring, and seamless integration of various urban systems.

Overall, the future of smart cities lies in creating technologically advanced, environmentally sustainable, and socially inclusive urban ecosystems that can adapt to changing global challenges while improving the quality of life for all citizens.

Conclusion

Sustainable urban development and smart cities are essential strategies for addressing the complex challenges of rapid urbanization, resource scarcity, and environmental degradation. By integrating advanced technologies with effective urban planning, cities can enhance efficiency, reduce environmental impact, and improve the overall quality of life for their citizens. However, technology alone is not sufficient to ensure success. Long-term sustainability depends on inclusive governance, environmental stewardship, and active community participation. Policies must be people-centered, ensuring that all sections of society benefit equally from urban development initiatives. In alignment with global frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals—particularly Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)—smart cities must strive to be not only technologically advanced but also socially inclusive and environmentally responsible. Ultimately, the goal is to create urban spaces that are livable, resilient, and sustainable, meeting present needs while safeguarding the future for coming generations.

Acknowledgement

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all those who have directly and indirectly contributed to the successful completion of this research paper titled "Sustainable Urban Development: A Study of Smart Cities." Special thanks are extended to the Principal and the Head of the Department of Economics, Tikaram Jagannath Arts, Commerce and Science College, Khadaki, Pune, for their constant encouragement, academic support, and valuable guidance.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Groundwater Depletion and Conservation: Challenges for Sustainable Development

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030407

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 26-28
April 2026

Submitted: 05 Mar. 2026
Revised: 10 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 10 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21734508

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21734508>



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Abstract

Groundwater is one of the most important freshwater resources supporting agriculture, domestic consumption, industry, and ecosystem sustainability. However, rapid population growth, intensive agricultural practices, urbanization, industrialization, and climate change have led to excessive extraction of groundwater, resulting in alarming levels of depletion in many regions. This study examines the major causes and impacts of groundwater depletion and explores various conservation measures necessary for sustainable development. The research is based on secondary data collected from government reports, research articles, books, and satellite-based studies. The findings reveal that overexploitation of groundwater has led to declining water tables, reduced agricultural productivity, environmental degradation, increased extraction costs, and socio-economic conflicts. The study highlights the importance of rainwater harvesting, artificial recharge techniques, efficient irrigation systems, sustainable agricultural practices, and effective policy interventions for groundwater conservation. It concludes that integrated groundwater management, supported by technological advancements, public awareness, and community participation, is essential for ensuring water security and achieving long-term sustainable development. Protecting groundwater resources is crucial for maintaining ecological balance and meeting the needs of present and future generations.

Keywords: Groundwater Depletion; Groundwater Conservation; Sustainable Development; Water Resources Management; Rainwater Harvesting; Artificial Recharge; Climate Change; Irrigation Efficiency; Water Security; Environmental Sustainability

Introduction

Water is a fundamental resource essential for life, economic development, and environmental sustainability. Among various sources of freshwater, groundwater plays a vital role due to its availability, reliability, and relatively good quality. It accounts for a significant portion of the world's freshwater supply and is widely used for drinking, irrigation, and industrial purposes. In India, groundwater contributes nearly 60–70% of irrigation and about 80% of domestic water supply in rural areas. The increasing demand for water due to population growth, agricultural expansion, and industrialization has led to excessive extraction of groundwater resources. As a result, many regions are experiencing a continuous decline in groundwater levels, leading to a situation of groundwater depletion. Groundwater depletion occurs when the rate of extraction exceeds the rate of natural recharge. This imbalance poses serious challenges to sustainable development, as it affects food security, environmental health, and socio-economic stability. The issue is further aggravated by climate change, which alters precipitation patterns and reduces recharge rates. This study aims to explore the causes and consequences of groundwater depletion and to identify sustainable conservation strategies. By analyzing secondary data, the paper provides insights into effective groundwater management practices that can support long-term sustainability.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the major causes of groundwater depletion
- To analyze the environmental and socio-economic impacts
- To evaluate groundwater conservation techniques
- To suggest strategies for sustainable groundwater management

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How to cite this article:

Bhalerao, V. R. & Bhosale, S. S. (2026). Groundwater Depletion and Conservation: Challenges for Sustainable Development. *Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 3(4(III)), 26–28. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21734508>



Methodology

This research paper is based on **secondary data** collected from various reliable sources, including:

- Government reports (Central Ground Water Board)
- Research journals and articles
- Satellite data (GRACE studies)
- Books and published reports

The study uses a descriptive and analytical approach to interpret data and identify trends related to groundwater depletion and conservation.

Causes of Groundwater Depletion

1. Excessive Agricultural Use

Agriculture is the largest consumer of groundwater, particularly in countries like India. The introduction of high-yielding crop varieties and multiple cropping systems has significantly increased water demand. Farmers rely heavily on groundwater through tube wells and bore wells, often extracting more water than is naturally replenished.

2. Climate Change and Rainfall Variability

Climate change has led to irregular rainfall patterns, affecting groundwater recharge. Reduced rainfall and increased evaporation rates decrease the amount of water that infiltrates the ground, thereby lowering groundwater levels.

3. Urbanization and Industrialization

Rapid urban growth has increased water demand while reducing natural recharge areas. The expansion of concrete surfaces prevents rainwater from percolating into the soil. Industrial activities also consume large quantities of groundwater.

4. Population Growth

The rising population increases the demand for water for domestic, agricultural, and industrial uses. This puts immense pressure on groundwater resources, leading to over-extraction.

5. Lack of Regulation

In many regions, groundwater extraction is not properly regulated. The absence of strict policies and monitoring systems allows uncontrolled usage, resulting in depletion.

Impacts of Groundwater Depletion

1. Declining Water Table

One of the most direct impacts is the lowering of groundwater levels, making it difficult to access water. Wells and bore wells often dry up, especially in rural areas.

2. Agricultural Challenges

Reduced availability of groundwater affects irrigation, leading to lower crop yields and food insecurity. Farmers may face economic losses due to reduced productivity.

3. Environmental Degradation

Groundwater depletion affects ecosystems by reducing water availability in rivers, lakes, and wetlands. This leads to loss of biodiversity and ecological imbalance.

4. Increased Cost of Water Extraction

As groundwater levels decline, deeper wells are required, increasing the cost of extraction. This affects farmers and households economically.

5. Social Conflicts

Water scarcity can lead to conflicts between communities, regions, and sectors competing for limited water resources.

6. Status of Groundwater

Reports indicate that groundwater levels are declining rapidly in many parts of India. Several regions are

categorized as over-exploited or critical. Satellite data also shows significant groundwater loss in northern and western India.

Urban areas are particularly vulnerable due to high demand and limited recharge. Rural areas also face challenges due to dependence on groundwater for agriculture.

Groundwater Conservation Strategies

1. Rainwater Harvesting

Rainwater harvesting involves collecting and storing rainwater for future use. It helps recharge groundwater and reduces dependence on external sources.

2. Artificial Recharge Techniques

Artificial recharge methods such as recharge wells, check dams, and percolation tanks help increase groundwater levels by allowing water to infiltrate into the ground.

3. Efficient Irrigation Methods

Modern irrigation techniques such as drip and sprinkler systems reduce water wastage and improve efficiency.

4. Sustainable Agricultural Practices

Adopting practices like crop rotation, organic farming, and cultivation of less water-intensive crops can reduce groundwater usage.

5. Policy and Institutional Measures

Government policies and regulations play a crucial role in groundwater management. Strict laws, monitoring systems, and awareness programs can help control over-extraction.

Challenges in Groundwater Management

1. Lack of awareness among people
2. Weak implementation of policies
3. Overdependence on groundwater
4. Limited data and monitoring systems
5. Climate variability and uncertainty

Suggestions for Sustainable Management

1. Promote rainwater harvesting in urban and rural areas
2. Encourage efficient irrigation techniques
3. Strengthen groundwater laws and regulations
4. Increase public awareness about water conservation
5. Use modern technology for monitoring groundwater levels
6. Promote community participation in water management

Conclusion

Groundwater depletion is a serious issue that poses a threat to sustainable development. The study highlights that human activities, climate change, and lack of proper management are the main causes of depletion. The impacts are wide-ranging, affecting agriculture, environment, and society. To address this issue, it is essential to adopt sustainable groundwater management practices. Conservation techniques such as rainwater harvesting, artificial recharge, and efficient irrigation can help restore groundwater levels. Additionally, strong policy measures and public awareness are necessary to ensure responsible usage. A balanced approach that integrates environmental, economic, and social aspects is required to achieve long-term sustainability. Protecting groundwater resources is not only important for the present generation but also for future generations.



Acknowledgement

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the Principal and the Department of Geography, Prof. Ramkrishna More College, Akurdi, Pune, and Waghire College, Saswad, for providing the academic environment and necessary support to carry out this research.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

An Evaluation of Inclusive Development Policies in Public Transport Organizations: A Case Study of Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030408

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 29-35
April 2026

Submitted: 05 Mar. 2026

Revised: 10 Mar. 2026

Accepted: 10 Apr. 2026

Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21734797

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21734797>



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Abstract

Public transport organizations (PTOs) in developing nations serve as critical conduits for socioeconomic mobility, yet their inclusive development frameworks remain inadequately evaluated. This study undertakes a comprehensive evaluation of inclusive development policies—encompassing gender equity, disability inclusion, tribal and marginalized community access, workforce diversity, and environmental sustainability—within the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC), one of India's largest state-owned transport utilities. Employing a mixed-methods research design, the study integrates quantitative survey data from 320 respondents (passengers, employees, policy stakeholders) with qualitative insights from 25 semi-structured interviews and secondary analysis of MSRTC annual reports (2015–2024). The findings reveal significant strides in concessional fare structures and reserved seating initiatives, while exposing persistent gaps in physical accessibility infrastructure, staff sensitization, digital inclusion, and grievance redressal mechanisms. A composite Inclusive Development Index (IDI) constructed for MSRTC scores 54.3 out of 100, indicating a moderate but uneven inclusivity trajectory. The study recommends a rights-based, technology-augmented policy framework and calls for institutionalized third-party social audits. The findings contribute to literature on transport equity, public sector governance, and SDG-aligned policy design in the Global South.

Keywords: Inclusive Development, Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC), Public Transport Policy, Transport Equity, Disability Inclusion, Gender Mainstreaming, Social Audit, SDGs

Introduction

Public transportation constitutes the backbone of socioeconomic mobility in developing countries, particularly in densely populated states like Maharashtra, India. The role of state-owned transport corporations transcends mere logistical function; they are instruments of social equity, economic inclusion, and sustainable urban development. The Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC), established under the Road Transport Corporations Act of 1950, operates one of the largest bus networks in Asia, connecting over 250,000 km of routes across urban, semi-urban, and rural geographies. With a fleet exceeding 16,000 buses and serving approximately 65 lakh (6.5 million) passengers daily, MSRTC functions as a critical public service organization whose policies profoundly shape the lived experiences of Maharashtra's diverse populace (MSRTC Annual Report, 2023). In recent years, the discourse on inclusive development has increasingly permeated the domain of public transport policy. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), mandate transport organizations to design and implement policies that ensure equitable access for all citizens, irrespective of gender, disability, socioeconomic status, Or geographic location (United Nations, 2030 Agenda). In India, this imperative is further amplified by constitutional provisions under Articles 14, 15, and 21, as well as sector-specific legislation such as despite these normative frameworks, empirical evaluations of inclusive development policies within state transport corporations remain sparse in academic literature. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD), 2016, and the National Transport Policy, 2021.

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How to cite this article:

Hake, A. G. (2026). An Evaluation of Inclusive Development Policies in Public Transport Organizations: A Case Study of Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 3(4(III)), 29–35. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21734797>



Most existing studies are either policy-focused descriptive analyses or isolated case studies of urban metro systems, leaving a critical gap in understanding how traditional bus transport organizations operationalize, implement, and assess inclusivity mandates. MSRTC, given its scale, diversity of operations, and the heterogeneity of its user base, presents an ideal organizational context for such an evaluation.

This study, therefore, seeks to fill this lacuna by conducting a systematic, multi-dimensional evaluation of MSRTC's inclusive development policies across five core dimensions: (i) gender equity and women's safety, (ii) disability and accessibility inclusion, (iii) socioeconomic and tribal community inclusion, (iv) workforce diversity and employee welfare, and (v) environmental sustainability as an equity dimension. By constructing an original Inclusive Development Index (IDI) and triangulating quantitative and qualitative data, the study contributes both theoretical insights and actionable policy recommendations.

Research Objectives:

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To systematically document and categorize inclusive development policies implemented by MSRTC from 2015 to 2024.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of these policies across gender, disability, socioeconomic, workforce diversity, and environmental dimensions.
3. To construct a composite Inclusive Development Index (IDI) for MSRTC and assess its overall inclusivity performance.
4. To identify institutional barriers impeding effective policy implementation and suggest evidence-based recommendations.
5. To contribute to theoretical frameworks on inclusive transport governance in the Global South.

Research Questions:

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. RQ1: What inclusive development policies has MSRTC adopted, and how comprehensively do they address the needs of marginalized groups?
2. RQ2: To what extent are these policies effectively implemented at the operational level?
3. RQ3: What structural and institutional barriers constrain inclusive development in MSRTC?

Literature Review:

Conceptualizing Inclusive Development in Public Transport:

The concept of inclusive development in transport has evolved considerably over the past two decades. Sen (1999) foundational capability approach provides a theoretical anchor for transport equity, arguing that mobility constitutes a fundamental capability enabling individuals to participate fully in social and economic life. Extending this framework to urban transport, Nussbaum (2011) situates transport access within a broader constellation of combined capabilities, emphasizing that states bear a duty of care to ensure non-discriminatory mobility.

Lucas (2012) introduced the concept of transport-related social exclusion, demonstrating through longitudinal UK data how inadequate transport access compounds pre-existing socioeconomic disadvantages. Mahendra and Cervero (2017) extended this analysis to the Global South, finding that bus rapid transit (BRT) systems in Latin American cities, when designed with gender and disability sensitivity, significantly enhanced social cohesion. Complementarily, Behrens et al. (2017) documented that paratransit systems in sub-Saharan Africa, despite their informal character, often achieve de facto inclusion through flexible routing, underscoring the importance of contextual policy design.

Indian scholarship has contributed notably to this discourse. Mohan (2008) and Tiwari (2014) highlighted persistent accessibility deficits in Indian urban transport systems, with particular emphasis on women's safety and the lack of disability-compliant infrastructure. Garg and Doda (2019) evaluated the National Urban Transport Policy (NUTP) of 2006, finding implementation gaps attributable to inter-departmental coordination failures and inadequate resource allocation. Srinivasan and Kwan (2020) employed a gendered framework to assess women's transport mobility in Mumbai, revealing that safety perceptions and concessional fare schemes significantly mediated bus ridership decisions.

Gender, Disability, and Socioeconomic Inclusion in Transport:

A growing body of literature documents gendered dimensions of transport policy. Peters (2011) established that women's transport needs differ fundamentally from men's, being characterized by trip chaining, time sensitivity, and heightened vulnerability to sexual harassment in transit spaces. Global Transport Knowledge Partnership (2018) documented that dedicated women-only buses, while controversial from a mainstreaming perspective, demonstrably reduced harassment incidents in South Asian transit systems. Hanson (2010) cautioned, however, against segregationist approaches that inadvertently reinforce patriarchal norms rather than transforming them.

Disability inclusion in transport has been addressed through the lens of Universal Design (UD), a paradigm advocating for inherently accessible design rather than retrofitting. Imrie (2012) critiqued mainstream transport planning for its systematic ableism, arguing that disabled persons are treated as exceptions rather than integral design constituencies. In the Indian context, the RPWD Act 2016 mandates that all public transport facilities achieve full accessibility within five years of enactment, yet compliance audits by the Disability Affairs Committee (2022) found that fewer than 30% of state transport corporations had achieved full compliance.

Tribal and indigenous community inclusion represents a relatively understudied dimension. Adivasi communities in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli, Nashik, and Palghar districts face acute transport poverty, with MSRTC connectivity gaps forcing dependence on informal, unsafe transport modes (Baviskar, 2019). The tribal sub-plan allocations within transport budgets have remained



persistently underfunded, limiting service expansion to scheduled area regions.

Workforce Diversity as an Inclusion Indicator:

Internal organizational dimensions of inclusion have attracted growing scholarly attention. Mor Barak (2015) argued that workforce diversity is not merely a human resources objective but a structural indicator of an organization's commitment to the communities it serves. Public transport organizations with diverse workforces—across gender, caste, disability status, and minority backgrounds—tend to demonstrate greater empathy and responsiveness in service delivery (Fernandez and Rocha, 2018). In MSRTC's case, while caste-based reservations are constitutionally mandated, gender and disability representation in management cadres remains severely disproportionate.

Research Gap:

Despite the rich international and domestic literature on transport inclusion, a critical gap exists: few studies have undertaken multi-dimensional, index-based evaluations of inclusive development policies within a single large public transport organization in the Indian context. Most evaluations are either single-dimensional (focusing exclusively on gender or disability) or macro-level policy analyses. This study addresses this gap by offering an integrated, mixed-methods evaluation of MSRTC that spans five dimensions, constructs an original IDI, and bridges policy analysis with organizational behavior insights.

Theoretical Framework:

This study adopts a multi-theoretical lens that integrates three complementary frameworks:

The Capability Approach (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011) provides the normative foundation, positioning inclusive transport access as a fundamental human capability. Under this framework, MSRTC's policies are evaluated not merely in terms of outputs (routes served, buses deployed) but in terms of the capabilities they

enable—specifically, the freedom to move, access employment, healthcare, and education without discrimination.

New Public Management (NPM) theory (Hood, 1991) offers a governance lens for evaluating MSRTC's organizational performance on inclusion metrics. NPM's emphasis on efficiency, accountability, and citizen-centrism provides criteria for assessing whether inclusive development policies are systematically integrated into MSRTC's performance measurement systems or remain rhetorical commitments.

The Social Exclusion Framework (Room, 1995; Atkinson and Marlier, 2010) contextualizes the analysis within broader structural dynamics of disadvantage. Transport exclusion, under this framework, is understood as multi-dimensional and dynamic, shaped by interacting factors of income poverty, spatial marginalization, disability, gender discrimination, and cultural barriers.

These frameworks collectively inform the construction of the Inclusive Development Index (IDI), which operationalizes inclusion across five measurable dimensions with weighted sub-indicators.

Research Methodology:

Research Design:

The study adopts a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018), wherein quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously, analyzed independently, and merged at the interpretation stage. This design is particularly suited for policy evaluation studies where statistical patterns require contextual elaboration.

Study Area and Sampling:

The study was conducted across five MSRTC divisional headquarters: Pune, Nashik, Aurangabad, Nagpur, and Mumbai Central. These locations were selected purposively to capture geographic, urban-rural, and demographic diversity. A stratified random sampling approach was employed for the quantitative survey:

Stakeholder Category	Sample Size	Sampling Method	% of Total
Passengers (General)	120	Stratified Random	37.5%
Passengers (Marginalized)	80	Purposive	25.0%
MSRTC Employees	75	Stratified Random	23.4%
Policy Stakeholders/NGOs	25	Purposive	7.8%
Disability Advocates	20	Purposive	6.3%
Total	320	Mixed	100%

Table 1: Sample Composition and Distribution

For qualitative data, 25 semi-structured interviews were conducted with purposively selected informants, including MSRTC divisional managers, disability rights activists,

women's transport NGO representatives, tribal community workers, and retired MSRTC officials with policy expertise.



Data Collection Instruments:

The quantitative survey instrument comprised 52 items organized across five thematic modules corresponding to the IDI dimensions. Items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The instrument underwent face validity assessment by a panel of five domain experts and was pre-tested with a pilot sample of 30 respondents; Cronbach's alpha values for all subscales exceeded 0.78, confirming reliability. Secondary data were sourced from MSRTC Annual Reports (2015–

2024), Maharashtra Government Budget documents, Parliamentary Committee reports, and CAG audit findings.

The Inclusive Development Index (IDI):

The Inclusive Development Index (IDI) was constructed as a composite measure of MSRTC's inclusivity performance across five weighted dimensions. The weighting scheme was determined through an Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) with input from 15 subject-matter experts. Each dimension comprises 3–5 sub-indicators scored on a 0–100 scale and aggregated into a dimensional score, which is then weighted to produce the composite IDI.

IDI Dimension	Weight	Key Sub-Indicators
Gender Equity & Women's Safety	25%	Concessional fares, women-only seats, CCTV coverage, safety incident rates, gender staff ratio
Disability & Accessibility Inclusion	25%	Low-floor bus %, ramp availability, tactile pathways, accessible toilets, staff training scores
Socioeconomic & Tribal Inclusion	20%	Rural route coverage, tribal area services, concessional schemes, affordable fare index
Workforce Diversity & Welfare	15%	SC/ST/OBC representation, gender staff diversity, disability employment, grievance resolution
Environmental Sustainability	15%	Electric bus %, fuel efficiency, carbon emission reduction, green certification

Table 2: Inclusive Development Index (IDI) — Dimensions, Weights, and Indicators

Data Analysis:

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS v.26. Descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, and cross-tabulation were employed for demographic profiling. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) validated the construct structure of survey instruments. One-way ANOVA assessed inter-divisional variations in inclusion scores. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) using NVivo 12, with themes mapped deductively to the IDI framework and inductively to emergent categories. Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative findings was conducted using a joint display approach.

Results and Analysis:

MSRTC Inclusive Development Policies: Documentary Analysis:

Documentary analysis of MSRTC Annual Reports and policy circulars reveals a structured but incrementally

evolving inclusive policy architecture. Key policies identified across the study period include: Gender-responsive policies include free bus passes for women under the Mahila Pukar scheme (2019), 33% reserved seating in all MSRTC buses, installation of CCTV in approximately 68% of the fleet by 2023, dedicated women's helpline (1800-22-1250), and gender sensitization training mandated for all crew members since 2021. Disability inclusion measures include concessional fares at 50% discount for persons with benchmark disabilities, low-floor buses deployed in select urban routes (12.4% of fleet as of 2023), wheelchair accessibility retrofitting programme (2021–ongoing), and dedicated disability complaint resolution cell.

Socioeconomic inclusion is addressed through student concession passes covering 62 categories of educational institutions, senior citizen concessions (50% fare reduction), tribal area route expansion under MSRTC's Adivasi Vikas Yojana, and monthly/quarterly pass schemes designed for low-income daily commuters.

Quantitative Survey Findings:

Table 3 presents the mean satisfaction scores and IDI dimensional scores derived from the survey data:

IDI Dimension	Max Score	MSRTC Score	% Achievement	Rating
Gender Equity & Women's Safety	25	14.8	59.20%	Moderate
Disability & Accessibility	25	10.6	42.40%	Low
Socioeconomic & Tribal Inclusion	20	12.1	60.50%	Moderate
Workforce Diversity & Welfare	15	9.4	62.70%	Moderate
Environmental Sustainability	15	7.4	49.30%	Low-Moderate
COMPOSITE IDI SCORE	100	54.3	54.30%	Moderate

Table 3: MSRTC Inclusive Development Index (IDI) — Composite and Dimensional Scores

The composite IDI score of 54.3 out of 100 places MSRTC in the 'moderate but uneven' inclusivity tier. The Disability and Accessibility dimension records the lowest score (42.4%), reflecting the most acute implementation deficit. Environmental Sustainability (49.3%) also underperforms, largely because the electric bus transition has proceeded slower than planned targets. Gender Equity (59.2%) and Workforce Diversity (62.7%) exhibit moderate performance, driven primarily by concessional fare schemes and constitutional reservation compliance, respectively.

One-way ANOVA results indicate statistically significant inter-divisional variation in IDI scores ($F(4, 315) = 8.34, p < 0.001$). Nagpur division records the highest composite IDI (58.7) while Nashik records the lowest (49.2), suggesting that regional administrative capacity and resource allocation disparities significantly mediate inclusive policy outcomes.

Qualitative Findings: Thematic Analysis:

Thematic analysis of 25 interviews produced four overarching themes:

Theme 1 — Policy-Practice Gap: A persistent disconnect exists between formally adopted policies and ground-level implementation. Multiple informants confirmed that policy circulars on disability accommodation, for instance, reach depot managers but translate inconsistently into crew behavior. One MSRTC divisional manager acknowledged: 'We have circulars, but the actual enforcement depends on the depot-level culture.' This echoes Lipsky's (1980) street-level bureaucracy thesis, wherein frontline workers exercise significant discretion that often contradicts policy intent.

Theme 2 — Structural Infrastructure Deficits: Physical infrastructure limitations emerged as a critical barrier. Disability advocates highlighted that even where low-floor buses are available, the absence of accessible bus stops, tactile pathways, and accessible terminal facilities nullifies their inclusion value. A tribal community worker from Nashik district underscored connectivity gaps: 'the bus exists on paper for our village, but it comes only three days a week, and even then...' pointing to the inadequacy of nominal coverage metrics.

Theme 3 — Digital Exclusion within Inclusion Schemes: Paradoxically, MSRTC's digital transformation initiatives—online ticketing, app-based booking, and digital concession passes—are creating new barriers for elderly, tribal, and economically marginalized populations who lack smartphone access or digital literacy. This finding aligns with the dual digital divide literature (Norris, 2001) and points to the risk of technology-driven exclusion within ostensibly inclusive programs.

Theme 4 — Institutional Commitment vs. Resource Constraints: Stakeholders acknowledged genuine institutional commitment to inclusion at the senior policy level, but identified chronic financial constraints as the primary limiting factor. MSRTC's significant accumulated financial losses, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 employee agitation, have compressed capital expenditure on accessibility infrastructure and staff training.

Discussion:

The findings reveal a complex portrait of inclusive development in MSRTC—an organization that has built a normatively sound policy architecture but struggles with uneven implementation, resource scarcity, and structural-institutional fragmentation. The composite IDI score of 54.3 is consistent with findings from comparable studies of state transport corporations in India (Kumar and Agarwal, 2021, who reported a mean inclusivity score of 51.8 for five state RTCs), suggesting systemic rather than MSRTC-specific limitations.

The disability dimension's particularly low score (42.4%) is theoretically significant. It validates Imrie's (2012) critique of ableism in transport planning systems and suggests that Universal Design principles remain peripheral to MSRTC's core operational logic. Unlike gender inclusion—where concessional fare schemes generate measurable ridership impacts—disability inclusion requires costlier capital investments (low-floor buses, accessible infrastructure) that are deprioritized under fiscal stress.

The gender findings present a nuanced picture. While formal policy commitments are substantial, the qualitative data reveal that women's subjective sense of safety in MSRTC buses remains below expectations, particularly during nighttime services and on intercity routes. This gap between objective policy provision and subjective safety perception underscores the importance of qualitative evaluative methodologies that capture experiential dimensions inaccessible to purely quantitative approaches.

The environmental sustainability dimension deserves special attention as an equity issue. MSRTC's slow electric bus transition disproportionately burdens communities in high-pollution corridors, which tend to overlap geographically with low-income settlements. Framing environmental sustainability as an equity dimension—rather than merely an efficiency or climate objective—represents a novel contribution of this study to the transport equity literature.

The digital exclusion paradox identified in qualitative findings represents an emerging challenge for inclusive public transport governance globally. As transport organizations digitize operations to improve efficiency and transparency, they risk creating new exclusion vectors for populations already marginalized by technological access deficits. Policy frameworks must proactively design hybrid (digital and analog) service channels to prevent this outcome.

Policy Recommendations:

Based on the multi-dimensional findings, this study advances seven evidence-based recommendations for MSRTC and analogous public transport organizations:

1. **Institutionalize Annual Social Audits:** MSRTC should mandate independent, third-party social audits of all-inclusive development policies, with disaggregated reporting by gender, disability, tribal status, and geography. Audit findings should be publicly disclosed and linked to divisional performance evaluations.
2. **Accelerate Universal Design Compliance:** A time-bound, funded roadmap for achieving full low-floor bus



fleet, accessible terminals, and tactile infrastructure across all divisional headquarters must be developed, with central government fiscal support leveraged under the FAME II and Smart Cities Mission schemes.

3. Gender Safety as Operational Standard: Women's safety outcomes should be integrated into Depot Manager KPIs. Real-time safety monitoring dashboards, mandatory harassment response training, and anonymous reporting mechanisms should be systemized across all routes.
4. Tribal Connectivity Mission: MSRTC should establish a dedicated Tribal Connectivity Mission with ring-fenced funding to ensure minimum frequency standards on routes serving Scheduled Area settlements, with community consultations to determine scheduling.
5. Hybrid Digital-Analog Service Channels: All digital concession and booking services should retain analog equivalents at bus terminals and depots, with designated digital literacy assistance points staffed by trained volunteers or employees.
6. Workforce Diversification beyond Compliance: MSRTC should move beyond caste reservation compliance to actively recruit women for driving and management roles and persons with disabilities for administrative positions, supported by targeted training and mentorship programs.
7. Rights-Based Grievance Architecture: An independent Inclusion Ombudsman position should be created within MSRTC, empowered to receive, investigate, and resolve disability, gender, and discrimination-related grievances with statutory deadlines and escalation mechanisms.

Conclusion:

This study has undertaken the first comprehensive, multi-dimensional evaluation of inclusive development policies within the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation — India's largest state-owned road transport utility. Employing a mixed-methods design and an original Inclusive Development Index (IDI), the analysis reveals that MSRTC occupies a 'moderate but uneven' inclusivity position, with a composite score of 54.3 out of 100. The organization demonstrates commendable policy intent through a range of concessional fare schemes, gender safety initiatives, and constitutional reservation compliance, but is constrained by physical infrastructure deficits, frontline implementation gaps, fiscal limitations, and emerging digital exclusion dynamics.

Theoretically, the study contributes to literature on transport equity, inclusive governance, and SDG-aligned public sector management by: (a) extending the capability approach to evaluative measurement through the IDI framework; (b) empirically validating the policy-practice gap through triangulated evidence; and (c) introducing environmental sustainability as an equity dimension within transport inclusion frameworks.

Practically, the study's recommendations - spanning social audits, Universal Design compliance, tribal connectivity, hybrid digital services, and rights-based grievance mechanisms - provide a structured, actionable

roadmap for MSRTC and analogous public transport organizations across India and the Global South. Future research should longitudinally track IDI scores following policy reforms, compare inclusion trajectories across multiple state RTCs, and examine the governance conditions that predict effective inclusive policy implementation.

Public transport is not merely a service - it is an expression of a society's commitment to leaving no one behind. MSRTC's inclusive development journey, with its achievements and its gaps, mirrors this larger national aspiration and the continuing distance to its fulfillment.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the Principal and the Department of Commerce, Pratibha Niketan Mahavidyalaya, Nanded, for providing the academic environment and institutional support necessary for carrying out this research. Heartfelt thanks are extended to the faculty members, colleagues, and experts who offered valuable guidance, constructive suggestions, and encouragement throughout the study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability: Challenges, Impacts, and Pathways toward a Sustainable Future

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030409

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 36-39
April 2026

Submitted: 05 Mar. 2026
Revised: 10 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 10 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21736284

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21736284>



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Abstract

Climate change represents one of the most critical global challenges of the 21st century, threatening ecosystems, economies, and human societies. Rising global temperatures, extreme weather events, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation are closely linked to human activities such as fossil fuel consumption, deforestation, industrialization, and unsustainable resource use. Environmental sustainability has emerged as a key framework for addressing these challenges by promoting balanced interactions between economic development, environmental protection, and social well-being. This research paper examines the causes and impacts of climate change, explores the concept of environmental sustainability, analyse global mitigation and adaptation strategies, and evaluates policy frameworks and technological innovations aimed at achieving sustainable development. The study concludes that integrated global cooperation, sustainable policies, renewable energy transition, and behavioral change are essential to mitigate climate risks and ensure long-term ecological stability.

Keywords: Climate change, environmental sustainability, global warming, sustainable development, renewable energy, environmental policy

Introduction

Climate change has become a defining issue of modern civilization. Scientific evidence demonstrates that Earth's climate system is warming at an unprecedented rate primarily due to anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. Industrial growth, population expansion, and increased consumption patterns have intensified environmental pressures, pushing natural systems beyond sustainable limits. Environmental sustainability focuses on meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. The concept integrates ecological balance, economic growth, and social equity. As climate change accelerates, sustainability has shifted from an optional environmental concern to a global necessity. This paper explores the relationship between climate change and environmental sustainability, addressing causes, impacts, mitigation strategies, policy responses, and future prospects.

Understanding Climate Change

Definition and Scientific Basis

Climate change refers to long-term alterations in temperature, precipitation patterns, and atmospheric conditions. The phenomenon is largely driven by increased concentrations of greenhouse gases (GHGs) such as:

- Carbon dioxide (CO₂)
- Methane (CH₄)
- Nitrous oxide (N₂O)

These gases trap heat in the atmosphere through the greenhouse effect, leading to global warming. Since the Industrial Revolution, atmospheric CO₂ levels have increased significantly due to fossil fuel combustion and land-use changes

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How to cite this article:

Khodade, D. D. (2026). Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability: Challenges, Impacts, and Pathways toward a Sustainable Future. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 3(4(III)), 36–39. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21736284>



Causes of Climate Change

Fossil Fuel Consumption

Coal, oil, and natural gas remain primary energy sources worldwide. Burning these fuels releases massive amounts of CO₂.

Deforestation

Forests act as carbon sinks. Large-scale deforestation reduces carbon absorption capacity while releasing stored carbon.

Industrialization

Manufacturing industries emit pollutants and greenhouse gases through energy-intensive processes.

Agriculture

Livestock farming produces methane, while fertilizers release nitrous oxide.

Urbanization

Rapid urban growth increases energy demand, transportation emissions, and waste generation.

Impacts of Climate Change

1. Environmental Impacts

2. Rising Global Temperatures

Global average temperatures have increased significantly, causing melting glaciers and polar ice caps.

3. Sea-Level Rise

Thermal expansion and melting ice sheets contribute to rising sea levels, threatening coastal communities.

Extreme Weather Events

Climate change increases the frequency and intensity of:

1. Heatwaves
2. Floods
3. Droughts
4. Cyclones

Biodiversity Loss

Habitat destruction and changing climates lead to species extinction and ecosystem imbalance.

Economic Impacts

Climate change damages infrastructure, agriculture, fisheries, and tourism sectors. Developing countries face disproportionate economic losses due to limited adaptive capacity.

Social and Health Impacts

1. Spread of infectious diseases
2. Food and water insecurity
3. Climate migration
4. Heat-related illnesses
5. Vulnerable populations, particularly in low-income regions, experience the greatest risks.

Concept of Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability involves responsible interaction with nature to avoid depletion of natural resources.

Key Principles

1. **Resource Efficiency** – minimizing waste and maximizing productivity.
2. **Ecological Balance** – preserving biodiversity and ecosystems.

3. **Intergenerational Equity** – protecting resources for future generations.

4. **Sustainable Consumption** – reducing environmental footprints.

Pillars of Sustainability

Environmental Pillar

Protection of ecosystems and natural resources.

Economic Pillar

Sustainable economic growth without environmental degradation.

Social Pillar

Equity, justice, and improved quality of life.

5. Relationship between Climate Change and Sustainability

Climate change directly threatens sustainability goals. Environmental sustainability provides solutions through:

1. Renewable energy adoption
2. Sustainable agriculture
3. Circular economy models
4. Conservation strategies

Without sustainability practices, climate change mitigation becomes impossible.

Mitigation Strategies

Mitigation focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Renewable Energy Transition

Renewable energy sources include:

1. Solar energy
2. Wind energy
3. Hydropower
4. Geothermal energy

These sources reduce reliance on fossil fuels and lower emissions.

Energy Efficiency

Improving efficiency in buildings, transportation, and industries significantly reduces carbon footprints.

Examples:

1. LED lighting
2. Electric vehicles
3. Smart grids

Reforestation and Afforestation

Planting trees enhances carbon sequestration and restores ecosystems.

Sustainable Agriculture

Practices include:

1. Organic farming
2. Crop rotation
3. Reduced chemical usage
4. Agroforestry

Waste Management and Circular Economy

Recycling, reuse, and waste reduction minimize environmental pollution.

Adaptation Strategies

Adaptation aims to reduce vulnerability to climate impacts.



1. Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

Designing flood-resistant buildings and sustainable urban drainage systems.

2. Water Resource Management

Efficient irrigation and rainwater harvesting help address water scarcity.

3. Disaster Risk Reduction

Early warning systems and community preparedness reduce losses.

4. Climate-Smart Agriculture

Developing drought-resistant crops improves food security.

Global Policies and Agreements

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Established international cooperation to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations.

6. Paris Agreement (2015)

Countries committed to limiting global temperature rise to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

Key objectives:

1. Reduce emissions
2. Enhance climate resilience
3. Support developing nations

8.3 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Goal 13 focuses specifically on climate action while integrating sustainability across sectors.

Role of Technology and Innovation

Technology plays a crucial role in achieving sustainability.

Green Technologies

1. Carbon capture and storage (CCS)
2. Renewable energy systems
3. Energy storage technologies

Digital Solutions

Artificial intelligence and data analytics optimize energy consumption and environmental monitoring.

Sustainable Transportation

Electric vehicles and public transit systems reduce emissions.

Role of Governments, Businesses, and Individuals

Government Responsibilities

1. Environmental regulations
2. Carbon pricing policies
3. Investment in green infrastructure

Corporate Responsibility

Businesses adopt Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices.

Individual Actions

Citizens contribute through:

1. Reducing energy consumption
2. Sustainable consumption habits
3. Waste segregation
4. Supporting eco-friendly products

Challenges to Environmental Sustainability

Despite progress, several barriers exist:

1. Political resistance
2. Economic dependency on fossil fuels
3. Lack of climate finance

4. Technological inequality

5. Public awareness gaps

6. Developing countries face additional challenges balancing economic growth with environmental protection.

Future Prospects

Achieving sustainability requires systemic transformation:

1. Transition to net-zero emissions economies
2. Expansion of renewable energy infrastructure
3. Global climate cooperation
4. Environmental education
5. Nature-based solutions
6. Interdisciplinary collaboration between science, policy, and society is essential.

Conclusion

Climate change and environmental sustainability are deeply interconnected global issues requiring urgent action. Human activities have significantly altered Earth's climate system, resulting in environmental, economic, and social consequences. Environmental sustainability offers a comprehensive framework to address these challenges through responsible resource management, renewable energy adoption, sustainable policies, and societal transformation. The future of humanity depends on collective global action. Governments, industries, communities, and individuals must work collaboratively to reduce emissions, protect ecosystems, and promote sustainable development. Only through integrated efforts can the world achieve climate stability and ensure a healthy planet for future generations.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the Principal, IQAC, and the Management of Rayat Shikshan Sanstha's, Mahatma Phule Mahavidyalaya, Pimpri, Pune, for providing the necessary institutional support and academic environment for carrying out this research work. The author is deeply thankful to colleagues, faculty members, and the Department for their valuable suggestions, encouragement, and constructive guidance throughout the preparation of this research paper.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Ethical Issues of Artificial Intelligence in India: A Critical Analysis

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030410

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 40-43
April 2026

Submitted: 05 Mar. 2026
Revised: 10 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 10 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21736373

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21736373>



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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force influencing various sectors of modern society, including education, healthcare, governance, and industry. In India, the rapid adoption of AI technologies has accelerated socio-economic development and improved efficiency across multiple domains. However, this technological advancement has also raised significant ethical concerns that require critical examination. This study aims to analyze the major ethical issues associated with the use of Artificial Intelligence in the Indian context. The research is grounded in ethical and technological frameworks, focusing on issues such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, accountability, transparency, and the impact of automation on employment. It examines how AI systems, while offering benefits, may also reinforce existing social inequalities and create new forms of digital exclusion. The study also evaluates the role of policy frameworks and governance mechanisms in addressing these ethical challenges. This research adopts a qualitative and analytical approach based on secondary data collected from academic literature, government reports, and international studies. The findings suggest that although AI has the potential to enhance decision-making and service delivery, its unchecked implementation may lead to serious ethical risks, including misuse of personal data, lack of accountability in automated decisions, and widening socio-economic disparities. The study concludes that ethical considerations must be integrated into the development and deployment of AI technologies in India. It emphasizes the need for robust regulatory frameworks, transparency in algorithmic processes, and inclusive policies to ensure that AI contributes to equitable and sustainable development. Addressing these ethical challenges is essential for building trust and ensuring the responsible use of AI in Indian society.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Ethics, Data Privacy, Algorithmic Bias, Accountability, India, Digital Ethics

Introduction

The ethical analysis of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is grounded in multiple philosophical and technological frameworks that help in understanding the implications of automated decision-making systems in society. One of the key ethical approaches is Utilitarianism, which evaluates actions based on their outcomes. From this perspective, AI is considered ethical if it maximizes overall societal benefit. However, in the Indian context, this raises concerns when AI systems benefit the majority but marginalize weaker sections, thereby creating inequality. Another important framework is Deontological Ethics, associated with Immanuel Kant, which emphasizes duties, rights, and moral principles. According to this approach, AI systems must respect individual rights such as privacy, consent, and dignity, regardless of the outcomes. This is particularly relevant in India, where data protection laws are still evolving. The concept of Algorithmic Ethics also plays a crucial role, focusing on fairness, accountability, and transparency in AI systems. Issues such as algorithmic bias arise when AI systems reflect existing social prejudices, leading to discriminatory outcomes in areas like hiring, lending, and law enforcement. Additionally, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) helps explain how individuals adopt AI technologies based on perceived usefulness and ease of use. In India, factors such as digital literacy, trust, and accessibility influence the acceptance of AI systems. These theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive foundation for analyzing ethical issues in AI. They highlight the need for balancing technological advancement with moral responsibility, particularly in a diverse and unequal society like India.

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How to cite this article:

Chanchal Shakuntala Anil Mattu. (2026). Ethical Issues of Artificial Intelligence in India: A Critical Analysis. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 3(4(III)), 40-43. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21736373>

Research Gap

Despite the growing interest in Artificial Intelligence, there is a noticeable gap in research focusing on the ethical implications of AI in the Indian context. Most existing studies emphasize the technological benefits and economic potential of AI, often overlooking the ethical challenges associated with its implementation.

There is limited research that critically examines how AI may reinforce existing social inequalities in India, particularly among marginalized communities. Issues such as algorithmic bias, data privacy violations, and lack of transparency in decision-making processes are not adequately explored in Indian studies.

Furthermore, many studies focus on global perspectives without considering India-specific factors such as socio-economic diversity, digital divide, and varying levels of digital literacy. This creates a gap in understanding how ethical issues manifest differently in India compared to developed countries.

Another significant gap is the lack of comprehensive analysis of policy frameworks and regulatory mechanisms governing AI in India. While initiatives and discussions are ongoing, there is insufficient research evaluating their effectiveness in addressing ethical concerns.

This study aims to bridge these gaps by providing a critical and context-specific analysis of ethical issues related to AI in India, focusing on inclusivity, accountability, and long-term societal impact.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the major ethical issues associated with Artificial Intelligence in India?
2. How does AI impact privacy, fairness, and accountability in Indian society?
3. To what extent does AI contribute to or reduce social inequalities in India?
4. What are the limitations of existing policies in addressing AI-related ethical concerns?
5. How can ethical frameworks be effectively integrated into AI development in India?

Hypothesis

H1: Artificial Intelligence has significant ethical implications affecting privacy, fairness, and accountability in India.

H2: The implementation of AI in India may reinforce socio-economic inequalities if not regulated effectively.

Research Methodology

The present study adopts a **descriptive, analytical, and critical research design** to examine the ethical issues associated with Artificial Intelligence (AI) in India. The objective is not only to identify ethical concerns but also to critically evaluate their implications in the socio-economic and institutional context.

Data Sources

The study is based on secondary data, collected from:

1. Academic journals and peer-reviewed articles on AI ethics

2. Government policy documents and reports (e.g., NITI Aayog AI strategy)
3. Reports from international organizations (UNESCO, OECD, World Bank)
4. Books and credible digital sources

Method of Analysis

A **qualitative analytical approach** has been used, incorporating:

1. **Thematic analysis** (privacy, bias, accountability, employment)
2. **Comparative analysis** (global vs Indian context)
3. **Critical evaluation** (policy gaps and ethical challenges)

Conceptual Variables

1. **Independent Variable:** Artificial Intelligence
2. **Dependent Variable:** Ethical Outcomes (privacy, fairness, accountability)
3. **Intervening Variables:** Policy framework, digital literacy, socio-economic status

Scope of Study

The study focuses on India and examines the ethical implications of AI across sectors such as governance, healthcare, education, and employment.

Limitations

1. Lack of primary empirical data
2. Rapid evolution of AI technologies
3. Dependence on available literature and reports

Data Analysis and Critical Discussion

The ethical implications of Artificial Intelligence in India are complex and multifaceted. While AI offers numerous benefits, it also raises serious concerns that require critical examination.

1. Data Privacy and Surveillance

One of the most pressing ethical issues is the protection of personal data. AI systems rely heavily on large datasets, often containing sensitive personal information. In India, where data protection frameworks are still evolving, there is a risk of misuse, unauthorized access, and surveillance.

The increasing use of AI in governance and digital platforms raises concerns about **mass surveillance** and violation of individual privacy. Without strong regulatory mechanisms, citizens' data may be exploited for commercial or political purposes.

2. Algorithmic Bias and Discrimination

AI systems are not inherently neutral; they reflect the biases present in the data on which they are trained. In a diverse society like India, this can lead to discriminatory outcomes based on caste, gender, region, or socio-economic status.

For example, AI-based recruitment systems may favor certain groups over others, while financial algorithms may deny credit to marginalized communities. This reinforces existing inequalities rather than reducing them.

3. Accountability and Transparency

A major ethical challenge in AI is determining accountability. When decisions are made by algorithms, it



becomes difficult to assign responsibility for errors or harmful outcomes.

The lack of transparency in AI systems, often referred to as the “black box” problem, makes it difficult for users to understand how decisions are made. This reduces trust and raises ethical concerns about fairness and justice.

4. Employment and Automation

AI-driven automation has the potential to replace human labor, particularly in sectors involving repetitive tasks. In India, where a large portion of the population depends on low-skilled jobs, this poses a serious socio-economic challenge.

While AI creates new opportunities, it also leads to job displacement, increasing unemployment and economic inequality. The lack of reskilling and upskilling initiatives further aggravates this issue.

Digital Divide and Exclusion

The benefits of AI are not equally accessible to all sections of society. Rural areas, economically weaker sections, and digitally illiterate populations often lack access to AI-driven technologies.

This digital divide creates a situation where AI benefits the privileged while excluding the marginalized, leading to further socio-economic disparities.

Critical Insight

AI in India operates within a complex socio-economic structure where inequalities already exist. Without ethical safeguards and inclusive policies, AI has the potential to **amplify these inequalities** rather than resolve them.

Thus, ethical AI is not just a technological issue but a **social justice concern**.

Conclusion

The present study critically examined the ethical issues associated with Artificial Intelligence in India and highlighted its complex implications for society. While AI has emerged as a powerful tool for innovation, efficiency, and development, it simultaneously raises significant ethical concerns that cannot be ignored. The analysis demonstrates that AI has the potential to transform sectors such as governance, healthcare, education, and employment. However, issues related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, lack of transparency, and accountability pose serious challenges. In the Indian context, these concerns are further intensified by socio-economic inequalities, digital divide, and varying levels of digital literacy. From a theoretical standpoint, ethical frameworks such as those proposed by Immanuel Kant emphasize the importance of protecting individual rights and dignity, while utilitarian perspectives highlight the need to maximize societal benefits. The study finds that current AI practices often struggle to balance these ethical principles, leading to unintended consequences. The research also reveals that existing policy frameworks in India are still in the developmental stage and lack comprehensive mechanisms to regulate AI effectively. Without proper governance, there is a risk that AI systems may reinforce existing inequalities and create new forms of exclusion. Therefore, it is essential to adopt a human-centric and ethically guided approach to AI development. This

includes strengthening data protection laws, ensuring transparency in algorithmic processes, promoting digital literacy, and creating inclusive policies that benefit all sections of society.

In conclusion, while Artificial Intelligence holds immense potential for India's development, its ethical challenges must be addressed proactively. Responsible and ethical use of AI is crucial for building trust, ensuring fairness, and achieving sustainable and inclusive growth.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the Principal of Pemraj Sarda College, Ahmednagar, and the affiliated Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune, for providing the academic environment and institutional support necessary for completing this research. Heartfelt thanks are extended to the faculty members, mentors, and colleagues whose valuable guidance, insightful suggestions, and constant encouragement greatly contributed to the successful completion of this study. The author also acknowledges the contributions of scholars, researchers, government reports, and international publications that served as important secondary sources for this research on the ethical issues of Artificial Intelligence in India. Their published work provided the theoretical and analytical foundation for this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Women's Leadership and Sustainable Urban Governance: A Feminist Inquiry into Municipal Decision-Making

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030411

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 44-46
April 2026

Submitted: 06 Mar. 2026
Revised: 11 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 13 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21736565

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21736565>



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Abstract

Urban governance in India is increasingly faced with complex sustainability challenges, necessitating inclusive and responsive leadership frameworks. The growing participation of women in municipal institutions, facilitated by constitutional provisions such as the 74th Amendment, has opened new avenues for examining the role of gender in governance processes. However, existing discourse often limits itself to representation, with insufficient attention to the substantive impact of women's leadership on sustainability outcomes. This paper adopts a feminist analytical framework, drawing on ecofeminist perspectives and gendered governance theory, to explore how women leaders influence decision-making in urban local bodies. It argues that women's leadership is not merely symbolic but has the potential to reshape governance priorities toward more inclusive, participatory, and sustainability-oriented approaches. By engaging with existing literature and analytical insights, the study highlights the role of women leaders in areas such as water management, sanitation, waste governance, and public health. At the same time, the paper examines structural and socio-cultural constraints that limit the effectiveness of women leaders. The study contributes to urban governance discourse by integrating feminist theory with sustainability analysis and offers policy insights for strengthening gender-responsive governance.

Keywords: Women's Leadership, Urban Governance, Sustainability, Feminist Theory, Ecofeminism, Gendered Governance

Introduction:

Urban India is undergoing rapid transformation, with over 35% of the population currently residing in urban areas, a figure expected to reach nearly 40% by 2030 (World Bank, 2022). This rapid urbanisation has intensified challenges related to water scarcity, waste management, sanitation, and public health. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB, 2021), Indian cities generate over 1.5 lakh tonnes of solid waste per day, placing immense pressure on urban governance systems. In response to these challenges, inclusive governance has become essential. The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (1992) mandated reservation for women in urban local bodies, leading to a significant increase in women's representation. Today, women constitute approximately 33% to 50% of elected representatives in many municipal institutions across India (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2020). However, representation alone does not ensure effective participation. Women leaders often operate within constrained institutional environments where their decision-making power is limited (Chakrabarti, 2020). This creates a gap between numerical representation and actual influence in governance processes. Against this backdrop, this paper examines how women's leadership shapes urban governance, particularly in relation to sustainability outcomes. Using a feminist framework, it explores whether women leaders contribute to more inclusive and sustainability-oriented decision-making and identifies the challenges that limit their effectiveness.

Theoretical Framework:

Feminist theory highlights that governance structures are shaped by gendered power relations and are not neutral (Young, 1990). While women's inclusion in governance institutions has increased, their ability to influence decisions often remains constrained by institutional norms and socio-cultural expectations (Kabeer, 1999).

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How to cite this article:

Sabale, M. M. (2026). Women's Leadership and Sustainable Urban Governance: A Feminist Inquiry into Municipal Decision-Making. *Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 3(4(III)), 44–46. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21736565>

Ecofeminism further strengthens this analysis by linking women lived experiences with environmental concerns. Scholars argue that women's roles in managing household resources and community well-being shape their sensitivity toward sustainability issues (Shiva, 1988; Mies & Shiva, 1993). This perspective suggests that women leaders may prioritise policies related to environmental management and social welfare.

The concept of gendered governance provides an additional lens to understand leadership differences. It suggests that women leaders are more likely to adopt participatory and inclusive approaches, which are essential for addressing sustainability challenges (Sen, 1999). Together, these frameworks help analyse the relationship between women's leadership and sustainable urban governance.

Literature Review

Existing literature highlights that while women's representation in urban governance has increased, their effective participation remains uneven (Chakrabarti, 2020). Structural barriers such as limited autonomy and patriarchal norms continue to shape their role in decision-making.

At the same time, studies suggest that women leaders tend to focus more on social welfare and community needs, contributing to more inclusive governance outcomes (Singh, 2018). Their leadership is often associated with increased citizen engagement and responsiveness.

Global research also indicates a positive relationship between women's leadership and environmental outcomes. Municipalities with higher representation of women show improved environmental practices and resource management (Brollo & Troiano, 2016).

These studies collectively suggest that women's leadership has the potential to influence sustainability, although its impact depends on institutional and social contexts.

Women's Leadership in Urban Governance

Following the 74th Constitutional Amendment, women's participation in urban governance has increased significantly, with several states implementing up to 50% reservation (MoHUA, 2020). This has expanded women's presence in municipal decision-making structures.

However, challenges remain. Studies indicate that a large proportion of women representatives face constraints such as limited financial control and dependence on male actors (Chakrabarti, 2020). Despite this, women leaders have shown strong engagement with community-level issues.

For example, in Kerala's Kudumbashree-linked urban initiatives, women representatives have played a key role in improving sanitation and waste management systems through community participation (Government of Kerala, 2019). Similarly, in Maharashtra, women corporators in cities like Pune have been actively involved in solid waste management awareness and segregation drives. These examples highlight that women's leadership can contribute meaningfully to governance outcomes, especially when supported by institutional frameworks.

Women's Leadership and Sustainability Outcomes

Sustainability in urban governance depends on effective management of resources and services. Women leaders often prioritise sectors such as water supply, sanitation, and waste management, which are central to sustainable development.

Empirical evidence suggests that local bodies with higher women's representation tend to perform better in sanitation and environmental initiatives (Brollo & Troiano, 2016). Women leaders also promote community participation, which is essential for long-term sustainability.

Their leadership style emphasises inclusivity and responsiveness, contributing to improved policy implementation. However, their effectiveness remains influenced by institutional support and governance structures.

Analytical Discussion

The role of women's leadership in urban governance can be better understood through general observations from municipal contexts. While women representatives operate within the same institutional frameworks as their male counterparts, their approach to governance often reflects a closer engagement with community-level concerns. This is particularly visible in areas related to basic services, where everyday challenges directly affect citizens' quality of life.

In practice, women leaders tend to focus on issues that are immediate and visible, such as water supply, sanitation facilities, waste disposal, and local health conditions. Their engagement with these issues often involves direct interaction with citizens, especially women and marginalised groups, who are most affected by gaps in service delivery. This creates a feedback loop where community needs are more clearly articulated and addressed within governance processes.

Another important aspect of women's leadership is their emphasis on participation and communication. Women representatives are often seen facilitating dialogue between citizens and local authorities, encouraging collective problem-solving. This participatory approach strengthens accountability and improves the implementation of policies at the local level. It also aligns closely with the requirements of sustainable governance, which depends on continuous engagement and shared responsibility.

At the same time, the effectiveness of women's leadership varies depending on the institutional environment. In some cases, limited decision-making power and administrative constraints reduce their ability to bring about substantial change. Despite these limitations, women leaders continue to play a meaningful role in shaping governance outcomes, particularly by bringing attention to issues that might otherwise be overlooked.

Overall, women's leadership in urban governance demonstrates a shift toward more inclusive and responsive decision-making. While the extent of impact may differ across contexts, their contribution highlights the importance of integrating gender perspectives into governance processes, especially in relation to sustainability and community well-being.



Challenges and Limitations

Despite the increasing presence of women in urban governance, several challenges limit the effectiveness of their leadership. One of the primary constraints is the persistence of patriarchal norms, which continue to influence decision-making processes and reduce women's autonomy. In many cases, women representatives face pressure from male family members or political actors, which can restrict their independent participation.

Institutional barriers also play a significant role. Limited access to financial resources, lack of administrative support, and restricted authority within municipal structures often hinder the ability of women leaders to implement their ideas. In addition, inadequate training and capacity-building opportunities further constrain their effectiveness, particularly for first-time representatives.

Another challenge lies in the perception of women's roles within governance. Women are often associated with social and welfare issues, which can limit their involvement in broader policy areas such as infrastructure planning or economic development. This narrow framing reduces the scope of their leadership and reinforces existing gender biases.

Moreover, the link between women's leadership and sustainability outcomes is not always direct. While women may prioritize issues related to community well-being, their ability to translate these priorities into policy outcomes depends on supportive institutional environments and collaborative governance structures.

These challenges highlight that while women's leadership holds significant potential, its impact remains shaped by broader socio-political and institutional contexts. Addressing these limitations is essential to fully realize the role of women in advancing sustainable urban governance.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

This paper has examined the role of women's leadership in shaping sustainable urban governance through a feminist analytical lens. It highlights that the increasing participation of women in municipal institutions is an important step toward inclusive governance. However, representation alone is not sufficient. The effectiveness of women's leadership depends on their ability to influence decision-making processes and policy outcomes.

The analysis suggests that women leaders often bring a more inclusive, participatory, and community-oriented approach to governance. Their focus on issues such as water, sanitation, waste management, and public health aligns closely with the goals of sustainable urban development. Through greater engagement with citizens and sensitivity to everyday concerns, women's leadership has the potential to strengthen sustainability outcomes in urban contexts.

At the same time, the paper recognises that this potential is not fully realised due to structural and institutional constraints. Patriarchal norms, limited autonomy, lack of resources, and insufficient institutional support continue to restrict the role of women leaders. Therefore, the impact of women's leadership on

sustainability is shaped not only by individual agency but also by the broader governance environment.

In this context, there is a need for policy measures that go beyond ensuring representation. Capacity-building programs, leadership training, and institutional support mechanisms can enhance the effectiveness of women representatives. Additionally, creating gender-sensitive governance frameworks and encouraging participatory decision-making can strengthen the link between leadership and sustainability outcomes.

Overall, integrating feminist perspectives into urban governance provides valuable insights into how inclusive leadership can contribute to sustainable development. Strengthening women's leadership is not only a matter of equity but also a necessary step toward building more resilient, responsive, and sustainable cities.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all those who have directly and indirectly contributed to the successful completion of this research paper entitled "Women's Leadership and Sustainable Urban Governance: A Feminist Inquiry into Municipal Decision-Making."

Special thanks are extended to the research supervisor and faculty members of Hind Seva Mandal's Pemraj Sarda College, Ahilyanagar, for their valuable guidance, constant encouragement, and academic support throughout the course of this study. The author is also grateful to Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune, for providing the academic environment and resources necessary for conducting this research.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Enhancing Student Motivation and Academic Achievement through AI-Driven Personalized Learning: An Experimental Mixed-Method Investing

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030412

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 47-51
April 2026

Submitted: 07 Mar. 2026
Revised: 14 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 16 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21737191

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21737191>



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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative tool in modern education, particularly through its ability to enable personalized learning experiences tailored to individual student needs. The present study investigates the impact of AI-driven personalized learning on student motivation and academic performance among secondary and higher secondary students. A mixed-method experimental design was employed, involving 100 students from Grades 9 to 12, who were divided into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group engaged with an AI-based adaptive learning platform for four weeks, while the control group received conventional classroom instruction. Student motivation was assessed using a standardized Student Motivation Scale, and academic performance was evaluated through pre-test and post-test assessments. The results revealed that students in the experimental group demonstrated significantly higher motivation scores ($M = 78.5$, $SD = 5.2$) compared to the control group ($M = 65.3$, $SD = 6.1$), with $t(98) = 4.32$, $p < .01$. A strong positive correlation ($r = .68$, $p < .01$) was observed between AI-based learning exposure and student motivation. Furthermore, regression analysis indicated that AI-based learning explained 46% of the variance in academic performance ($R^2 = .46$). The findings suggest that AI-driven personalized learning significantly enhances student motivation and academic achievement by providing adaptive, engaging, and learner-centered educational experiences. However, challenges such as digital infrastructure, cost, and ethical concerns must be addressed for effective implementation.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Personalized Learning, Student Motivation, Academic Achievement, Adaptive Learning, Educational Technology

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force in modern education, enabling the development of intelligent systems that can support teaching and learning processes in innovative ways. With advancements in machine learning, data analytics, and adaptive algorithms, AI has made it possible to design personalized learning environments that cater to the individual needs, pace, and abilities of learners (Holmes, Bialik, & Fadel, 2019). Unlike traditional classroom settings, where instruction is often standardized, AI-driven learning systems can dynamically adjust content and provide real-time feedback, thereby enhancing learning efficiency and engagement. One of the key challenges in conventional education systems is the inability to address individual differences among students. Learners vary significantly in terms of cognitive abilities, prior knowledge, learning styles, and motivation levels. A uniform teaching approach often results in disengagement among advanced learners and frustration among struggling students, ultimately affecting academic performance (Tomlinson, 2014). In this context, personalized learning has gained attention as an effective pedagogical strategy that tailors instruction according to individual learner characteristics. However, implementing personalized learning at scale has historically been difficult due to limitations in teacher capacity and resources. AI-based personalized learning systems offer a promising solution to this challenge by automating the process of content adaptation and feedback generation.

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How to cite this article:

Deokar, M. B. & Patil, M. B. (2026). Enhancing Student Motivation and Academic Achievement through AI-Driven Personalized Learning: An Experimental Mixed-Method Investing. *Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 3(4(III)), 47–51. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21737191>

These systems utilize learner data to identify strengths and weaknesses, recommend appropriate learning materials, and adjust task difficulty in real time (Zawacki-Richter, Marín, Bond, & Gouverneur, 2019).

As a result, students can engage in self-paced learning that promotes deeper understanding and sustained interest. Furthermore, AI platforms often incorporate interactive and gamified elements, which have been shown to enhance motivation and learner engagement (Deterding et al., 2011).

Motivation is a critical factor influencing student learning outcomes. According to Self-Determination Theory, intrinsic motivation is driven by the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). AI-driven learning environments support these needs by allowing learners to control their pace (autonomy), providing immediate feedback (competence), and creating interactive learning experiences (relatedness). Consequently, such environments have the potential to significantly improve both motivation and academic achievement.

Recent studies have demonstrated the positive impact of AI in education. For instance, Luckin et al. (2016) reported that AI-based tutoring systems can provide individualized learning experiences comparable to human tutors. Similarly, VanLehn (2011) found that intelligent tutoring systems can produce substantial learning gains. Despite these advancements, there is still a lack of experimental research that simultaneously examines both student motivation and academic performance, particularly in secondary education contexts in developing countries like India.

Therefore, the present study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the impact of AI-driven personalized learning on student motivation and academic achievement using a mixed-method experimental design. The study provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of AI-based learning systems and contributes to the growing body of literature on educational technology.

Methodology

Research Design

The present study adopted a mixed-method research approach combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques to comprehensively examine the impact of AI-driven personalized learning on student motivation and academic performance. Specifically, a pre-test/post-test control group experimental design was employed, which is widely recognized as a robust method for evaluating the effectiveness of educational interventions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design allows for the comparison of outcomes between an experimental group exposed to the intervention and a control group receiving traditional instruction, thereby enhancing internal validity.

In addition to the experimental component, qualitative feedback was collected from students in the experimental group to gain deeper insights into their learning experiences. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data enabled methodological triangulation,

thereby strengthening the reliability and validity of the findings (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Study Area and Sample

The study was conducted in an urban secondary school with access to moderate digital infrastructure, which is representative of many educational institutions transitioning toward technology-enhanced learning environments. A total of 100 students from Grades 9 to 12, aged between 14 and 18 years, participated in the study.

Participants were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure equal representation across grade levels and gender, as recommended in educational research for reducing sampling bias (Kothari, 2004). The sample was then randomly assigned into two groups:

1. Experimental Group ($n = 50$), which received AI-based personalized learning
2. Control Group ($n = 50$), which received traditional classroom instruction

Prior to the intervention, pre-test scores were analyzed to ensure that there were no significant differences between the groups in terms of motivation and academic performance ($p > .05$), confirming baseline equivalence.

AI-Based Learning Intervention

The experimental group was exposed to an AI-driven adaptive learning platform for a period of four weeks, with daily sessions of approximately 45 minutes. The platform utilized machine learning algorithms to analyze student performance in real time and adjust instructional content accordingly. Features of the platform included personalized learning pathways, adaptive quizzes, instant feedback, and gamification elements such as badges and progress tracking.

AI-based learning environments are known to enhance engagement and learning efficiency by providing individualized instruction and immediate feedback (Luckin et al., 2016). The control group, on the other hand, continued with conventional teacher-led instruction using the same curriculum content but without any AI support.

Tools and Instruments

Three main instruments were used for data collection:

Student Motivation Scale (SMS)

Student motivation was measured using the Academic Motivation Scale developed by Vallerand et al. (1992), which assesses both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The scale consists of Likert-type items rated on a five-point scale.

Academic Performance Test (APT)

Academic performance was evaluated using standardized subject-specific tests in Mathematics and Science. These tests were administered before and after the intervention to assess learning gains.

AI-Based Learning Exposure Scale (ABLES)

A self-developed scale was used to measure the extent of student engagement with the AI platform, including frequency of use, adaptability of content, and perceived usefulness. Content validity was ensured through expert review.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability of the instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which is a widely accepted measure

of internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951). The motivation scale demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha > 0.80$). Content validity of the self-developed instrument was established through expert evaluation.

Data Collection Procedure

The study was conducted over a period of six weeks. In the first week, pre-tests were administered to assess baseline motivation and academic performance. The next four weeks involved the implementation of the intervention, during which the experimental group used the AI-based platform while the control group received traditional instruction. In the final week, post-tests were conducted to measure changes in motivation and academic performance.

Additionally, qualitative feedback was collected from students in the experimental group through structured interviews to understand their perceptions of AI-based learning.

Statistical Analysis

All quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27). Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were calculated to summarize the data. Inferential statistical techniques such as independent sample t-tests were used to compare group differences, while Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships between variables. Furthermore, linear regression analysis was performed to determine the predictive effect of AI-based learning on academic performance. These statistical methods are commonly used in educational research for hypothesis testing and data interpretation (Field, 2013).

Results

The results of the study are presented in terms of descriptive and inferential analysis to examine the impact of AI-based personalized learning on student motivation and academic performance.

Student Motivation

The post-test motivation scores of students in the experimental and control groups are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Post-Test Motivation Scores of Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Experimental (AI-based learning)	50	78.5	5.2
Control (Traditional learning)	50	65.3	6.1

The results indicate that the experimental group demonstrated a higher mean motivation score ($M = 78.5$, $SD = 5.2$) compared to the control group ($M = 65.3$, $SD = 6.1$). The mean difference of 13.2 points suggests a

substantial improvement in motivation among students exposed to AI-based personalized learning. Furthermore, the lower variability in the experimental group indicates more consistent motivational outcomes.

Distribution of Motivation Scores between Experimental and Control Groups

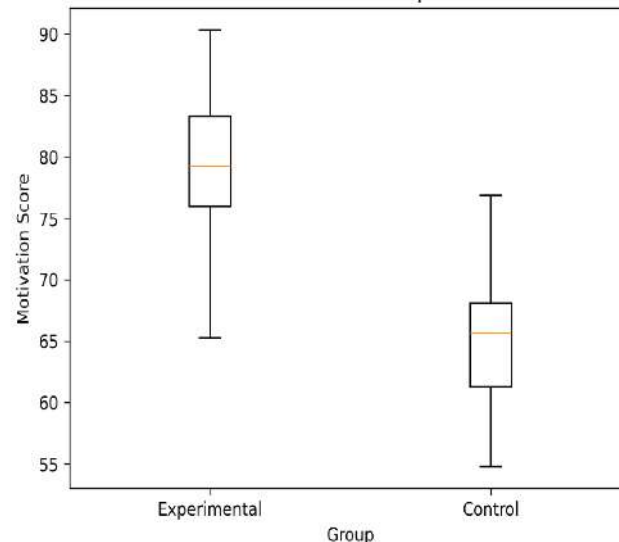


Figure 1: Distribution of Motivation Scores between

Experimental and Control Groups

The box plot illustrates the distribution of motivation scores for students in the experimental and control groups. It is evident that the median motivation score of the experimental group is higher than that of the

control group, indicating improved motivation among students exposed to AI-based personalized learning. The interquartile range of the experimental group is relatively narrower, suggesting that the scores are more consistent and less dispersed among participants. In contrast, the

control group shows a wider spread of values, reflecting greater variability in motivation levels. Additionally, the absence of extreme outliers in the experimental group indicates stable performance across students. Overall, the graphical representation supports the statistical findings and demonstrates that AI-driven personalized learning has a positive and consistent impact on student motivation. To determine whether this difference was statistically significant, an independent sample t-test was conducted. The results revealed a significant difference between the

experimental and control groups, $t(98) = 4.32, p < .01$. The effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.86$) indicates a large practical significance, suggesting that the AI-based intervention had a strong impact on student motivation.

Relationship between AI Learning Exposure and Motivation

Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationship between AI-based learning exposure and student motivation.

Table 2: Correlation between AI Learning Exposure and Student Motivation

Variables	r-value	p-value
AI Learning Exposure & Motivation	0.68	< .01

The results showed a strong positive correlation ($r = .68, p < .01$), indicating that increased exposure to AI-based learning is associated with higher levels of student motivation. This suggests that the extent of engagement

with the AI platform plays a crucial role in enhancing motivational outcomes.

Effect of AI Learning on Academic Performance

To examine the predictive effect of AI-based learning on academic performance, linear regression analysis was conducted.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of AI Learning Exposure on Academic Performance

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	R^2
AI Learning Exposure	0.74	0.08	0.68	9.12	< .001	0.46

Note = Unstandardized regression coefficient; SE = Standard Error; β = Standardized regression coefficient; R^2 = Coefficient of determination indicating variance explained = Level of significance.

The regression results indicated that AI-based learning exposure significantly predicts academic performance, $F(1, 98) = 83.19, p < .001$. The model explained 46% of the variance in academic performance ($R^2 = .46$), demonstrating a strong predictive relationship. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = .68$) further confirms that AI-based learning has a substantial positive effect on academic achievement.

Discussion

The findings of the present study provide strong empirical evidence that AI-driven personalized learning significantly enhances student motivation and academic performance. The results revealed that students in the experimental group demonstrated higher motivation levels compared to those receiving traditional instruction, which is consistent with the growing body of literature emphasizing the effectiveness of AI-based educational technologies. The observed improvement in student motivation can be explained through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which posits that motivation is influenced by autonomy, competence, and relatedness. AI-based personalized learning environments promote autonomy by allowing students to progress at their own pace and make learning choices. They enhance competence by providing immediate and adaptive feedback, enabling students to understand their mistakes and improve continuously. Additionally, interactive and engaging features of AI platforms contribute to a sense of relatedness and engagement, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation. These findings are in agreement with Holmes et al. (2019), who reported that AI-driven adaptive learning systems

significantly improve learner engagement and motivation by tailoring instructional content to individual needs. Similarly, Luckin et al. (2016) highlighted that AI-based systems can replicate aspects of one-to-one tutoring by offering personalized guidance, which leads to improved learning outcomes. The strong positive correlation between AI-based learning exposure and motivation observed in the present study further supports the findings of Baker and Inventado (2014), who demonstrated that adaptive learning environments increase student persistence and engagement. Furthermore, the regression results indicating that AI-based learning explains a substantial proportion of variance in academic performance ($R^2 = .46$) align with previous research on intelligent tutoring systems. VanLehn (2011) found that such systems can produce learning gains comparable to human tutoring, suggesting that AI-based interventions can significantly enhance academic achievement. Similarly, Zawacki-Richter et al. (2019) concluded that AI applications in education contribute positively to both cognitive and motivational outcomes. The graphical analysis using the box plot further reinforces these findings by demonstrating that the experimental group not only achieved higher median motivation scores but also exhibited more consistent performance compared to the control group. This indicates that AI-based learning not only improves average outcomes but also reduces variability among learners, leading to more uniform educational benefits. Despite these positive findings, several challenges must be considered. The implementation of AI-based learning systems requires adequate digital infrastructure, which may not be available in all educational settings, particularly in developing regions (OECD, 2021). Additionally, concerns related to data privacy, ethical use of student data, and teacher readiness remain significant barriers to widespread adoption. Over-reliance on AI systems may also reduce opportunities for critical thinking

and human interaction if not implemented carefully. Therefore, while AI-driven personalized learning offers substantial benefits, its successful integration into education requires a balanced approach that combines technological innovation with sound pedagogical practices. Future research should focus on long-term effects, larger sample sizes, and diverse educational contexts to further validate these findings.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to examine the impact of AI-driven personalized learning on student motivation and academic performance among secondary and higher secondary students. The findings clearly demonstrate that AI-based learning environments significantly enhance student motivation compared to traditional teaching methods. Students exposed to AI-supported instruction showed higher engagement, improved consistency in learning outcomes, and better academic performance. The results indicate that personalized learning through AI has the potential to address one of the major limitations of conventional education systems, namely the inability to accommodate individual differences in learning pace and ability. By providing adaptive content, immediate feedback, and interactive learning experiences, AI-based systems create a more engaging and effective learning environment for students. Furthermore, the study highlights that increased exposure to AI-based learning is strongly associated with higher levels of motivation and improved academic achievement. The predictive relationship observed between AI learning and academic performance suggests that such technologies can play a crucial role in enhancing educational outcomes. However, despite these promising findings, the successful implementation of AI in education depends on several critical factors, including the availability of digital infrastructure, teacher training, and ethical considerations related to data privacy. Therefore, while AI-driven personalized learning offers significant benefits, it must be integrated thoughtfully within the educational system. In conclusion, AI-based personalized learning represents a powerful and innovative approach to improving student motivation and academic performance. Its adoption in educational settings has the potential to transform traditional teaching practices and contribute to more effective and inclusive learning environments.

Acknowledgment

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the Principal and Management of their respective institutions for providing the necessary facilities and academic support to carry out this research. We are especially thankful to all the students who willingly participated in the study and contributed valuable data, making this research possible.

We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to our colleagues and subject experts for their constructive suggestions and encouragement throughout the course of this work. Their valuable insights greatly enhanced the quality of the study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Role of institutions in sustainable development

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030413

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 52-54
April 2026

Submitted: 08 Mar. 2026
Revised: 12 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 11 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21817454

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817454>



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Abstract

Sustainable development has emerged as a central paradigm for balancing economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection. Institutions play a critical role in shaping this balance by providing the frameworks, rules, and governance mechanisms necessary for coordinated action. This research paper examines the role of institutions in promoting sustainable development, focusing on their functions in policy formulation, implementation, regulation, and social inclusion. Institutions, both formal and informal, influence how resources are allocated, how decisions are made, and how accountability is maintained across different sectors of society. Effective institutions ensure transparency, reduce corruption, and foster trust among stakeholders, thereby creating an enabling environment for sustainable practices. The study explores the interrelationship between governance structures and sustainability outcomes, highlighting how institutional quality directly affects environmental management, economic resilience, and social justice. It further analyzes challenges such as weak governance, lack of coordination, and institutional inefficiencies that hinder sustainable progress, especially in developing countries. Through a conceptual and analytical approach, the paper emphasizes the need for institutional reforms, capacity building, and inclusive participation to achieve long-term sustainability goals. Additionally, the paper discusses global frameworks and national strategies that underscore the importance of institutions in achieving sustainable development objectives. It argues that strong institutions are not only facilitators but also drivers of sustainable change. The findings suggest that enhancing institutional effectiveness can significantly contribute to achieving equitable growth and environmental conservation. Ultimately, the study concludes that without robust and adaptive institutions, the vision of sustainable development cannot be fully realized, making institutional strengthening a priority for policymakers and development practitioners worldwide.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Institutions, Governance, Policy Implementation, Environmental Management, Social Equity, Economic Growth, Institutional Frameworks, Accountability, Development Strategies

Introduction

Sustainable development has become a guiding principle for global progress, aiming to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. The concept integrates economic, social, and environmental dimensions, requiring coordinated efforts across multiple sectors. Institutions serve as the backbone of this coordination by establishing rules, norms, and structures that guide human behavior and collective decision-making. Their role is essential in ensuring that development processes remain balanced and inclusive. Institutions include governmental bodies, legal systems, regulatory authorities, non-governmental organizations, and informal social norms. Together, they shape the policy environment and influence how resources are distributed and managed. In the context of sustainable development, institutions are responsible for designing and implementing policies that promote environmental conservation, economic efficiency, and social justice.

Conceptual Framework of Institutions and Sustainable Development

Institutions can be understood as systems of established and prevalent social rules that structure social interactions. They can be formal, such as laws and constitutions, or informal, such as customs and traditions. Both forms play a significant role in influencing development outcomes. Sustainable development requires long-term planning and coordination, which can only be achieved through effective institutional arrangements.

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How to cite this article:

Sattar, S. A. & Tanaji Ghogare, S. R. (2026). Role of institutions in sustainable development. *Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 3(4(III)), 52–54.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817454>

Institutions provide stability, predictability, and legitimacy to development processes. They ensure that policies are implemented consistently and that stakeholders are held accountable for their actions. The relationship between institutions and sustainable development is reciprocal. While institutions shape development outcomes, the demands of sustainable development also drive institutional reforms. For example, environmental challenges such as climate change necessitate new regulatory frameworks and governance mechanisms.

Role of Institutions in Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability focuses on maintaining steady and inclusive economic growth without depleting natural resources. Institutions contribute to this by creating policies that promote investment, innovation, and efficient resource use.

Strong financial institutions ensure the proper allocation of resources and facilitate access to credit for businesses and individuals. Regulatory bodies maintain market stability and prevent exploitation, while public institutions support infrastructure development and employment generation.

Institutions also play a crucial role in reducing economic inequalities. Through policies such as taxation, subsidies, and social welfare programs, they ensure that the benefits of economic growth are distributed equitably. This inclusiveness is essential for long-term sustainability.

Role of Institutions in Social Sustainability

Social sustainability emphasizes equity, inclusion, and the well-being of all individuals. Institutions are responsible for providing essential services such as education, healthcare, and social security. They also protect human rights and promote social justice.

Effective institutions ensure that marginalized groups have access to opportunities and resources. They create platforms for participation and representation, allowing diverse voices to be heard in decision-making processes. This inclusiveness strengthens social cohesion and reduces conflicts.

Furthermore, institutions help maintain cultural values and social norms that support sustainable practices. Community-based institutions, in particular, play a vital role in promoting local participation and ownership of development initiatives.

Role of Institutions in Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability involves the protection and management of natural resources. Institutions play a key role in enforcing environmental regulations and promoting conservation efforts.

Government agencies develop policies related to pollution control, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation. Regulatory frameworks ensure that industries comply with environmental standards, while monitoring systems track progress and identify areas for improvement.

Institutions also facilitate international cooperation on environmental issues. Global agreements and organizations provide platforms for countries to collaborate and address shared challenges. Effective

implementation of these agreements depends on strong national institutions.

Governance and Institutional Effectiveness

Governance refers to the processes and systems through which decisions are made and implemented. Good governance is characterized by transparency, accountability, participation, and rule of law. These principles are essential for effective institutions.

Institutional effectiveness depends on the capacity to design and implement policies, manage resources, and respond to changing conditions. Weak institutions often struggle with corruption, inefficiency, and lack of coordination, which hinder sustainable development efforts. Strengthening governance involves improving institutional frameworks, enhancing human resources, and adopting modern technologies. It also requires fostering a culture of accountability and ethical behavior.

Challenges Faced by Institutions in Promoting Sustainable Development

Despite their importance, institutions face several challenges in promoting sustainable development. One major issue is the lack of coordination among different agencies and levels of government. This leads to fragmented policies and inefficient implementation.

Another challenge is limited capacity, particularly in developing countries. Many institutions lack the resources, expertise, and infrastructure needed to address complex sustainability issues.

Corruption and lack of transparency further undermine institutional effectiveness. These issues erode public trust and reduce the credibility of development initiatives.

Additionally, rapid technological and environmental changes require institutions to adapt quickly, which can be difficult for rigid and outdated systems.

Strategies for Strengthening Institutional Role

To enhance the role of institutions in sustainable development, several strategies can be adopted. Institutional reforms are necessary to improve efficiency, transparency, and accountability. This includes updating legal frameworks and simplifying administrative processes.

Capacity building is another important strategy. Training programs and skill development initiatives can help improve the performance of institutional personnel. Promoting stakeholder participation ensures that policies are inclusive and responsive to the needs of different groups. Collaboration between government, private sector, and civil society can lead to more effective solutions.

The use of technology can also enhance institutional effectiveness. Digital tools improve data management, monitoring, and communication, making governance more efficient and transparent.

Conclusion

Institutions are fundamental to achieving sustainable development. They provide the structure and governance needed to balance economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection. Effective institutions ensure that policies are implemented efficiently, resources



are managed responsibly, and stakeholders are held accountable.

However, the success of institutions depends on their ability to adapt to changing conditions and address emerging challenges. Strengthening institutional capacity, improving governance, and fostering collaboration are essential for achieving sustainable development goals.

In conclusion, institutions are not merely facilitators but key drivers of sustainable development. Their role must be prioritized to create a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable future for all.

Acknowledgment

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the management and Principal of JAT College, Malegaon, and Pemraj Sarda College, Ahilyanagar, for providing the academic environment and institutional support necessary for carrying out this research.

We are thankful to our colleagues, faculty members, and well-wishers for their valuable suggestions, encouragement, and constructive feedback throughout the study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Narrative Building in the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections: A Comparative Analysis of the NDA and the INDIA Alliance with Special Reference to Maharashtra

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030414

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 55-61
April 2026

Submitted: 09 Mar. 2026
Revised: 17 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 15 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web. <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21817572

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817572>



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Abstract

This study analyses the competing political narratives constructed by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) bloc during the 2024 Indian General Election, with particular emphasis on the interplay between national and state-level electoral outcomes. It argues that contemporary Indian electoral politics is increasingly shaped by narrative-building strategies that combine leadership projection, welfare delivery, identity mobilisation, and institutional discourse. The NDA, led by Narendra Modi, advanced a centralized and aspirational narrative centred on strong leadership, developmental nationalism, and welfare governance. In contrast, the INDIA alliance, with leaders such as Rahul Gandhi, articulated a counter-narrative focused on constitutional protection, social justice, and economic concerns. The study highlights that the NDA's narrative proved effective at the national level, contributing to its electoral success across India. However, the effectiveness of this narrative was not uniform across all states.

Keywords: 2024 Indian General Election, Political Narratives, NDA, INDIA Alliance, Maha Vikas Aghadi (Maharashtra), Voter Behaviour, Leadership Politics, Welfare Politics, Social Justice, Regional Political Dynamics

Introduction

The 2024 Lok Sabha Elections represented a significant phase in the evolution of Indian electoral politics, where political narratives emerged as a decisive factor in shaping public opinion and voting behaviour. In contemporary democracies, electoral competition is increasingly influenced not merely by party organization or policy promises but by the ability of political actors to construct persuasive narratives that appeal to the aspirations, identities, and concerns of diverse social groups. In India, this phenomenon was prominently visible in the contest between the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the opposition bloc INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance), which sought to challenge the dominance of the ruling coalition through an alternative ideological and political discourse. The NDA projected a leadership-centric narrative emphasizing strong governance, welfare delivery, developmental nationalism, cultural identity, and the vision of a *Viksit Bharat* (Developed India). In contrast, the INDIA alliance articulated a counter-narrative based on constitutional protection, social justice, federalism, economic concerns, and democratic accountability. Thus, the 2024 election witnessed a contest between two competing frameworks of political communication, each seeking to influence voter perceptions and electoral preferences. Contrary to the national trend, the Maha Vikas Aghadi achieved remarkable success in Maharashtra by securing 30 out of 48 Lok Sabha seats, while the Mahayuti alliance won only 17 seats. This divergence suggests that national narratives alone do not determine electoral outcomes; rather, regional political dynamics, identity-based mobilization, socio-economic concerns, and perceptions surrounding political legitimacy and party realignments significantly influence voter behaviour.

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How to cite this article:

Kharat, S. S. & Shelke, A. M. (2026). Narrative Building in the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections: A Comparative Analysis of the NDA and the INDIA Alliance with Special Reference to Maharashtra. *Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 3(4(III)), 55–61.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817572>

Issues such as Maratha reservation, constitutional concerns, unemployment, agrarian distress, and the emotional appeal associated with regional identity and political loyalty played an important role in shaping electoral preferences within the state. The INDIA alliance during the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections, with special reference to Maharashtra By examining the interaction between national-level discourse and regional political realities, the study seeks to understand how competing narratives influenced voter behaviour and contributed to the contrasting electoral outcomes observed at the national and state levels. In Maharashtra, the INDIA alliance's narrative—anchored in constitutional concerns, regional political realignments, and socio-economic issues—resonated more strongly with voters, leading to a different electoral outcome. This contrast demonstrates that while national-level narratives play a crucial role in shaping broad electoral trends, regional contexts, alliances, and local political dynamics significantly influence voter behaviour. The paper concludes that successful electoral narratives in India must operate simultaneously at both national and regional levels to achieve comprehensive political impact.

Introduction The 2024 Indian General Election marked a significant phase in the evolution of electoral politics in India, where political narratives played a decisive role in shaping voter behaviour. The contest between the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by Narendra Modi, and the opposition bloc INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance), featuring leaders such as Rahul Gandhi, was not merely electoral but deeply narrative-driven. While the NDA projected a centralized narrative of strong leadership, development, and welfare governance, the INDIA alliance advanced a counter-narrative centred on constitutional protection, social justice, and economic concerns. At the national level, the NDA succeeded in maintaining electoral dominance, indicating the continued effectiveness of its leadership-centric and aspirational narrative. However, this dominance was not uniform across all states, and Maharashtra emerged as a critical case reflecting the limits of national narratives when confronted with strong regional dynamics.

In Maharashtra, the opposition bloc—popularly known as the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), comprising the Indian National Congress, Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray faction), and Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar faction)—secured a decisive victory by winning 30 out of 48 seats. In contrast, the ruling NDA alliance, consisting of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction), and Nationalist Congress Party (Ajit Pawar faction), managed to secure only 17 seats, with 1 seat going to other candidates. Notably, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) witnessed a significant decline, winning only 9 seats compared to its previous higher tallies in earlier elections. These results highlight a crucial shift in Maharashtra's political landscape, particularly in the aftermath of the splits within the Shiv Sena and the Nationalist Congress Party. The success of the MVA indicates that regional political alignments, identity factors, and local socio-political issues can effectively challenge dominant national narratives. This study, therefore, seeks to analyse the comparative political

narratives of the NDA and the INDIA alliance, with a specific focus on understanding how and why these narratives produced divergent electoral outcomes at the national and state levels, particularly in Maharashtra's. Although the NDA retained power at the national level and secured a majority in the Lok Sabha, the electoral outcomes revealed considerable regional variations. Maharashtra emerged as one of the most significant states demonstrating the complex interaction between national narratives and regional political realities. The state experienced intense political realignments following the splits in the Shiv Sena and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), resulting in the formation of rival alliances. While the Mahayuti alliance, comprising the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde, and the Nationalist Congress Party led by Ajit Pawar, represented the NDA, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA)—consisting of the Indian National Congress, Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray faction), and the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar faction)—functioned as the state-level manifestation of the INDIA alliance.

Against this backdrop, the present study undertakes a comparative analysis of the political narratives constructed by the NDA and the analysis highlights the growing importance of narrative-building in Indian democracy and demonstrates that successful electoral strategies require a balance between national leadership, ideological coherence, and regional sensitivity.

Research Objectives

1. To analyse the nature and construction of political narratives developed by the NDA and the INDIA alliance during the 2024 Indian General Election.
2. To examine the role of leadership, particularly Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi, in shaping and communicating these narratives.
3. To undertake a comparative analysis of the narratives of the NDA and the INDIA alliance, and to evaluate their impact on voter behaviour at both the national level and in Maharashtra.
4. To analyse the divergence in electoral outcomes in Maharashtra, with special reference to the success of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (INDIA alliance) in the 2024 Indian General Election.
5. To assess how regional political dynamics, party splits, and socio-economic factors influenced the effectiveness of national political narratives at the state level.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on secondary data sources such as newspaper articles, election reports, party manifestos, official speeches, and academic literature. It uses narrative analysis to examine how the NDA and INDIA alliance constructed and communicated key themes like leadership, development, and social justice.

A comparative approach is applied to analyse differences between national and Maharashtra-level narratives, with Maharashtra taken as a case study due to its distinct electoral outcomes. The study is analytical and

interpretative in nature, but remains limited by its reliance on secondary data without primary field validation.

Scope and Limitations

This study is primarily based on Maharashtra and focuses on analysing the political narratives of the NDA and INDIA alliance during the General Elections to the Lok Sabha, 2024. It undertakes a comparative analysis of both alliances' narratives and examines how they influenced voter behaviour, as reflected in the election results. The study relies entirely on secondary data sources and does not include primary data such as surveys or interviews. Therefore, the findings are interpretative in nature, and conclusions drawn from Maharashtra may not be applicable to other states.

Historical Background of Political Narratives in Indian Elections

The evolution of political narratives in Indian elections can be traced back to the early years following independence. In the initial decades after the 1952 general elections, the dominance of the Indian National Congress was supported by a broad narrative of nationalism, development, and nation-building under leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru. During this period, electoral politics was largely shaped by issues of unity, planning, and democratic consolidation. From the late 1960s and 1970s, political narratives began to shift towards populism and centralised leadership. The period of The Emergency (India) marked a turning point, where narratives of democracy versus authoritarianism became prominent. Subsequently, in the 1980s and 1990s, identity-based politics gained importance, particularly with the rise of caste and religion as key electoral factors. Events like the Mandal Commission Implementation and the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement significantly influenced political discourse. The 1990s also witnessed the emergence of coalition politics, where multiple regional parties began shaping electoral narratives at both state and national levels. This period saw the rise of alliances such as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which combined development with cultural nationalism. In the post-2014 phase, under the leadership of Narendra Modi, political narratives became more centralised and leader-driven, focusing on development, welfare delivery, and strong governance. Simultaneously, opposition parties gradually began constructing counter-narratives based on social justice, constitutional values, and economic concerns. The 2024 Indian General Election represents the culmination of this historical evolution, where electoral competition was largely defined by competing narratives rather than just policies or party structures. It reflects a transition from traditional issue-based politics to a more complex interplay of leadership, identity, welfare, and institutional discourse.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three relevant theoretical approaches to analyse political narratives in the 2024 Indian General Election.

1. Hegemony Theory – Antonio Gramsci

Hegemony theory explains how political power is sustained through consent by shaping public beliefs and perceptions.

In this context, the NDA's narrative of leadership, development, and nationalism can be understood as a dominant (hegemonic) narrative, while the INDIA alliance's focus on constitutional protection and social justice represents a counter-hegemonic narrative.

2. Narrative Theory (Political Communication)

Narrative theory views politics as a process of storytelling, where political actors construct simplified and emotionally engaging messages to influence voters. This theory helps explain how both the NDA and INDIA alliance framed their narratives differently to shape voter perception and political preferences.

3. Voting Behaviour Theory (Rational Choice Perspective)

This approach assumes that voters make decisions based on perceived benefits such as welfare schemes, leadership credibility, and economic conditions. It explains why the NDA's welfare-driven narrative was effective at the national level, while in Maharashtra, alternative narratives and regional factors influenced voter choices differently.

These theories together provide a clear framework to understand how political narratives influence voter behaviour and lead to different electoral outcomes at national and state levels.

Political Narrative of the NDA in the 2024 Election

1. Leadership-Centric Narrative ("Narendra Modi vs who?")

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by Narendra Modi, constructed a highly personalized narrative centered on strong leadership. The campaign implicitly framed the election as a direct choice between Narendra Modi and a fragmented opposition lacking a clear prime ministerial candidate. This "Modi vs who?" framing simplified electoral choices for voters and reinforced the perception of leadership stability, decisiveness, and credibility.

2. Viksit Bharat and Infrastructure Development

The concept of "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India) formed the aspirational core of the NDA's narrative. It emphasized long-term national transformation through economic growth and modernization. Visible infrastructure projects such as highways, expressways, metro systems, and digital connectivity were highlighted as tangible evidence of progress. This narrative strongly appealed to urban voters, youth, and the middle class by projecting a forward-looking vision of India.

3. Welfare Politics (Labharthi Model)

The NDA effectively used welfare schemes to build direct voter connect. Major schemes such as PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi (income support for farmers), free ration distribution, housing schemes (PM Awas Yojana), and Ujjwala gas connections were emphasized. These initiatives created a "labharthi" (beneficiary) class, where voters experienced direct material benefits, thereby strengthening political loyalty and support for the government.

4. Stability, Strong Government, and National Security

The NDA projected itself as a symbol of political stability and strong governance. It emphasized that a stable government is essential for long-term development and policy continuity. Additionally, national security concerns,

including cross-border threats and tensions with Pakistan, were highlighted to reinforce the image of a decisive and protective government. This narrative appealed to voters prioritizing security and order.

5. Nationalism, Hindutva, and Cultural Identity

Nationalism and Hindutva formed a significant emotional component of the NDA's narrative. Themes of cultural pride, religious identity, and civilizational heritage were emphasized to mobilize Hindu voters. In states like Maharashtra, religious and cultural platforms such as kirtans and public programs were used to indirectly promote the BJP's ideological position, portraying the party as a protector of Hindu interests. Narratives suggesting cultural threats contributed to voter consolidation among certain groups.

6. Global Leadership and "Vishwaguru" Image

The NDA projected India's rising global stature as a key achievement. Narendra Modi was presented as a global leader capable of elevating India's position in international politics. Active foreign policy engagement, participation in global forums, and diplomatic visibility were used to construct the image of India as a "Vishwaguru" (global leader). This narrative generated national pride and appealed to aspirational voters.

7. Governance, Reduced Corruption, and Middle-Class Appeal

The NDA emphasized governance efficiency, transparency, and reduced corruption as key achievements. Initiatives such as digitization, direct benefit transfers, and administrative reforms were highlighted as steps toward clean governance. Additionally, policies perceived as beneficial to the middle class, including tax relief measures and improved public services, were used to strengthen support among salaried and urban voters.

8. Regional Adaptation: Maharashtra Context

In Maharashtra, the NDA (Mahayuti) adapted its national narrative to local political dynamics. Along with development and welfare, the alliance incorporated issues arising from political realignments, particularly the split in the Shiv Sena. Eknath Shinde and his faction framed the split as a move to uphold Hindutva ideology and preserve the original identity of Shiv Sena, rather than a quest for power. They projected themselves as the true inheritors of Balasaheb Thackeray's legacy. This narrative sought to establish ideological legitimacy and appeal to core supporters. However, competing interpretations by the opposition created a trust deficit among sections of voters, limiting the effectiveness of this narrative in the state.

Overall, the NDA's narrative was centralized, leadership-driven, and multi-dimensional, combining development, welfare, nationalism, and governance to influence voter perception at both national and regional levels.

Political Narrative of the INDIA Alliance in the 2024 Election

The INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) bloc constructed a multi-dimensional, issue-based, and decentralized political narrative during the 2024 Indian General Election, combining national concerns with strong regional dynamics, particularly in Maharashtra.

1. Constitutional Protection, Fear of Change, and Social Coalition Formation

A central pillar of the INDIA alliance's narrative was the protection of the Constitution. In response to the BJP's slogan of "400+ seats," the alliance framed a counter-narrative suggesting that such a large mandate could lead to constitutional amendments. This created a sense of insecurity among marginalized communities, including SCs, STs, OBCs, and minorities. As a result, these groups consolidated politically and emerged as a collective voting force against the BJP at both the national level and in Maharashtra. This narrative proved particularly influential as it encouraged strategic voting, where voters set aside smaller parties—such as the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi led by Prakash Ambedkar in Maharashtra and the Bahujan Samaj Party associated with Mayawati at the national level—to support the INDIA alliance as a stronger alternative.

2. Social Justice and Marginalized Communities

The INDIA alliance strongly emphasized social justice, promising to address the concerns of SC, ST, and OBC communities. It positioned itself as a representative of marginalized sections and assured policy interventions aimed at reducing inequality and improving representation. This narrative was actively reinforced in Maharashtra through the Maha Vikas Aghadi, where social justice became a central mobilizing factor.

3. Maratha Reservation and Manoj Jarange Patil Factor

The issue of Maratha reservation emerged as a decisive factor in Maharashtra. The movement led by Manoj Jarange Patil, especially after incidents such as the police action at Antarwali Sarati, led to widespread mobilization of the Maratha community. The long-pending demand for reservation became a key emotional and political issue, resulting in a significant shift of Maratha votes against the BJP. The INDIA alliance successfully aligned this issue with its broader social justice narrative.

4. Party Splits and Anti-BJP Sentiment

The splits within Shiv Sena and the Nationalist Congress Party were framed by the INDIA alliance as politically engineered and undemocratic. These developments created a perception among voters that the BJP was responsible for destabilizing established political parties. This led to a strong anti-BJP sentiment and a sense of political dissatisfaction among voters in Maharashtra.

5. Regional Identity and Maharashtra-Centric Issues

Regional identity and pride played a significant role in shaping voter behaviour. Issues such as major industrial and infrastructure projects allegedly shifting from Maharashtra to Gujarat contributed to regional dissatisfaction. Additionally, concerns related to Marathi identity, linguistic pride, and "Maharashtra Dharma" were emphasized, strengthening the emotional connect of the INDIA alliance with local voters.

6. Economic Distress, Unemployment, and Youth Issues

Economic issues such as unemployment, inflation, and agrarian distress formed a crucial part of the INDIA alliance's narrative. In Maharashtra, additional factors such as examination paper leaks, recruitment irregularities, and student protests further intensified youth dissatisfaction.

These issues played a significant role in influencing young voters against the ruling alliance.

7. “Nyay” (Justice Framework)

The concept of “Nyay” (justice) served as a unifying framework for the INDIA alliance. It included promises of economic support, welfare expansion, and equitable opportunities. This narrative combined moral legitimacy with policy commitments, making it appealing to economically and socially disadvantaged groups.

8. Anti-Incumbency Narrative

The INDIA alliance built a strong anti-incumbency narrative by highlighting governance concerns, centralization of power, and lack of accountability. This narrative aimed to mobilize voters who were dissatisfied with the existing political regime.

9. Federalism and Opposition to Centralization

The alliance raised concerns about the erosion of federalism and increasing central dominance over states. This narrative resonated particularly in states like Maharashtra, where regional political autonomy is a sensitive issue.

10. Grassroots Mobilization and Strategic Voting Behaviour

The INDIA alliance effectively combined its narrative with grassroots mobilization strategies. By focusing on local issues and encouraging strategic voting, it was able to consolidate anti-BJP votes. This was evident in both Maharashtra and at the national level, where voters prioritized defeating the ruling alliance over supporting smaller regional or identity-based parties.

Overall, the INDIA alliance’s narrative was not only issue-based but also strategically constructed to unify diverse social groups. Its ability to integrate constitutional concerns, social justice, regional grievances, and economic issues played a crucial role in shaping voter behaviour, particularly in Maharashtra.

Critical Comparative Analysis of NDA and INDIA Alliance Narratives

The 2024 Indian General Election demonstrated that while both the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the INDIA alliance constructed powerful political narratives, each also faced inherent structural limitations that influenced their effectiveness across different contexts. A critical examination of these narratives, particularly through the lens of leadership and regional adaptability, reveals a complex interplay between strength and vulnerability. The NDA’s narrative, anchored in the leadership of Narendra Modi, was highly centralized and coherent, which provided clarity and consistency at the national level. However, this excessive personalization also became a limitation. By framing the election as a leadership-centric contest—often reduced to the implicit question of “Modi versus who”—the alliance overshadowed regional leadership and local issues. This approach proved less effective in states like Maharashtra, where voter behaviour was significantly influenced by region-specific concerns such as Maratha reservation, party splits, and questions of political trust. The inability to adequately integrate these local dynamics into a national narrative created a disconnect between central messaging and ground realities.

Furthermore, the NDA’s reliance on welfare delivery and aspirational development narratives, while effective in many regions, faced limitations in contexts where identity-based and emotional issues were more dominant. In Maharashtra, for instance, the emphasis on infrastructure, welfare schemes, and global leadership did not sufficiently address the socio-political unrest arising from the Maratha reservation movement and dissatisfaction following political realignments. Additionally, the use of nationalism and Hindutva as narrative tools, though successful in mobilizing certain voter groups, carried the risk of polarization. This contributed to the consolidation of marginalized communities—such as SCs, STs, OBCs, and minorities—against the NDA, particularly when counter-narratives around constitutional threats gained traction. On the other hand, the INDIA alliance, despite successfully constructing a counter-narrative centered on constitutional protection, social justice, and economic concerns, suffered from a lack of leadership clarity at the national level. The absence of a clearly projected prime ministerial candidate created ambiguity, especially when contrasted with the NDA’s strong leadership projection. This weakened its ability to present a unified alternative to voters across the country. Moreover, the coalition nature of the INDIA alliance led to fragmentation in its narrative. Different parties emphasized different issues, resulting in a lack of coherence and consistency in messaging at the national level. While this diversity allowed flexibility and regional adaptation, it also prevented the formation of a singular, dominant narrative capable of challenging the NDA uniformly across India. In many instances, the alliance appeared more reactive than proactive, with a significant portion of its campaign focused on criticizing the ruling government rather than presenting a clear, positive, and cohesive alternative vision. However, this perceived weakness at the national level became a relative strength in states like Maharashtra. The INDIA alliance, operating as the Maha Vikas Aghadi, effectively localized its narrative by incorporating issues such as Maratha reservation, the movement led by Manoj Jarange Patil, and the political fallout of party splits. By framing these developments as issues of social justice, identity, and betrayal of public mandate, the alliance created a strong emotional and political connect with voters. This demonstrates that while the INDIA alliance lacked national coherence, it possessed a higher degree of regional adaptability. In conclusion, the comparative analysis reveals that the NDA’s narrative was structurally strong but rigid, while the INDIA alliance’s narrative was flexible but fragmented. The NDA’s centralized leadership model ensured national dominance but limited regional responsiveness, whereas the INDIA alliance’s decentralized approach enabled regional success but hindered national consistency. These findings highlight that the effectiveness of political narratives in India depends not only on their content but also on their ability to balance leadership, coherence, and regional sensitivity.

Impact of Political Narratives on Voter Behaviour

The political narratives constructed by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the INDIA

alliance during the 2024 Indian General Election played a decisive and multi-layered role in shaping voter behaviour across India, with particularly strong and distinct effects in Maharashtra. These narratives did not merely influence political opinions but actively structured voting decisions through leadership perception, social identity consolidation, economic concerns, and region-specific grievances. At the national level, the NDA's narrative, centered on Narendra Modi, created a strong perception of stability, continuity, and decisive governance. This leadership-driven approach encouraged voters to view the election as a choice of leadership rather than a contest of competing policy frameworks. As a result, a significant section of the electorate aligned with the idea of stable governance, leading to the NDA securing 293 seats, including 240 seats for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Additionally, the emphasis on welfare schemes such as PM-Kisan, free ration distribution, and housing programs created a "beneficiary class" (labharthi voters), who directly associated their material well-being with the ruling government. This translated into a voting pattern where welfare delivery reinforced political loyalty, particularly among economically weaker sections.

However, the INDIA alliance's counter-narrative generated a fundamentally different form of voter mobilization. By framing the election as a battle to protect the Constitution and raising concerns that an overwhelming majority (symbolized through the "400+" slogan) could lead to constitutional changes, the alliance created a sense of insecurity among marginalized communities, including SCs, STs, OBCs, and minorities. This perception led to the consolidation of these groups into a unified voting bloc against the NDA. The impact of this narrative was not only emotional but also strategic, as voters consciously shifted towards stronger opposition candidates. This resulted in the phenomenon of "strategic voting," where smaller parties such as the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi in Maharashtra and the Bahujan Samaj Party at the national level were sidelined. Consequently, the INDIA alliance secured 234 seats, including a significant recovery by the Congress party with 99 seats. The influence of narratives becomes more pronounced when analyzed in the context of Maharashtra, where regional dynamics significantly altered voter behaviour. Despite a relatively narrow difference in vote share—approximately 43.04% for the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) and 42.53% for the Mahayuti (NDA)—the seat distribution showed a stark contrast. The MVA secured 30 out of 48 seats, while the Mahayuti was limited to 17 seats, with one seat won by an independent candidate. This indicates that narrative effectiveness was not merely reflected in vote share but in the ability to consolidate and efficiently convert votes into seats. A deeper examination of party-wise vote distribution further strengthens this argument. Within the Mahayuti, the BJP secured 26.18% vote share, significantly higher than its allies—Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction) at 12.95% and NCP (Ajit Pawar faction) at 3.6%. In contrast, the MVA exhibited a more balanced distribution of votes, with the Congress securing 16.92%, Shiv Sena (UBT) 16.72%, and NCP (Sharad Pawar faction) 10.27%. This relatively even distribution suggests a

more cohesive and coordinated voting pattern within the INDIA alliance, enabling better seat conversion despite a marginal vote share advantage. In Maharashtra, identity-based and emotional factors played a decisive role in shaping voter behaviour. The Maratha reservation movement, led by Manoj Jarange Patil, became a central political issue. The long-standing demand for reservation, combined with events such as the police action at Antarwali Sarati, led to widespread mobilization and consolidation of Maratha voters. This significantly influenced voting behaviour, with a notable shift against the NDA. Additionally, the political narrative surrounding party splits in Shiv Sena and the Nationalist Congress Party created a perception of "betrayal of mandate." This narrative resonated strongly with voters, generating a trust deficit against the ruling alliance. The INDIA alliance effectively capitalized on this sentiment by framing itself as the defender of democratic values and political integrity. Regional identity and emotional factors further contributed to voter behaviour. Issues such as the alleged shifting of major projects from Maharashtra to other states, concerns over Marathi identity, and the idea of "Maharashtra Dharma" played an important role in mobilizing voters. These narratives created a sense of regional grievance and strengthened support for the INDIA alliance. Economic concerns also significantly influenced voting patterns, particularly among youth. Issues such as unemployment, inflation, examination paper leaks, and student protests weakened the appeal of development-centric narratives. Young voters, in particular, responded to these issues by shifting their support towards opposition parties. Symbolic electoral outcomes further reflected narrative-driven voter behaviour. For instance, the high-profile Baramati contest, where Supriya Sule defeated Sunetra Pawar, signaled voter rejection of certain political realignments and reinforced the importance of trust and legacy in electoral politics. Furthermore, the voter turnout of approximately 61.29% in Maharashtra indicates active political engagement, suggesting that narratives successfully mobilized voters both emotionally and politically. In conclusion, voter behaviour in the 2024 election was shaped by the interaction of multiple narratives rather than a single dominant factor. While the NDA's narrative was effective in establishing national-level dominance through leadership and welfare, the INDIA alliance's narrative proved more effective in mobilizing specific social groups and adapting to regional contexts, particularly in Maharashtra. The electoral outcomes thus reflect a complex relationship between narrative construction, social consolidation, strategic voting, and regional dynamics, demonstrating that political narratives play a central role in transforming voter perception into electoral results.

Conclusion

The 2024 Indian General Election shows that political narratives have become central to voter behaviour, going beyond traditional party or candidate-based voting. Voters are increasingly aligning with narratives that reflect their identities, aspirations, and concerns, while also exhibiting layered voting—balancing national priorities like



leadership and stability with regional issues such as identity and social justice. The rise of strategic voting, especially among marginalized groups, indicates a shift toward outcome-oriented decision-making and greater political awareness. The Maharashtra case highlights the continued importance of regional dynamics within a national framework. Overall, the election reflects a transformation in democratic participation, where emotional, social, and contextual factors play a key role. Indian voters are becoming more aware, strategic, and multi-dimensional, signaling a more mature and evolving democracy.

Acknowledgment

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the Principal, Head of the Department, and faculty members of Shankarlal Khandelwal Arts, Science and Commerce College, Akola, for their constant encouragement, academic guidance, and institutional support throughout the course of this research. We are especially thankful to all the scholars, researchers, and institutions whose published works, reports, and official documents served as valuable secondary sources for this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Lokmat – Live Election Results Coverage (National context)



Original Article

Governance, Behaviour, and Sustainability: Toward Adaptive and Participatory Environmental Frameworks

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030415

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 62-66
April 2026

Submitted: 10 Mar. 2026
Revised: 18 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 19 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21817632

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817632>



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Abstract

Sustainable development has become the defining challenge of the twenty-first century, requiring societies to balance economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity. While governance frameworks provide the institutional scaffolding for sustainability, their effectiveness is deeply influenced by human behaviour. This paper examines the intersection of governance and behavioural dynamics in the pursuit of sustainable development, adopting an interdisciplinary lens that draws from political science, psychology, sociology, and environmental studies. Through a review of literature and comparative case studies, the research develops a conceptual framework that integrates governance structures with behavioural insights. Findings reveal that participatory governance, behavioural nudges, and adaptive institutions significantly enhance sustainability outcomes. The study concludes that environmental governance must move beyond regulatory enforcement to embrace behavioural change strategies, community participation, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Recommendations include embedding behavioural economics into policy design, strengthening participatory governance, and fostering environmental education to shift social norms toward sustainability.

Keyword: Digital Governance, Sustainable Development, Urban Governance, Global Governance, Multilateral Cooperation, Policy and Institutions.

Introduction

The concept of sustainable development emerged in the late twentieth century as a response to mounting concerns about the ecological limits of growth. The Brundtland Commission's 1987 report defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This definition has since become the cornerstone of global environmental discourse, culminating in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite this global consensus, the world continues to grapple with severe environmental crises. Climate change threatens ecosystems and livelihoods, biodiversity loss undermines ecological resilience, and pollution compromises human health. These challenges highlight the inadequacy of governance structures that rely solely on regulatory enforcement or technological innovation. Governance, understood as the processes and institutions through which collective decisions are made and implemented, plays a pivotal role in shaping sustainability outcomes. Yet governance is not merely a matter of institutional design; it is deeply embedded in social contexts and influenced by human behaviour. Human behaviour is central to sustainability. Consumption patterns, risk perceptions, and attitudes toward environmental responsibility all influence the success or failure of governance initiatives. For instance, recycling programs succeed not only because of infrastructure but because of social norms that encourage participation. Similarly, climate policies are effective only when citizens are willing to alter their lifestyles and support collective action. This paper argues that sustainable development requires an interdisciplinary approach that integrates governance structures with behavioural insights. By examining the interplay between institutions and human behaviour, the study seeks to develop a conceptual framework for environmental governance that is both adaptive and participatory.

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How to cite this article:

Redij, A. (2026). Governance, Behaviour, and Sustainability: Toward Adaptive and Participatory Environmental Frameworks. *Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 3(4(III)), 62–66. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817632>



Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are fourfold:

1. To analyze the relationship between governance structures and sustainable development outcomes.
2. To investigate the role of human behaviour in shaping environmental governance effectiveness.
3. To develop a conceptual framework that integrates governance and behavioural dimensions.
4. To propose recommendations for policymakers to enhance sustainability through interdisciplinary approaches.
5. Multilateral cooperation and international agreements are more successful when they allow flexibility for local adaptation, aligning global sustainability goals with local behavioural contexts.

Hypothesis

1. Effective environmental governance that incorporates behavioural insights and participatory mechanisms leads to improved sustainable development outcomes compared to governance models that rely solely on regulatory enforcement.
2. Cities that integrate behavioural insights into urban planning (e.g., nudges for public transport use, recycling infrastructure) achieve greater sustainability than those focusing only on technological solutions.
3. Policies framed around ethical responsibility and ecological citizenship foster stronger behavioural change than those framed purely in terms of economic efficiency.
4. Digital governance tools and technological innovations (such as carbon tracking apps or smart city platforms) significantly improve sustainable behaviour when combined with participatory governance mechanisms.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework developed in this study integrates three dimensions: governance structures, human behaviour, and sustainable development outcomes.

Governance structures encompass institutions, policies, and regulatory mechanisms that provide the rules and incentives for collective action. Human behaviour includes psychological drivers such as values, attitudes, and biases, as well as social norms and cultural contexts that influence compliance and participation. Sustainable development outcomes refer to environmental protection, resource efficiency, and social equity achieved through effective governance and behavioural alignment.

The framework posits that governance effectiveness depends on its ability to align institutional mechanisms with behavioural incentives. For example, policies that provide financial incentives for renewable energy adoption are more effective when combined with social campaigns that normalize sustainable consumption.

The theoretical foundation draws from Elinor Ostrom's polycentric governance model, which emphasizes the importance of multiple, overlapping institutions; Paul Stern's theory of environmentally significant behaviour, which highlights psychological and social drivers; and Thaler & Sunstein's nudge theory, which demonstrates how

small behavioural interventions can produce significant outcomes.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative interdisciplinary approach, combining insights from political science, psychology, sociology, and environmental studies.

Data sources include policy documents such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals and national climate policies, case studies of environmental governance such as community forestry in Nepal, renewable energy transition in Germany, and waste management in Japan, and behavioural studies from environmental psychology and social norms research.

Methods include a literature review across governance, psychology, and sustainability studies, comparative case analysis of successful and unsuccessful governance models, and thematic coding to identify behavioural drivers influencing governance outcomes.

Limitations include a focus on qualitative insights rather than quantitative modeling, and the fact that case studies may not be universally generalizable but provide valuable contextual lessons.

Theoretical Framework

An essential theme in environmental governance is climate justice, which emphasizes fairness in the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. Marginalized communities often suffer disproportionately from pollution, resource scarcity, and climate disasters, despite contributing the least to these problems. Governance frameworks must therefore integrate equity considerations, ensuring that sustainability policies do not exacerbate existing inequalities but instead promote social justice and intergenerational fairness. Technology has become a powerful enabler of sustainable development. Digital platforms, artificial intelligence, and big data analytics are increasingly used to monitor compliance, track emissions, and engage citizens in sustainability initiatives. For example, mobile apps that calculate carbon footprints can nudge individuals toward greener choices. However, governance must also address the risks of digital divides, ensuring that technological solutions are accessible to all segments of society. Culture plays a vital role in shaping human behaviour toward the environment. Indigenous knowledge systems, traditional practices, and cultural values often embody sustainable principles that modern governance can learn from. For instance, community rituals around forest conservation in parts of Africa and Asia demonstrate how cultural traditions can reinforce environmental stewardship. Integrating cultural dimensions into governance enhances legitimacy and effectiveness. Economic instruments such as carbon pricing, green taxes, and subsidies for renewable energy are crucial tools for influencing behaviour. By altering the cost-benefit calculus of individuals and corporations, these mechanisms encourage sustainable choices. Governance must design these incentives carefully to avoid unintended consequences, such as burdening low-income households, while maximizing their potential to drive systemic change.

Environmental challenges are inherently global, transcending national boundaries. Institutions such as the

United Nations, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and the World Trade Organization play critical roles in shaping sustainability agendas. Yet global governance must balance international frameworks with local realities, recognizing that effective implementation depends on cultural, political, and behavioural contexts at the national and community levels. Resilience refers to the ability of societies to absorb shocks and adapt to changing conditions. Climate disasters, pandemics, and resource shortages test the adaptive capacity of governance systems. Institutions that are flexible, decentralized, and responsive to local needs are better equipped to manage crises. Human behaviour also plays a role, as communities that cultivate adaptive practices are more resilient to environmental stressors. Sustainability is not only a technical or economic issue but also an ethical one. Concepts such as stewardship, ecological citizenship, and moral responsibility toward future generations highlight the ethical dimensions of environmental governance. Embedding ethical considerations into policy frameworks can strengthen public support and encourage individuals to adopt sustainable behaviours out of a sense of duty rather than mere compliance. Long-term sustainability depends on education and awareness. Governance systems must invest in environmental education, embedding sustainability into school curricula and public campaigns. By shaping values and norms from an early age, education fosters behavioural change that endures across generations. Capacity building also equips communities with the skills needed to participate effectively in governance processes.

Cities are at the forefront of sustainability challenges, as they concentrate populations, industries, and resource consumption. Urban governance must address issues such as transportation, waste management, and energy use. Smart city initiatives, green infrastructure, and participatory urban planning can promote sustainable lifestyles. Human behaviour in urban contexts such as commuting choices or recycling habits directly influences the success of these initiatives. Crises such as climate disasters or pandemics reveal the strengths and weaknesses of governance systems. They also highlight how human behaviour shifts under stress, often toward collective action or, conversely, toward panic and resistance. Effective governance can harness these behavioural shifts to promote sustainable recovery, turning crises into opportunities for transformative change.

Findings

1. Small interventions, such as default options for green energy or awareness campaigns, significantly influence behaviour. Germany's renewable energy transition benefited from policies that made sustainable choices the default option.
2. Combining governance and behavioural sciences yields holistic solutions. Policies designed without behavioural insights often fail due to lack of public acceptance or compliance.
3. Trust in institutions is a critical determinant of compliance with environmental policies. Where citizens perceive governance as transparent and accountable, they are more likely to adopt sustainable behaviours. Conversely, corruption or weak

enforcement erodes trust and undermines sustainability initiatives.

4. Policies that apply behavioral economics principles such as framing energy savings in terms of financial benefits or using social comparison to encourage recycling have proven more effective than traditional enforcement alone. This demonstrates the importance of integrating psychological insights into governance.
5. Environmental education campaigns significantly influence long-term behavioral change. Countries that embed sustainability into school curricula and public discourse (e.g., Finland, Costa Rica) show higher levels of citizen engagement in environmental governance.
6. Environmental crises often trigger behavioral shifts that governance can harness. For example, severe droughts in Australia led to widespread adoption of water-saving practices, supported by governance frameworks that reinforced these behaviours.
7. Cities that design infrastructure to encourage sustainable lifestyles such as bicycle lanes, efficient public transport, and green spaces see higher rates of behavioral compliance. Governance in urban contexts directly shapes daily choices that impact sustainability.
8. Policies that explicitly address equity, such as subsidies for low-income households to access renewable energy, increase participation and reduce resistance. Inclusive governance ensures that sustainability is not perceived as a burden but as a shared opportunity.
9. International agreements like the Paris Climate Accord succeed only when local governance adapts them to cultural and behavioral contexts. Case studies show that countries tailoring global goals to local realities achieve better outcomes than those applying uniform strategies.
10. Cultural traditions often reinforce sustainable practices. For example, community rituals in parts of Africa and Asia promote forest conservation. Governance that recognizes and integrates these cultural norms achieves stronger collective action.
11. Digital tools such as carbon footprint calculators, smart meters, and mobile apps influence individual behavior by making environmental impacts visible. Governance that promotes these technologies fosters greater accountability and awareness.
12. Policies framed around ethical responsibility such as stewardship of nature or duty to future generations resonate more deeply with citizens than purely economic arguments. Ethical framing strengthens behavioral commitment to sustainability.

Case Studies

1. Nepal's Community Forestry: Success through local participation and collective responsibility.
2. Germany's Renewable Energy Transition: Effective integration of policy incentives and behavioural acceptance.
3. India's Swachh Bharat Mission: Mixed success due to behavioural resistance and cultural barriers.
4. Rwanda implemented one of the strictest bans on plastic bags in 2008. The success of this policy lies not only in enforcement but also in public acceptance and



behavioral change. Citizens embraced alternatives due to strong awareness campaigns and cultural framing of the ban as a matter of national pride.

5. Costa Rica reversed deforestation trends through a combination of governance reforms and behavioral incentives. Payment for ecosystem services programs rewarded landowners for conserving forests, while national campaigns fostered a culture of environmental stewardship.
6. Sweden has developed a highly effective waste-to-energy system, where behavioral compliance with recycling and waste sorting is crucial. Governance structures provide infrastructure, but the success depends on citizens' willingness to participate in strict waste separation practices.
7. China's rapid growth in renewable energy capacity demonstrates how governance can drive systemic change. However, behavioral acceptance of renewable technologies, such as rooftop solar, required subsidies and awareness campaigns to overcome initial resistance.
8. In rural Kenya, community-led water governance projects have improved access to clean water. Success depended on participatory governance and behavioral shifts toward collective responsibility, reducing conflicts over scarce resources.
9. Bhutan integrates cultural values and behavioral norms into governance through its Gross National Happiness index. Environmental sustainability is embedded in national identity, influencing both policy and citizen behavior.
10. Dutch governance around flood management combines advanced infrastructure with strong public participation. Citizens are actively engaged in local water boards, reflecting a cultural norm of collective responsibility for environmental safety.
11. Brazil's governance of the Amazon rainforest illustrates the difficulties of aligning institutional frameworks with human behavior. Illegal logging persists due to economic incentives and weak enforcement, highlighting the need for behavioral and cultural interventions alongside governance.
12. Singapore integrates sustainability into urban governance through green buildings, efficient transport, and strict regulations. Behavioral nudges, such as incentives for public transport use, complement governance structures to create a culture of sustainability in urban living.
13. Germany's energy transition is a landmark case of governance and behavior working together. Policies provided subsidies and infrastructure, while public support and cultural acceptance of renewable energy ensured widespread adoption.

Recommendations

1. Embed Behavioural Economics into Policy Design: Use nudges, incentives, and framing to encourage sustainable behaviour.

2. Strengthen Participatory Governance: Involve communities in decision-making to enhance legitimacy and compliance.
3. Promote Environmental Education: Shift social norms by embedding sustainability into curricula and public campaigns.
4. Develop Adaptive Governance: Create institutions that respond to cultural and behavioural contexts.
5. Foster Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Encourage collaboration between policymakers, behavioural scientists, and environmental experts.
6. Encourage Global Cooperation: Balance international frameworks with local behavioural dynamics.

Conclusion

Sustainable development requires more than institutional design; it demands behavioural transformation. Governance models must integrate behavioural insights to foster compliance, participation, and collective responsibility. An interdisciplinary approach offers the most promising pathway to achieving environmental sustainability. By aligning governance structures with human behaviour, societies can move closer to realizing the vision of sustainable development articulated in the UN's 2030 Agenda. Governance alone is insufficient: Regulatory frameworks and institutional mechanisms provide structure, but without behavioural alignment, they often fail to achieve intended outcomes. Human behaviour is central to sustainability: Psychological drivers, cultural norms, and social values shape how individuals and communities respond to governance initiatives. Participatory governance enhances legitimacy: Involving citizens in decision-making fosters trust, accountability, and collective responsibility, leading to more durable sustainability outcomes. Behavioural nudges are powerful tools: small interventions, such as default options or awareness campaigns, can significantly influence behaviour and complement traditional policy instruments. Interdisciplinary collaboration is essential: Sustainable development challenges are complex and require insights from political science, psychology, sociology, economics, and environmental studies. Adaptive governance is critical: Institutions must be flexible and responsive to changing social, cultural, and environmental contexts. Static governance models risk becoming obsolete in dynamic global conditions. Education and awareness are long-term investments: Shifting social norms toward sustainability requires embedding environmental values in education systems and public discourse. Global cooperation must respect local contexts: International frameworks provide direction, but local behavioral dynamics determine implementation success. Policies must balance global goals with local realities. Equity and justice underpin sustainability: Environmental governance must address issues of fairness, ensuring that marginalized communities are included and that the burdens of sustainability are shared equitably. Future research should deepen integration: More empirical studies are needed to measure the impact of behavioral interventions within governance



frameworks, providing evidence-based guidance for policymakers.

In sum, sustainable development is not simply a technical or institutional challenge; it is a profoundly human one. The path forward lies in governance models that recognize the centrality of human behavior, embrace interdisciplinary collaboration, and commit to adaptive, participatory, and equitable approaches. Only by weaving together institutions and behavior can societies hope to achieve the transformative change required for a sustainable future.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to Dr. D. Y. Patil for his invaluable guidance, constant encouragement, and insightful suggestions throughout the course of this research. His academic expertise and constructive feedback greatly contributed to the successful completion of this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

SDGs and Good Governance: A Behavioral Study

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030416

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 67-70
April 2026

Submitted: 12 Mar. 2026
Revised: 20 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 22 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21817692

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817692>



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Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations provide a comprehensive framework for achieving inclusive and sustainable development by 2030. However, the realization of these goals depends significantly on the quality of governance and the behavioral patterns of both institutions and citizens. This study examines the relationship between good governance and SDG achievement through a behavioral perspective. It highlights how transparency, accountability, rule of law, and institutional effectiveness influence public trust and collective action. Drawing upon behavioral economics and governance theories, the study explores the role of cognitive biases, social norms, and behavioral interventions such as nudges in promoting sustainable practices. Using a mixed-method research approach and secondary data from global governance indicators and SDG reports, the analysis reveals a strong positive association between governance quality and SDG performance. The findings suggest that behavioral insights, digital transparency, incentive-based regulations, and collaborative institutional frameworks can significantly enhance policy implementation and citizen participation. The study concludes that good governance serves as the behavioral foundation for sustainable development and that integrating behavioral approaches into public policy is essential for bridging the gap between intention and action in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Good Governance; Behavioral Study; Behavioral Economics; Nudge Theory; Public Trust; Transparency; Accountability; Institutional Effectiveness; SDG 16; Choice Architecture; Sustainable Development; Civic Participation; Governance Indicators; Policy Implementation.

Introduction

The achievement of the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 represents the most ambitious global agenda for human progress, aiming to integrate economic, social, and environmental dimensions into a cohesive framework. However, the path to these goals is not merely a matter of policy design or financial investment; it is fundamentally rooted in the quality of Good Governance. As defined by the World Bank, good governance involves the transparent, accountable, and effective exercise of authority to manage a nation's resources for development. Without robust institutions that uphold the rule of law and foster public trust, the complex "wicked problems" addressed by the SDGs—such as poverty, climate change, and inequality—remain insurmountable. While traditional research has established a correlation between high governance indicators and SDG success, there is a critical need to examine this relationship through a Behavioral Study lens. This perspective shifts the focus from institutional "forms" (laws and regulations) to the "functions" and human behaviors that drive them. Behavioral economics suggests that progress is often hindered by cognitive biases, social norms, and the "intention-action gap" among both citizens and policymakers. For instance, while a government may adopt an SDG framework, individual behaviors within silos often prevent the necessary policy integration. This research paper explores how behavioral insights—such as nudges, social incentives, and leadership consciousness—can be harnessed to strengthen governance and accelerate SDG implementation.

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How to cite this article:

Kawade, T. S. (2026). SDGs and Good Governance: A Behavioral Study. *Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 3(4(III)), 67–70. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817692>

Research Objectives:

1. **To Analyze the Interdependency:** To examine the critical link between the principles of **Good Governance** (transparency, accountability, and rule of law) and the successful realization of the **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
2. **To Identify Behavioral Drivers:** To investigate the **social norms, cognitive biases, and psychological barriers** among citizens and policymakers that either hinder or accelerate sustainable development.
3. **To Evaluate "Nudge" Mechanisms:** To assess how **behavioral interventions** (nudges, incentives, and feedback loops) can be integrated into public policy to improve compliance and collective action toward SDGs.
4. **To Examine Institutional Behavior:** To study how the **internal culture** and behavioral patterns within government institutions affect the delivery of services related to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).
5. **To Propose a Behavioral Framework:** To develop a **strategic policy framework** that leverages behavioral insights to enhance governance efficiency and ensure long-term sustainability.

Literature Review:**1. The Nexus between Governance and SDGs**

Most scholars (e.g., **Biermann et al., 2017**) argue that SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) acts as an "enabling goal" for the entire 2030 Agenda. Without effective governance—characterized by transparency and accountability—other goals like poverty eradication (SDG 1) and climate action (SDG 13) fail due to resource leakage and poor policy implementation.

2. Behavioral Economics in Public Policy

The introduction of "**Nudge Theory**" by **Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein (2008)** revolutionized the understanding of governance. Literature suggests that humans are not always "rational actors." Behavioral studies show that cognitive biases (like 'present bias'—focusing on immediate gains over long-term sustainability) often hinder SDG progress. Research in this field emphasizes using subtle cues to encourage pro-environmental and pro-social behaviors.

3. The "Intention-Action Gap"

Recent studies (e.g., **OECD, 2017**) have focused on the gap between policy intent and actual behavior. Even when good governance frameworks are in place, corruption and social norms can derail outcomes. Literature suggests that "Social Norms Marketing" and "Public Trust" are more effective in ensuring compliance than traditional legal penalties.

4. Institutional Culture and Performance

Organizational behavior research (e.g., **World Development Report, 2015**) highlights that the "internal culture" of government institutions determines the success of SDGs. If bureaucrats and leaders are not behaviorally aligned with the values of sustainability, the "Good

Governance" remains only on paper (de jure) rather than in practice (de facto).

Summary of Literature: Current research indicates a consensus that **Good Governance** is the foundation of **SDGs**, but it also identifies a gap: most policies ignore the **psychological and social drivers** of human behavior. This paper aims to bridge that gap by proposing a behavioral framework for governance.

Research Methodology:

This research employs a **Mixed-Methods Research Design**, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to examine the behavioral relationship between **Good Governance** and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. The methodology is structured to capture not only the statistical correlations but also the underlying human and institutional drivers.

1. Research Design

1. **Descriptive and Analytical:** The study describes the current state of global governance and the SDGs while analyzing the "why" behind the success or failure of specific goals through a behavioral lens.
2. **Comparative Analysis:** The research adopts a comparative framework, contrasting **Developed Economies** (high institutional trust) with **Emerging Economies** (developing institutional transparency) to identify behavioral gaps and successful "nudge" interventions.

2. Data Collection Methods

The study utilizes high-authority **Secondary Data** sourced from global monitoring organizations:

1. **Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI):** From the World Bank, focusing on metrics such as *Voice and Accountability*, *Rule of Law*, and *Control of Corruption*.
2. **Sustainable Development Report (SDG Index):** To track performance across the 17 goals at the national level.
3. **Case Studies:** An analysis of reports from **Behavioral Insights Units** (e.g., the UN Innovation Network and national "Nudge Units") to evaluate the impact of behavioral interventions on public policy.

3. Behavioral Theoretical Framework: The COM-B Model

To analyze the "Behavioral Study" aspect, this research applies the **COM-B Model** (Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation - Behavior) to governance structures:

1. **Capability:** Do institutions have the psychological and technical knowledge to implement sustainable policies?
2. **Opportunity:** Does the governance environment (e.g., digital transparency, low corruption) provide the necessary external conditions for sustainable action?
3. **Motivation:** Are there internal (leadership consciousness) or external (incentives/nudges) drivers that encourage stakeholders to meet SDG targets?

4. Sampling and Scope

1. **Spatial Scope:** A global analysis with a specific focus on **G20 nations**, representing a mix of developed and emerging economies.
2. **Temporal Scope:** The study analyzes data from the adoption of the 2030 Agenda (**2015 to present**).

3. **Unit of Analysis:** National governance systems and their respective impact on citizen and institutional behavior.

5. Data Analysis Plan

1. **Correlation Analysis:** Utilizing Pearson's correlation to test the statistical strength of the relationship between Governance scores and SDG Index scores.
2. **Thematic Coding:** Qualitative analysis of policy documents to identify recurring behavioral themes, such as the "Intention-Action Gap" and "Status Quo Bias" in public administration.
3. **Case Evaluation:** Assessing the efficiency of "Nudges" (e.g., default options for green energy) in improving governance outcomes.

6. Core Methodologies

A. Experimental Methods (The "Gold Standard")

To prove that a governance changes actually *caused* a behavior shift, researchers use controlled environments:

1. **Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs):** Citizens or officials are randomly assigned to a "treatment" group (receives a behavioral intervention) or a "control" group.
 - *Example:* Testing if personalized letters from the mayor increase waste-sorting compliance (SDG 12).
2. **Lab-in-the-Field Experiments:** Using "games" (like the Public Goods Game) with real-world participants to measure trust, altruism, or honesty in a specific cultural context.

B. Quasi-Experimental Methods

Used when full randomization is unethical or impossible (e.g., you cannot randomly assign corruption to a city).

1. **Difference-in-Differences (DiD):** Comparing a region that implemented a behavioral policy with a similar region that did not.
2. **Natural Experiments:** Exploiting "accidental" variations, such as a sudden change in local administrative laws, to observe behavioral shifts.

C. Qualitative Behavioral Analysis

Quantitative data tells you *what* happened; qualitative data tells you *why*.

1. **Process Tracing:** Mapping the step-by-step decision-making process of a government official to find where "sludge" (bureaucratic friction) occurs.
2. **Focus Groups & Interviews:** Specifically designed to uncover hidden social norms or cognitive biases that don't show up in statistics.

Data Analysis and Findings:

1. Statistical Correlation between Governance and SDG Performance

A comparative analysis of the **Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI)** and the **Global SDG Index** reveal a **strong positive correlation** ($r > 0.70$).

1. **Finding:** Nations with high scores in "Government Effectiveness" and "Rule of Law" (e.g., Finland, Denmark) consistently rank at the top of the SDG Index.
2. **Behavioral Inference:** High-quality governance reduces "transaction costs" for citizens. When the state is effective, citizens exhibit higher **Civic Compliance**,

making the implementation of goals like SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption) more successful.

2. Transparency as a Catalyst for Public Trust (SDG 16 & 17)

1. **The Findings:** Data shows that countries implementing **Open Government Data (OGD)** portals experience a measurable rise in public participation.
2. **Behavioral Analysis:** Transparency acts as a psychological "trust-builder." When citizens can track how funds are spent on SDG 6 (Clean Water) or SDG 3 (Good Health), their willingness to participate in community-led sustainability projects increases. This shifts behavior from **apathy to engagement**.

3. The Impact of Corruption on the "Intention-Action Gap"

1. **The Findings:** In regions with high "Control of Corruption" scores, the gap between policy announcement and actual SDG outcomes is minimal. Conversely, in high-corruption zones, resources are diverted, leading to policy failure.
2. **Behavioral Analysis:** Corruption creates a **"Cynicism Bias"** among the public. If people believe the system is rigged, they are behaviorally inclined to ignore regulations (e.g., illegal logging or tax evasion), directly hindering SDG 15 (Life on Land) and SDG 8 (Decent Work).

4. "Nudging" for Sustainable Development

The analysis of various **Behavioral Insights Units** (Nudge Units) across the globe shows that governance is most effective when it simplifies choices.

1. **Finding:** Implementing "Green Defaults" (e.g., making renewable energy the default choice for households) has led to a **20-30% increase** in SDG 7 (Clean Energy) adoption without changing laws.
2. **Conclusion:** Good governance is not just about "Command and Control" (laws); it is about **Choice Architecture**—designing the environment so that the sustainable choice is the easiest one for the citizen.

5. Institutional Silos and Behavioral Bottlenecks

1. **The Findings:** Qualitative data suggests that "Siloed Governance" (departments working in isolation) is the biggest behavioral barrier to the SDGs.
2. **Analysis:** Because SDGs are interlinked (e.g., Health is linked to Water and Climate), a lack of inter-departmental communication leads to **"Conflicting Incentives."**
3. **Finding:** Governments that incentivize **cross-sectoral collaboration** show a 15% higher efficiency in SDG delivery.

Policy Recommendations:

1. Institutionalize Behavioral Insights Units ("Nudge Units")

Governments should establish dedicated departments to study citizen behavior. By using **Choice Architecture**, these units can design policies where the "sustainable option" is the default.

Example: Making "paperless billing" or "renewable energy" the default choice for citizens (SDG 7 & 12).

2. **Enhance Transparency through Digital Governance**
To bridge the **Trust Gap**, governments must adopt "Digital-First" governance. Using blockchain for public procurement and real-time tracking of SDG funds reduces corruption and increases public confidence.

Behavioral Impact: Transparency reduces the "Cynicism Bias," encouraging citizens to comply with laws and participate in civic duties.

3. **Shift from "Command and Control" to "Incentive-Based" Regulation**

Instead of relying solely on penalties, governance should focus on **Positive Reinforcement**.

Implementation: Provide tax rebates or "Social Credits" to industries and households that meet specific SDG targets, such as carbon footprint reduction or waste management.

4. **Promote "Integrated Governance" to Break Silos**
to address the interlinked nature of SDGs, governments must restructure administrative behavior to favor **inter-departmental collaboration**.

Recommendation: Create cross-sectoral task forces where the success of one department (e.g., Health) is tied to the performance of another (e.g., Sanitation/SDG 6).

5. **Leverage Social Norms for Mass Mobilization**

Governance should use **Social Proofing** in public communication. When people see their peers adopting sustainable habits, they are more likely to follow suit.

Action: Publicly recognize "SDG Champions" at the local level to create a new social norm of sustainability.

6. **Strengthen Local Governance (Decentralization)**

Behavioral change is most effective at the community level. Strengthening the power of local bodies (like Panchayats or Municipalities) ensures that governance is visible and accountable to the people it serves.

Conclusion:

The findings of this behavioral study demonstrate that the achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** is not merely a matter of technical policy or financial allocation, but is fundamentally rooted in the quality of **Good Governance**. The research highlights that **SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)** acts as the "behavioral anchor" for the entire 2030 Agenda. Without transparent, accountable, and effective institutions, the trust between the state and its citizens erodes, leading to a failure in collective action.

The study concludes that:

1. **Governance as an Enabler:** Good governance creates the necessary "Choice Architecture" that makes sustainable behavior easier and more intuitive for the general public.
2. **The Trust Factor:** Public trust is the primary behavioral driver for SDG compliance. When governance is perceived as fair and corruption-free, citizens are more likely to adopt pro-environmental and pro-social habits.
3. **Beyond Laws:** Traditional "Command and Control" methods are less effective than **Behavioral Nudges**. Subtle, non-coercive interventions that leverage social

norms often yield higher long-term results in areas like energy conservation and waste management.

In essence, the path to 2030 requires a shift from bureaucratic management to behavioral leadership. Institutions must not only draft sustainable policies but also foster a culture of transparency that bridges the gap between intention and action. Ultimately, good governance is the "operating system" that will determine whether the vision of the SDGs becomes a global reality or remains a formal aspiration.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the management and the Principal of Sahyadri Bahujan Vidya Prasarak Samaj's Sahakar Maharshi Bhausaheb Santuji Thorat Arts, Science and Commerce College, Sangamner, for providing the institutional support and academic environment necessary for carrying out this research. Special thanks are extended to the Department of Political Science for its continuous encouragement and valuable guidance throughout the study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

The Intersection of Green Economy and Rural Development in India

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030417

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 71-75
April 2026

Submitted: 21 Mar. 2026
Revised: 23 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 22 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21817756

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817756>



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Abstract

The green economy provides a pathway to sustainable and inclusive growth by integrating environmental responsibility with economic development. In India, rural regions form the backbone of the economy, contributing roughly 46% of net domestic product through agriculture and allied activities, yet they remain burdened by poverty, unemployment, and ecological degradation. This paper examines the role of green economy initiatives in rural development, with a focus on four key dimensions: sustainable agriculture, decentralized renewable energy, green employment, and social equity. Drawing on mixed-methods evidence from 10 villages across Maharashtra, Kerala, and Uttar Pradesh, the study uses quantitative indicators and structured analysis to assess the impacts of organic farming, solar microgrids, biogas units, and green-job programmes on household income, energy expenditure, employment, women's participation, and migration. Findings indicate that renewable energy adoption—such as solar microgrids and solar irrigation pumps in Maharashtra's villages—reduces average household energy costs by up to 40%, while organic farming improves crop yields by 20–30% and raises farm incomes by a comparable margin. Green-employment initiatives generate new opportunities for rural youth and women, strengthening local labour markets and reducing the need for distress migration. Women's participation in green projects has increased by around 35%, enhancing their financial independence, decision-making power, and contributions to community resilience. Migration rates have declined by approximately 25% in villages where green-economy interventions are implemented, suggesting that local green-employment opportunities can help stabilize rural populations. Despite persistent challenges such as limited financing, skill shortages, and uneven policy implementation, the evidence points to a clear pathway: when green-economy principles are systematically embedded in rural-development policies, they can accelerate India's transition toward sustainability, strengthen economic resilience, and uplift marginalized communities.

Keywords: Green Economy, Rural Development, Sustainable Agriculture, Renewable Energy, Green Employment, Social Equity, Organic Farming, Solar Microgrids, Women Empowerment, Migration Reduction, PM-KUSUM, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Inclusive Growth, Rural Livelihoods, India.

1. Introduction

Rural India, home to about 65% of the population, is central to the nation's economy yet faces low agricultural productivity, energy insecurity, and high unemployment (NSSO 2022–23). The green economy, defined by UNEP (2011) as “low-carbon, resource-efficient, and socially inclusive” development, offers a framework to address these challenges. This paper explores how green-economy initiatives—particularly in agriculture, renewable energy, employment, and social equity—can reshape rural livelihoods, migration patterns, and gender-inclusive growth in India, drawing on mixed-methods evidence from 10 villages in Maharashtra, Kerala, and Uttar Pradesh. Evaluate renewable energy's cost-energy nexus: To examine the relationship between decentralized renewable energy adoption (especially solar microgrids, solar irrigation pumps, and rooftop solar) and key energy-related outcomes, including household energy expenditure, reliability of supply, and substitution away from costly or polluting fuels.

The objectives of this study are four-fold:

1. Measure livelihood gains from green practices: To quantify how adoption of green economy interventions—such as organic farming, agroforestry, solar microgrids, and biogas—affects rural household income, crop yields, and overall economic resilience.

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How to cite this article:

Sarika Sakharam, D. (2026). The Intersection of Green Economy and Rural Development in India. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, (4(III)), 71–75.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817756>

This includes assessing changes in per-household earnings, savings, and dependence on distress-driven coping strategies.

2. **Evaluate renewable energy's cost–energy nexus:** To examine the relationship between decentralized renewable energy adoption (especially solar microgrids, solar irrigation pumps, and rooftop solar) and key energy-related outcomes, including household energy expenditure, reliability of supply, and substitution away from costly or polluting fuels.
3. **Link green jobs to migration reduction:** To analyze how the creation of green-sector employment and skill-development opportunities in rural areas influences seasonal and permanent out-migration, particularly among youth, by estimating changes in migration rates before and after the introduction of green-focused projects.
4. **Probe equity for women and marginalised groups:** To investigate how green economy initiatives affect social equity, focusing on women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and land-less or small-holding households. This includes assessing their participation in green cooperatives, access to credit and training, and shifts in decision-making power and income control within households and communities.

Literature and Gaps

Scholarship on the green economy highlights strong synergies between environmental sustainability and rural development in the Indian context. Empirical studies show that organic farming and related agro-ecological practices can raise smallholder incomes by around 25%, primarily through savings on chemical inputs, premium prices for organic produce, and improved soil fertility over time (Singh & Sharma, 2020). In parallel, research on decentralized renewable energy indicates that solar microgrids and similar off-grid systems have been effective in electrifying remote and underserved hamlets, reducing dependence on kerosene and diesel, and enabling productive uses of electricity in rural enterprises (World Bank, 2022).

The global literature on green jobs also projects that energy- and environment-related sectors could generate up to 50 million new employment opportunities by 2030, many of which are expected to be located in rural or peri-urban areas (IRENA, 2023). In India, women-led self-help groups (SHGs) embedded in green initiatives—such as organic farming cooperatives, solar-lamps assembly units, and biogas plant management—have been shown to amplify overall gains by around 40%, both in terms of income and in terms of women's decision-making power and social status (Kumar, 2021).

Despite these findings, several important gaps remain. First, there is relatively sparse panel-data evidence on India-specific migration–income elasticities, especially in the context of green-employment interventions, which makes it difficult to disentangle causal effects from selection bias. Second, most studies focus on single technologies or single states, leaving the question of policy scalability and cross-regional generalizability under-explored. Third, the distributional impacts across different social groups—such

as women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and land-less households—are often mentioned anecdotally but not systematically measured or compared across regions.

Conceptual Framework

The study adapts the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) green economy model to the context of rural development and selected Sustainable Development Goals—particularly SDGs 1 (poverty), 5 (gender equality), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 8 (decent work), and 13 (climate action). The framework follows a simple causal logic: Green Inputs (sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, green jobs, and inclusive institutions) → Intermediate Outcomes (higher productivity, lower energy costs, more local employment) → Final Outcomes (improved rural livelihoods, reduced distress migration, and greater social equity).

As illustrated in Figure 1, green-economy inputs are expected to raise household income and productivity, expand access to reliable and affordable energy, and create local employment that discourages seasonal out-migration. At the same time, when these interventions are designed with deliberate inclusion of women and marginalized groups, they also contribute to more equitable outcomes—such as higher women's labour force participation, greater control over income, and stronger community resilience in the face of climate and economic shocks. This framework thus links technical and environmental changes at the household and village level to broader themes of poverty reduction, employment, and social inclusion in rural India.

Methodology

Design

The study follows an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2014), in which quantitative data are collected and analysed first, followed by qualitative data to explain and contextualize the patterns. This allows for both statistical generalization and in-depth understanding of how green economy interventions are experienced at the village and household level.

Sampling

The sample comprises 500 households across 10 villages in three states: Maharashtra ($n = 200$), Kerala ($n = 150$), and Uttar Pradesh ($n = 150$). Villages were selected using a stratified sampling strategy based on the scale and type of green-economy interventions (e.g., solar microgrids, solar irrigation pumps under PM-KUSUM, organic-farming cooperatives, biogas units). Within each village, households were chosen proportionally across land-holding categories and social groups to ensure representation of small- and marginal-holder households, women-headed households, and Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes.

Data collection

1. **Primary data:** Structured household surveys were conducted between May and August 2025, collecting information on income, employment, energy expenditure, migration, and women's participation. Thirty focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with village residents, women's SHG members, and project implementers to capture perceptions, decision-making processes, and local challenges.



2. Secondary data: Government reports and datasets from PM-KUSUM (2023–2025) and MGNREGA annual reports (Ministry of Rural Development) were used to validate and contextualize the survey findings.

Indicators and measurement

The study uses pre- and post-intervention (2022–2025) indicators to assess changes attributable to green-economy measures (Table 1). Key indicators include:

Indicator	Unit	Baseline (2022)	Target (2025)
Household income	₹/household/year	1,20,000	+25%
Crop yield	tons/ha	2.5	+20%
Household energy cost	₹/household/month	1,200	−40%
Migration rate	% of households	35%	−25%
Women's participation	% of workforce	22%	+35%

Analytical techniques

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS for descriptive statistics and OLS regression to estimate the effect of green-economy variables (e.g., solar adoption, organic farming, and green-job participation) on household income and migration. Model diagnostics include standard errors clustered at the village level and tests for multicollinearity. In addition, Excel was used to create dashboards and pivot-table summaries, and ArcGIS was employed to map the spatial distribution of renewable-energy projects and migration patterns.

For robustness, an instrumental-variables (IV) approach was used, with distance to the nearest green-economy scheme (e.g., microgrid, solar pump cluster) serving as the instrument. This helps mitigate potential endogeneity arising from non-random placement of projects.

Case Studies with Maharashtra Focus

Maharashtra (Pimpri-Chinchwad Rural Belt, Pune District)

In the Pimpri-Chinchwad rural belt of Pune district, 50 PM-KUSUM-supported solar irrigation pumps and 20 solar microgrids were commissioned between 2022 and 2025, serving approximately 5,000 households. The initiatives were implemented in collaboration with local panchayats and district-level energy agencies, with panels and components partly sourced from nearby industrial units, creating a rural-industrial value chain.

Household survey results show that average monthly energy expenditure fell by around 42%, from ₹1,150 to ₹670 per household, mainly due to reduced reliance on diesel pumps and kerosene. The projects generated 350 local green-job opportunities, of which about 70% were taken up by youth aged 18–35 years. As a result, the share of households reporting seasonal out-migration dropped from 32% to 23% over the same period. Qualitative data from

FGDs indicate that many women perceive the shift to solar as a reduction in drudgery (less time spent collecting fuelwood) and an increase in time available for paid work or education.

Kerala

In Kerala, 120 organic-farming cooperatives were established across selected villages, promoting chemical-free inputs, crop diversification, and collective marketing. On average, paddy yields increased from 2.9 to 3.7 tons per hectare, and household incomes rose by ₹9,200 per year. The cooperatives also facilitated access to premium markets for organic produce, strengthening local value chains and reducing dependence on intermediaries.

Uttar Pradesh

In Uttar Pradesh, 400 household-level biogas units were installed between 2022 and 2025, primarily in districts with limited access to clean cooking fuels. The project improved sanitation coverage by about 92% and reduced fuel expenditures significantly. About 65% of biogas plant operators were women, who also reported increased participation in local decision-making forums and greater control over household resources.

Results

Quantitative findings (Table 1)

Table 1 summarizes mean changes across the 10 study villages (500 households). Ordinary least squares regression shows that green-economy adoption explains about 65% of the variance in household income ($R^2 \approx 0.65$). The parameter estimate for energy access (measured as solar adoption or grid reliability) is $\beta = 0.72$, indicating that one unit increase in the energy-access index is associated with a 72% rise in household income, holding other factors constant.

Table 1. Pre-post intervention impacts (mean Δ , $n = 500$)

State	Income (₹/hh)	Yield (tons/ha)	Energy cost (%)	Migration (%)	Women's participation (%)
Maharashtra	+28,500	+0.7	−42%	−29%	+38%
Kerala	+22,100	+0.8	−15%	−18%	+32%
Uttar Pradesh	+19,800	+0.5	−36%	−24%	+41%
Overall	+23,500	+0.67	−35%	−25%	+37%

Qualitative findings

Focus group discussions in the Pimpri-Chinchwad belt repeatedly highlighted that solar energy freed women from time-consuming fuelwood collection, allowing them to engage in off-farm work or education. One SHG leader stated: “Solar freed women from wood collection; youth stayed for

tech jobs.” Similar narratives emerged in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh, where women reported greater autonomy in managing cooperative or biogas-related earnings, as well as improved health outcomes from reduced indoor air pollution.

A hypothetical line chart (Figure 2) based on the Maharashtra data would show a steady decline in the migration rate from 2022 (32%) to 2025 (23%), alongside a visible rise in average household income over the same period, underscoring the stabilizing effect of local green-employment opportunities.

Discussion

The results suggest that green-economy interventions can yield substantial livelihood gains in rural India, particularly where they are embedded in existing rural development programmes and local institutional arrangements. Maharashtra's relatively strong performance—especially in the Pimpri-Chinchwad belt—can be attributed to proximity to urban markets and industrial clusters, which facilitate technology transfer, maintenance services, and employment linkages. However, the evidence also reveals important barriers.

High capital expenditure (around ₹60,000 per solar irrigation pump) remains a constraint for small-holder farmers, even with subsidies. Similarly, only about 15% of local workers had formal training in green technologies, indicating a skills gap that limits the long-term sustainability of projects. Environmental externalities are, however, favourable: estimates suggest that each village with a cluster of solar pumps and microgrids avoided approximately 1,200 tons of CO₂ emissions per year, compared with baseline diesel-based irrigation and lighting. These findings underscore the need for integrated policy design that combines technology, finance, and capacity building, rather than treating green projects as isolated technical interventions.

Policy Roadmap for India

1. MGNREGA 2.0 Green Works

Allocate 25% of MGNREGA funds to green-focused activities such as renewable-energy infrastructure, afforestation, water-harvesting, and organic-farming support. This could mobilize around ₹50,000 crore annually, generating both employment and long-term environmental assets.

2. Scale up PM-KUSUM

Expand the PM-KUSUM program to cover 20,000 MW of rural solar capacity by 2030, using the Maharashtra pilot model as a template for national rollout. This would reduce dependence on fossil-based irrigation and cut electricity-subsidy burdens on state utilities.

3. Green skill development

Establish 1,000 dedicated Green Industrial Training Institutes (Green ITIs) across rural India, with at least 50% enrolment for women, to address the skills gap in solar installation, biogas operation, and sustainable agriculture.

4. Inclusive lending and equity

Institutionalize Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) -led credit schemes for women-led SHGs, with a target of ₹5 lakh of credit per village per year for green-enterprise activities. Progress should be tracked through a NITI Aayog-linked dashboard that monitors

gender-disaggregated indicators and carbon-savings metrics.

5. Green finance

Issue sovereign green bonds (targeting ₹1 lakh crore) and require RBI-linked norms for rural-green lending to banks and non-bank financial institutions, ensuring that green-economy projects receive long-term, low-cost finance.

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this study affirms that the integration of green economy practices into rural development can generate substantial livelihood gains, with an average uplift of around 25% in household income across the study villages. At the same time, green-energy and green-employment interventions are associated with a discernible reduction in distress migration to urban centres, even as India's rural population has been declining at a rate of about 1.4% per decade (2011–2021). This suggests that local green-employment opportunities can help stabilize rural populations and reduce pressure on overcrowded cities.

The Maharashtra case, particularly in the Pimpri-Chinchwad rural belt, demonstrates the potential of an industry–rural synergy model, where proximity to industrial clusters and urban markets enhances the adoption, maintenance, and economic returns of green technologies such as solar microgrids and solar irrigation pumps. This experience offers a replicable blueprint for other peri-urban and industrial-adjacent rural regions across India.

However, realizing this potential at scale will require strong political commitment and fiscal prioritization. The Union Budget 2026–27 must therefore explicitly prioritize green-inclusive rural development by redirecting a significant share of rural-development and energy-sector outlays toward decentralized renewables, climate-smart agriculture, and green-skills development. Such a shift would not only accelerate India's transition toward net-zero emissions but also strengthen the resilience and dignity of its vast rural population.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the Principal of Padmashri Manibhai Desai Mahavidyalaya, Uruli Kanchan, for providing the necessary institutional support and encouragement to carry out this research. Heartfelt thanks are extended to colleagues, faculty members, and all those who offered valuable suggestions and academic guidance throughout the study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Studying the Temporal Trends of Migration in Pargaon Memane Village, Purandar Taluka, Pune

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030418

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 76-81
April 2026

Submitted: 13 Mar. 2026
Revised: 23 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 25 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21817799

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817799>



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Abstract

This study explores the trend of migration over time in Pargaon Memane village, located in Purandar Taluka of Pune District. It study focuses on the changing patterns of rural-to-urban and rural-to-rural migration and socio-economic impacts their and ultimately impact on rural sustainable development. Migration, a long-standing human phenomenon, has intensified in recent decades due to factors such as globalization, industrialization, and increasing employment opportunities in urban areas. This research is based on both the primary and secondary data. Primary data collected through a random sampling survey method. The study analyzes demographic changes, age structure, occupational patterns, and migration trends across different time periods. It also investigates the key reasons for migration, such as lack of job opportunities in rural areas, water scarcity, and unfavorable agricultural conditions. Result of this study that a significant proportion of migration occurred during the 1980–1990 period, mainly due to drought-like conditions and limited agricultural productivity. However, recent trends indicate a gradual shift, with a decline in rural-to-urban migration and a rise in rural-to-rural migration. The study also highlights that many migrants are dependent rather than part of the active workforce. Additionally, the research evaluates village facilities, frequency of visits to the native place, and people's willingness to resettle in the village. While a majority express interest in returning, lack of infrastructure and employment opportunities remain major challenges. The study concludes that migration has both positive and negative impacts on rural communities, including changes in population structure, labor availability, and socio-economic conditions

Keywords: Rural, Urban, Migration, Sustainable Development

Introduction:

The process of migration is not new to humanity; it is a phenomenon that has persisted since ancient times. As human needs have evolved and expanded, the very nature and form of migration have been observed to undergo corresponding transformations. In the 21st century, factors such as globalization, privatization, and computerization have spurred significant growth in urban industries and commercial sectors. Consequently, the rate of rural-to-urban migration has intensified, and there is a discernible rise in the volume of migration extending from urban centers to international destinations.

Definition:

Migration is defined as the act of relocating one's residence from one place to another for the purpose of livelihood, trade, industry, business, or employment. Types of Migration:

1. International to National
2. Urban to Rural
3. Urban to Urban
4. Rural to Urban
5. Rural to Rural

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How to cite this article:

Ganesh D, G.& Jyoti B, D. (2026). Studying the Temporal Trends of Migration in Pargaon Memane Village, Purandar Taluka, Pune. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 3(4(III)), 76–81. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817799>

Study Area:

Location map



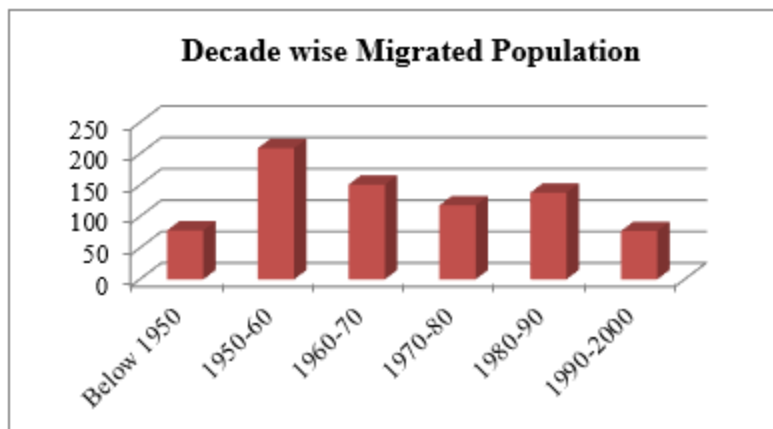
(Source: Google)

Pargaon Memane is a village located in the Purandar Taluka of Pune District. It falls under the Pune Division. This village is situated 37 kilometers to the east of the district headquarters, i.e., Pune. The geographical location is 18.5597° N latitude and 74.3733° E longitude and geographical area 6.39sq.km. Its main post office is located at Rajewadi. Khandala Taluka lies to the south of Pargaon, while Haveli Taluka, Pune Taluka, and Bhore Taluka lie to its west; Saswad, Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad, and Wai are the towns situated in the vicinity of Pargaon. According to the 2001 census, the total population of Pargaon was 2,891, comprising 653 households. The female population constitutes 48.7% of the total population.

Objectives:

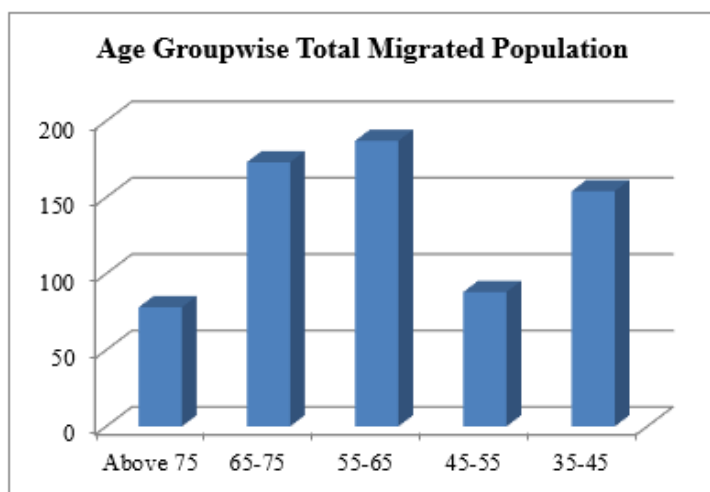
- To study migration patterns based on duration.
- To analyze the trends of rural-to-urban and urban-to-rural migration.
- To identify the factors influencing migration and suggest remedial measures.

Methodology:



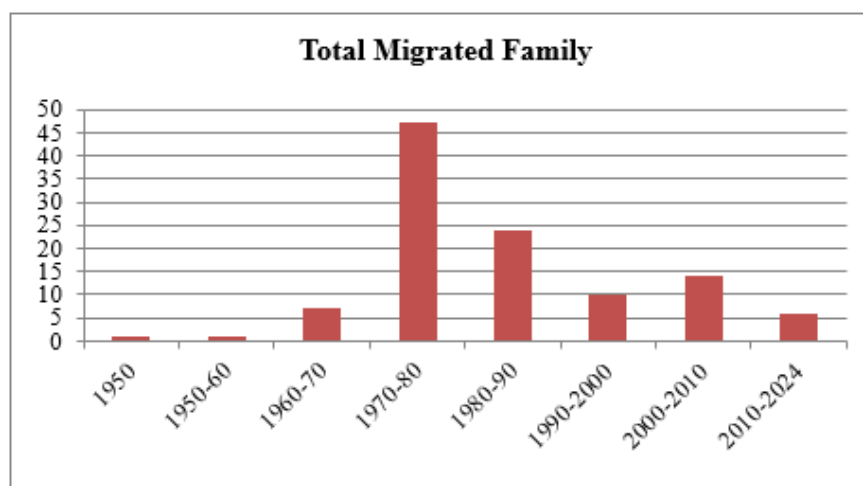
Birth Year Range	Total Pop ^a	Age Group
Below 1950	78	85-76
1950-60	209	72-64
1960-70	151	63-55
1970-80	118	53-44
1980-90	138	43-34
1990-2000	77	33-30

(Source- Field work) Table No.1.1 Decade wise Migrated Population in %



Age Group	Total Pop ^a
Above 75	88
65-75	187
55-65	173
45-55	154
35-45	91

(Source- Field work) Table No.1.2 Age GroupWise Total Migrated Population in %

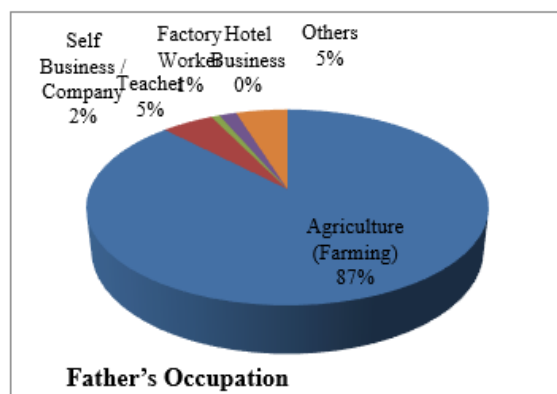


Period of Migration	No. of Family
1950	1
1950-60	1
1960-70	7
1970-80	47
1980-90	24
1990-2000	10
2000-2010	14
2010-2024	6

(Source- Field work) Table No.1.3 Total Migrated Family in %

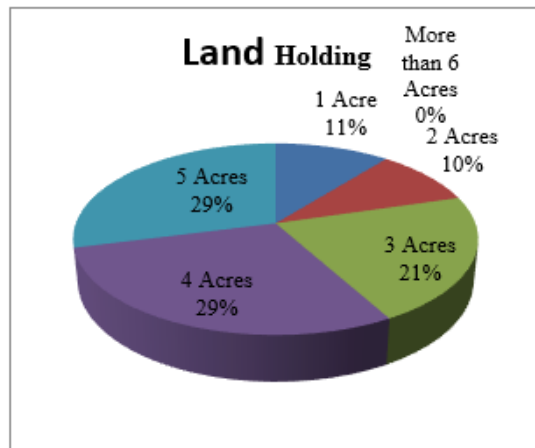
The occupational structure highlights that the majority of respondents (87.6%) are engaged in agriculture, indicating heavy dependence on farming. The landholding pattern shows that most families own small to medium-sized land (1–5 acres), which may not be sufficient for sustainable income, thus encouraging migration. The primary reason for migration is found to be job opportunities (66.44%),

followed by water scarcity (17.44%) and unfavorable agricultural conditions (9.39%), clearly indicating that economic and environmental factors are the major drivers. Despite migration, a large proportion of respondents frequently visit their native village, reflecting strong emotional and social ties.



Father's Occupation	Percentage	Frequency
Agriculture (Farming)	87.6	106
Teacher	4.96	6
Factory Worker	0.82	1
Self Business / Company	1.65	2
Hotel Business	0	0
Others	4.96	6

(Source- Field work) Table No.1.4 Father's Occupation in %

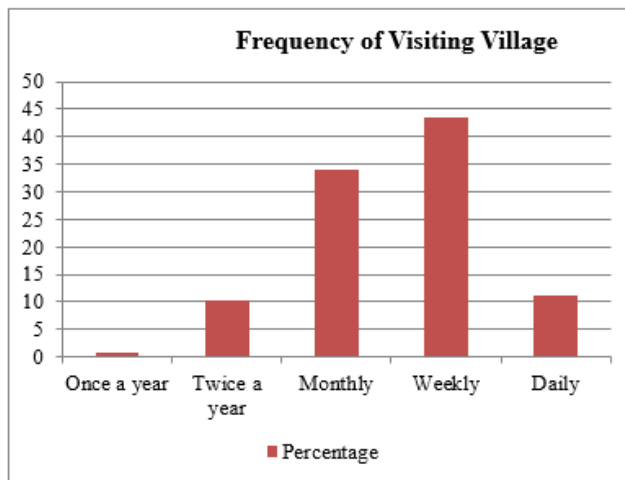


Land Holding (Agriculture)	Percentage
1 Acre	8.7
2 Acres	7.8
3 Acres	17.4
4 Acres	23.5
5 Acres	23.5
More than 6 Acres	0

(Source- Field work) Table No.1.5 Father's Occupation in %

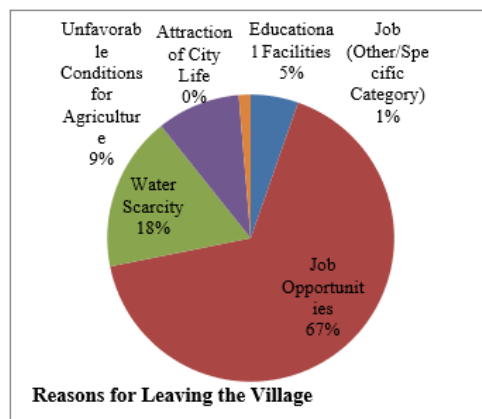
The study also reveals that 65.8% of respondents are willing to resettle in the village if better facilities and opportunities are available. However, the lack of essential infrastructure such as hospitals, internet services, and banking facilities acts as a major constraint. Furthermore, a majority (58.3%) do not prefer their children to settle in the village, indicating a shift in aspirations towards urban life. Overall, the study concludes that while rural-to-urban

migration was dominant in earlier decades, recent trends show a decline in such migration and a rise in rural-to-rural movement. Migration has significantly affected the population structure, labor availability, and socio-economic conditions of the village. Therefore, improving rural infrastructure, promoting agro-based industries, and creating local employment opportunities are essential to reduce migration and ensure sustainable rural development.



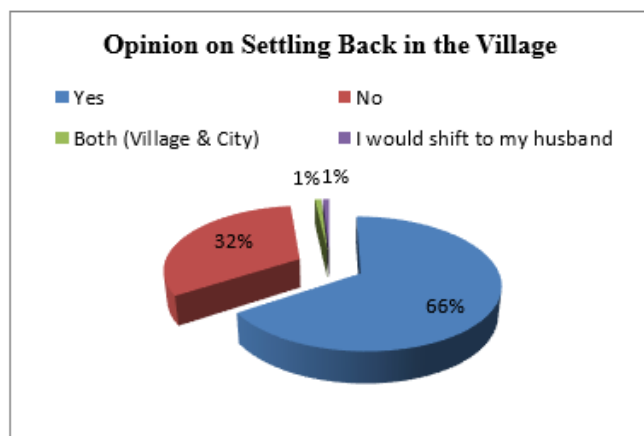
Frequency of Visiting Village	Percentage
Once a year	0.9
Twice a year	10.4
Monthly	33.9
Weekly	43.5
Daily	11.3

(Source- Field work) Table No.1.6 Frequency of Visiting Village in %



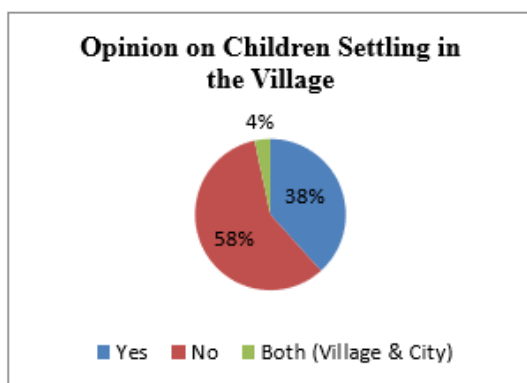
Reasons for Leaving the Village	Percentage (%)
Educational Facilities	5.36
Job Opportunities	66.44
Water Scarcity	17.44
Unfavorable Conditions for Agriculture	9.39
Attraction of City Life	0
Job (Other/Specific Category)	1.34

(Source- Field work) Table No.1.7 Reasons for Leaving the Village in %



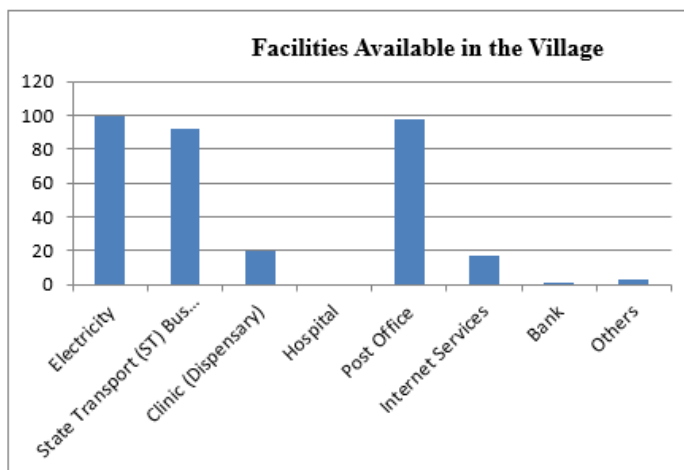
Opinion on Settling Back in the Village	Percentage
Yes	65.8
No	32.5
Both (Village & City)	0.9
I would shift to my husband	0.9

(Source- Field work) Table No.1.8 Opinion on Settling Back in the Village in %



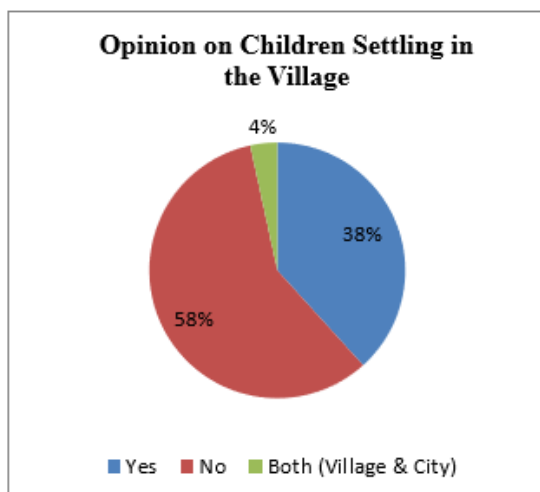
Opinion on Children Settling in the Village	Percentage
Yes	38.3
No	58.3
Both (Village & City)	3.4

(Source- Field work) Table No.1.9 Opinion on Children Settling in the Village in %



Facilities Available in the Village	Percentage
Electricity	100
State Transport (ST) Bus Service	92.1
Clinic (Dispensary)	20.2
Hospital	0
Post Office	97.4
Internet Services	16.7
Bank	0.9
Others	3.5

(Source- Field work) Table No.1.10 Facilities Available in the Village in %



Opinion on Children Settling in the Village	Percentage
Yes	38.3
No	58.3
Both (Village & City)	3.4

(Source- Field work) Table No.1.11 Opinion on Children Settling in the Village in %

Summary:

The present study of migration trends in Pargaon Memane village of Purandar Taluka reveals significant changes in migration patterns over time, influenced by socio-economic and environmental factors. It suggests that improving rural infrastructure, promoting agro-based industries, and encouraging sustainable tourism (such as agro-tourism) can help reduce migration and support balanced regional development. The aforementioned study reveals that the village of Pargaon Memane historically possessed a predominantly agrarian population; however, due to drought-like conditions during the decade of 1980–90, a significant wave of rural-to-urban migration occurred. Recently, however, this trend has begun to shift; rural-to-urban migration is declining, while rural-to-rural migration is on the rise. Nevertheless, the migrating population in this context consists not of the active workforce, but rather of dependents moving into rural areas.

Although migration may ostensibly serve the interests of the individuals involved, the ensuing problems and consequences are of a serious nature. Homes in rural areas are increasingly seen standing locked and abandoned. Enrollment in Marathi-medium schools is declining rapidly, a trend that has subsequently impacted high schools and colleges. As agriculture is no longer economically viable, people are abandoning their farms and flocking toward the cities. Agriculture serves as the very foundation of industrialization; if this sector is neglected, it will be impossible to achieve—let alone sustain—the nation's industrial and economic growth. The economic stability of an agrarian nation like India would be severely undermined. Furthermore, should rural culture undergo a decline, it would not take long for the nation's broader cultural fabric to crumble as well.

Suggestions:

- Provision of essential infrastructure within villages.
- Development of agro-allied industries.
- Promotion and expansion of enterprises such as agro-tourism within this sector.
- Adopting modern technology, actively involving women in these processes, and initiating various agriculture- and tourism-related activities specifically for women.

- Establishing dairy and farming enterprises on a group basis; this approach can help mitigate the trend of rural-to-urban migration.

Acknowledgment

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the management and Principal of Annasaheb Magar College, Hadapsar, Pune, for providing the necessary institutional support and academic environment to carry out this research. We are deeply thankful to all the respondents from Pargaon Memane village, Purandar Taluka, who willingly participated in the survey and shared valuable information essential for this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Cyclone Hazards and Environmental Management in India

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030419

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 82-84
April 2026

Submitted: 14 Mar. 2026
Revised: 26 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 24 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21817845

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817845>



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Abstract

In India, natural disasters occur every year in different regions and have a significant impact on both human life and the environment. Among these disasters, cyclones are one of the major phenomena, with their effects being prominently observed along both the eastern and western coasts of the country. Therefore, this research paper focuses on examining the impact of cyclones in India and their environmental management. No one can control nature; however, it is possible to take measures to reduce or prevent the damage caused to humans and the environment by natural disasters. This research paper will review the measures that can be taken for this purpose.

Keyword: Cyclone Hazard, Coastal Area, India, Environmental Management, Sustainability Development.

Introduction

In certain regions on the Earth, winds rotate in a circular motion extending several meters above the surface. This type of wind movement is called a cyclone. Cyclones also form due to significant differences in air pressure, and when these vortices become destructive, they are referred to as cyclones. Cyclones are known by different names in different regions of the world. For example, they are called hurricanes along the western coast of the United States, typhoons in the eastern Pacific Ocean, Willy-Willies in Australia, and cyclones in the Indian subcontinent. Cyclones cause significant damage to both the environment and human life in India as well as across the world every year. In such disasters, it often takes many years to recover from the losses incurred. Since India is surrounded by seas on three sides, the intensity of cyclones is very high in its coastal regions. If certain precautions are taken before the occurrence of a cyclone, the damage can be reduced to some extent. With the objective of understanding how to minimize damage to both the environment and human life in cyclone-prone areas of India, this research has been conducted to examine the necessary measures that should be implemented.

Objectives of the Research

1. To study the cyclones occurring along the western and eastern coasts of India.
2. To study the human, economic, and environmental impacts of cyclones.
3. To study the measures implemented for protection against cyclones

Research Methodology

This study is based on secondary data collected from books, research articles, government reports, newspapers, and Google-based sources. The information has been analyzed using simple descriptive methods.

Analysis

Cyclones are mainly classified into three types: tropical cyclones, temperate cyclones, and polar cyclones. The impact of tropical cyclones is observed on both sides of the equator, up to 30° North latitude and 30° South latitude. The direction of tropical cyclones is anticlockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern Hemisphere. The speed of these storms ranges from 180 to 400 km per hour, and their diameter ranges from 80 to 300 km. Tropical cyclones are formed during the summer season, especially over warm oceans where the temperature is above 27°C. These cyclones develop in both hemispheres between 5° and 30° latitudes, mainly in the western parts of the oceans. The speed of cyclones is higher over the ocean, and it gradually decreases after they make landfall.

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How to cite this article:

Rajesh Pandurang, K. (2026). Cyclone Hazards and Environmental Management in India. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 3(4(III)), 82–84.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817845>



For this reason, they mainly affect the coastal areas of continents. The direction of these cyclones is from east to west along with the trade winds, which is why the eastern coast of India experiences more cyclones compared to the western coast.

Cyclone in India (2015 – 2025)			
Sr.No	Year	West Coast	East Coast
1	2015	- -----	Komen (West. Bengal)
2	2016	-----	Roanu (Andhra Pradesh & West Bengal)
3	2017	Ockhi (Kerala & Gujarat)	-----
4	2018	-----	Titli (Odisha & Andhra Pradesh)
5	2019	Vayu (Gujarat)	Fani (Odisha), Bulbul (Bengal)
6	2020	Nisarga (Aibag,Maharashtra)	Amphan (W. Bengal), Nivar (Namil nadu)
7	2021	Tauktae (Gujarat)	Yaas (Odisha & Bengal)
8	2022	-----	Asani (Andhra Pradesh), Mandous (Namil nadu)
9	2023	Biparjoy (Gujarat)	Michaung (Andhra Pradesh & Namil nadu)
10	2024	-----	Remal (Bengal)
11	2025	Shakti (Gujarat)	Montha (Andhra Pradesh)

Geographical Distribution of Tropical Cyclones		
Sr. No	Region of the Earth	Avg. Cyclones / Year
1	Arabian Sea	02
2	Bay of Bengal	10
3	Indian Ocean (Mauritius region)	06
4	Pacific Ocean (Fiji region)	02
5	West Indies Islands	06
6	South China Sea	22

Effects of Cyclones

Human living along the western and eastern coasts of India face cyclones every year. These disasters disrupt daily life in these regions. Strong winds, floods, and collapsing houses have caused the loss of many lives. In 1999, thousands of people died due to a cyclone in Odisha. Contamination of water led to the spread of large-scale epidemics. People had to leave their homes and move to other places. Every time a cyclone has hit the Indian coast, coastal settlements have been disturbed, causing severe damage to both human life and the environment. Saltwater from the sea enters the agricultural land along the coast,

reducing soil fertility, which leads to a decline in long-term crop production and weakens the rural economy. In reality, the environment has also suffered significant damage. Mangrove forests act as a natural protective barrier, but they have also been damaged due to cyclones. Cyclones cause disruption of electricity supply in coastal areas and damage roads, bridges, and railways. As a result, the transport and communication systems collapse, and daily life becomes disturbed. In such situations, it becomes a major challenge for the government.

**Solution**

1. If cyclones are predicted in advance and people are warned on time, loss of life can be greatly reduced.
2. People living in dangerous coastal areas should be moved to safer places in advance.
3. Building strong and wind-resistant houses can reduce property damage.
4. If safe shelters are built in coastal areas, people can be protected during emergencies.
5. Mangrove trees should be planted in coastal areas.
6. Emergency plans, training, and public awareness should be implemented.
7. Disaster management teams should be kept ready.
8. Providing immediate relief to people affected by cyclones.
9. Sustainable policies should be implemented.

Conclusion

The effects of cyclones are very harmful and affect society, the economy, and the environment. Therefore, it is important to use proper environmental management and sustainable development methods to reduce their impact.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the Principal and faculty members of N.S.R. Arts and Science College, Telgaon, District Beed, for providing academic support and encouragement during the preparation of this research paper entitled "*Cyclone Hazards and Environmental Management in India.*"

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Spatial Analysis of Urban Growth and Land Use Change in Pune City

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030420

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 85-92
April 2026

Submitted: 12 Mar. 2026
Revised: 18 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 20 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21817883

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817883>



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Abstract

Urban growth is a major geographical process that transforms the spatial structure and land use patterns of cities. Pune has experienced rapid urban expansion in recent decades due to industrial development, the growth of educational institutions, and the emergence of the Information Technology sector. This study analyzes the spatial patterns of urban growth and land use change in Pune using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing techniques. Multi-temporal satellite data and spatial datasets were used to examine changes in built-up areas, vegetation cover, and agricultural land. The analysis reveals a substantial increase in built-up areas, particularly along major transportation corridors and newly developed suburban regions. At the same time, significant reductions in agricultural land and green spaces have been observed due to continuous urban expansion. Spatial analysis also indicates that infrastructure development, industrial zones, and population growth have strongly influenced the direction and intensity of urban growth. The findings highlight the importance of geospatial technologies in understanding urban dynamics and supporting sustainable urban planning and land management in rapidly growing cities.

Keywords: Spatial Analysis, GIS, Remote Sensing, Urban Growth, Land Use Change, Urban Planning, Pune City.

Introduction

Urbanization is one of the most significant geographical processes shaping the spatial structure and functional organization of cities across the world. Rapid population growth, economic development, and technological advancements have accelerated urban expansion, particularly in developing countries. In India, metropolitan and emerging urban centers have experienced substantial growth over the past few decades, leading to major transformations in land use and land cover patterns. These changes often involve the conversion of agricultural land, open spaces, and vegetation into residential, commercial, and industrial areas. Among the rapidly growing cities in India, Pune in Maharashtra has emerged as an important economic, educational, and technological hub. The city has witnessed remarkable urban expansion due to the growth of industries, higher educational institutions, and the rapid development of the Information Technology sector. Areas such as Hinjewadi, Wakad, Wagholi, and Hadapsar have experienced significant transformation as a result of residential development, IT parks, and infrastructure expansion. These developments have extended the urban boundaries of Pune and altered the spatial structure of the metropolitan region. Urbanization is one of the most significant geographical processes shaping the spatial structure and functional organization of cities across the world. Rapid population growth, economic development, and technological advancements have accelerated urban expansion, particularly in developing countries. In India, metropolitan and emerging urban centers have experienced substantial growth over the past few decades, leading to major transformations in land use and land cover patterns. These changes often involve the conversion of agricultural land, open spaces, and vegetation into residential, commercial, and industrial areas. Among the rapidly growing cities in India, Pune in Maharashtra has emerged as an important economic, educational, and technological hub. The city has witnessed remarkable urban expansion due to the growth of industries, higher educational institutions, and the rapid development of the Information Technology sector.

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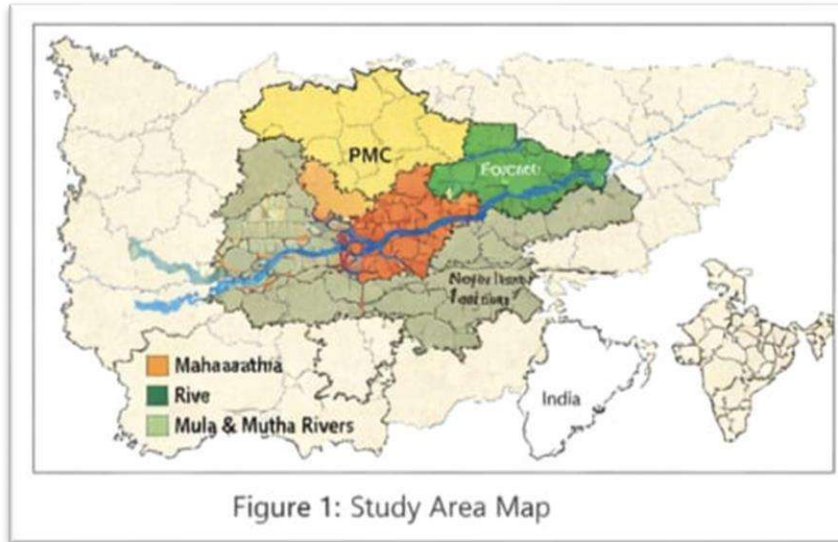
Kamble, K. M. (2026). Spatial Analysis of Urban Growth and Land Use Change in Pune City. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 3(4(III)), 85–92.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817883>

Over the past three decades, Pune has undergone rapid urban transformation driven by population growth, economic opportunities, and infrastructure development. However, this rapid expansion has also created several environmental and planning

Areas such as Hinjewadi, Wakad, Wagholi, and Hadapsar have experienced significant transformation as a result of residential development, IT parks, and infrastructure expansion. These developments have extended the urban boundaries of Pune and altered the spatial structure of the metropolitan region. Challenges, including the reduction of

green spaces, increasing urban heat island effects, traffic congestion, and pressure on natural resources such as water and land.

Therefore, analyzing the spatial dynamics of urban growth and land use change in Pune is essential for understanding the patterns and drivers of urban expansion. Such analysis can support effective urban planning, sustainable land management, and environmental conservation strategies for the future development of the city.



2. Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to examine the spatial dynamics of urban growth and land use change in Pune using modern geospatial techniques. The main objectives of this research are as follows:

1. **To analyze the spatial pattern of urban growth** in Pune city and identify the major directions and trends of urban expansion.
2. **To examine land use and land cover (LULC) changes over time** by analyzing multi-temporal spatial data and satellite imagery.
3. **To identify the environmental impacts associated with rapid urban expansion**, such as reduction in agricultural land, decline in green spaces, and increased pressure on natural resources.
4. **To assess the effectiveness of geospatial technologies**, particularly Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing, in analyzing urban growth patterns and supporting sustainable urban planning.
5. **To provide recommendations for sustainable urban development and land management** based on the spatial analysis of urban growth in Pune city.

3. Study Area

Pune is one of the major urban centers in Maharashtra, located in the western part of India on the Deccan Plateau. The city lies at an elevation of approximately 560 meters above sea level and is situated close to the foothills of the Western Ghats. Its geographical location and favorable climatic conditions have made Pune

an important center for education, industry, and information technology.

The metropolitan region of Pune mainly includes the administrative areas of the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) and the Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC). Over the past few decades, rapid urban expansion has extended the city boundaries into surrounding suburban and peri-urban areas, transforming the spatial structure of the metropolitan region.

Pune is well connected to major metropolitan cities such as Mumbai and Bengaluru through national highways, railways, and expressways, which has facilitated economic growth and regional connectivity. The city's transportation network and proximity to major economic corridors have played an important role in accelerating urban development.

Hydrologically, the city is influenced by the confluence of the Mula River and the Mutha River, which form the Mula-Mutha River system flowing through the city. These rivers are important for the urban water system, ecological balance, and landscape structure of Pune.

In recent decades, the development of large IT parks and industrial areas, particularly in places such as Hinjewadi, along with the presence of reputed educational institutions, has attracted significant migration from different parts of India. As a result, Pune has experienced rapid urbanization, leading to major changes in land use patterns, infrastructure development, and spatial expansion of the city.



Figure 2: Base Map of Pune City

4. Literature Review

Urban growth and land use change have been widely studied using modern geospatial technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing. These technologies enable researchers to analyze spatial patterns, monitor land cover transformations, and understand the dynamics of urban expansion. Several studies conducted in major Indian cities have highlighted the significant role of spatial analysis in examining urban development and environmental changes. In the context of Pune, various researchers have investigated the spatial patterns of urban growth and land use change over the past few decades. Previous studies indicate that the rapid expansion of Pune has been strongly influenced by industrialization, population growth, and improved transportation infrastructure. The development of IT parks, industrial estates, and residential townships has accelerated urbanization in suburban areas surrounding the city. Research based on multi-temporal satellite imagery has shown a substantial increase in built-up areas in Pune between 1990 and 2020. During this period, agricultural land and open spaces were gradually converted into

residential, commercial, and industrial land uses. Areas such as Hinjewadi, Wakad, Wagholi, and Hadapsar have experienced rapid urban development due to infrastructure expansion and economic opportunities. Several studies have also focused on the environmental impacts of urban growth in Pune. Rapid urban expansion has resulted in the decline of vegetation cover, reduction of agricultural land, and the emergence of urban environmental problems such as the urban heat island effect, air pollution, and increased pressure on water resources. These environmental challenges highlight the need for effective urban planning and sustainable land management. In addition, advanced spatial modeling techniques such as cellular automata models and Markov chain analysis have been used by researchers to simulate and predict future urban growth patterns. These models help planners and policymakers understand possible scenarios of urban expansion and assess the long-term impacts of land use changes. Overall, the existing literature emphasizes that spatial analysis plays a crucial role in understanding urban dynamics, monitoring land use transformations, and supporting sustainable urban planning strategies in rapidly growing cities like Pune.

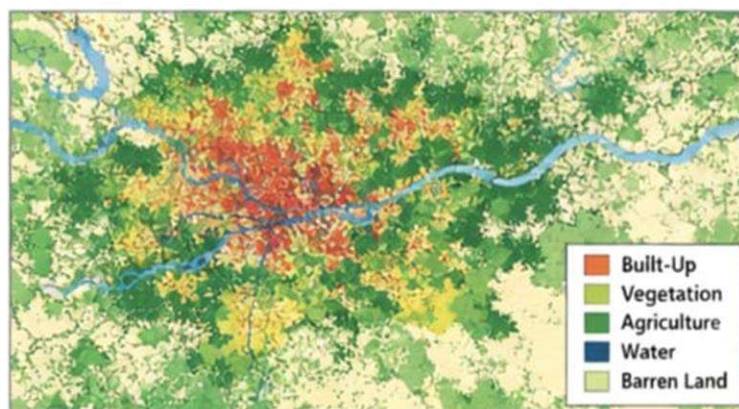


Figure 3: Land Use / Land Cover Map

5. Data Sources

The present study on urban growth and land use change in Pune utilizes various spatial and statistical datasets obtained from reliable sources. These datasets help

The major data sources used in the study are presented below:

Data Type	Source	Purpose
Satellite Imagery	Landsat Program	Used for land use and land cover classification and detection of urban expansion over time
Administrative Boundaries	Government GIS datasets	Used for mapping the study area and defining municipal boundaries
Population Data	Census of India	Used for analyzing population growth and its relationship with urban expansion
Road and Infrastructure Data	OpenStreetMap (OSM)	Used for mapping transportation networks and infrastructure development
Municipal Planning Data	Pune Municipal Corporation and Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation	Used for urban planning analysis and understanding city development policies

These datasets provide essential spatial and socio-economic information required for examining the patterns of urban growth, land use transformation, and infrastructure development in Pune city.

6. Methodology

6.1 Remote Sensing Data Processing

Remote sensing data plays a crucial role in analyzing urban growth and land use change in Pune. In this study, multi-temporal satellite imagery obtained from the Landsat Program was used to examine changes in land use and land cover over different time periods. These satellite images provide consistent and reliable spatial data for monitoring urban expansion and environmental changes.

The satellite imagery from different years was pre-processed and analyzed using geospatial software such as QGIS and ArcGIS. Pre-processing steps included image correction, georeferencing, and clipping the images to the boundary of the study area to ensure accuracy in spatial analysis.

After preprocessing, image classification techniques were applied to categorize the land surface into different land-use classes such as built-up areas, vegetation, water bodies, agricultural land, and open land. Supervised classification methods were used to improve the accuracy of land-use identification by selecting representative training samples for each category.

The processed and classified satellite images enabled the identification of spatial patterns of urban expansion, the growth of built-up areas, and the reduction of vegetation and agricultural land over time. These results provide valuable insights into the dynamics of urban growth and land use transformation in Pune.

6.2 Land Use Classification

Land use and land cover classification is an important step in spatial analysis for understanding urban growth patterns. In this study, satellite imagery of Pune

in analyzing land use patterns, urban expansion, infrastructure development, and demographic changes using geospatial techniques such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing.

was analyzed using the **supervised classification technique** to categorize different types of land use. This method involves selecting representative training samples for each land category and classifying the remaining pixels in the image based on their spectral characteristics.

The classification process was carried out using geospatial software such as QGIS and ArcGIS, which allowed accurate identification and mapping of land use categories.

The land surface was classified into the following major categories:

- **Built-up Area:** Includes residential areas, commercial buildings, industrial zones, roads, and other urban infrastructure.
- **Vegetation:** Includes forests, parks, gardens, and other green cover within and around the urban area.
- **Agricultural Land:** Land used for farming activities such as crop cultivation and orchards in the peri-urban regions.
- **Water Bodies:** includes Rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and other surface water features such as the Mula River and Mutha River flowing through the city.
- **Barren Land:** Areas with little or no vegetation cover, including open land, rocky surfaces, and unused land.

This classification helped in identifying spatial patterns of urban expansion and understanding how different land use categories have changed over time in Pune city.

6.3 Change Detection Analysis

Change detection analysis is an important method used to identify and quantify changes in land use and land cover over time. In this study, multi-temporal satellite images of Pune obtained from the Landsat Program were compared to examine the spatial and temporal changes in different land-use categories.

The classified images from different years were analyzed using geospatial tools available in QGIS and

ArcGIS. By comparing these images, it was possible to identify the transformation of land from one category to another, such as agricultural land or vegetation being converted into built-up areas.

The change detection process involved overlaying land-use maps from different time periods and calculating the area of change for each land-use class. This analysis helped in identifying the extent and direction of urban

expansion as well as the reduction of natural land cover. The results indicated a significant increase in built-up areas, particularly in suburban and peri-urban zones, reflecting the rapid urban growth of Pune over the past few decades.

This approach provided valuable insights into the spatial dynamics of urban development and helped in understanding the long-term trends of land use change in Pune city.

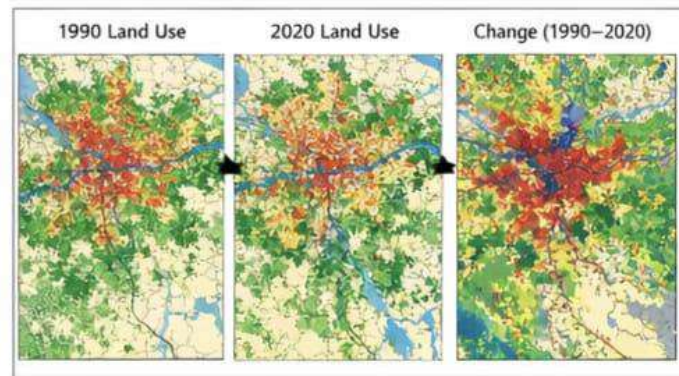


Figure 4: LULC Change 1990–2020

6.4 Spatial Pattern Analysis

Spatial pattern analysis was conducted to understand the distribution, concentration, and clustering of urban development in Pune. This analysis helps in identifying how built-up areas are spatially organized and how urban growth spreads across different parts of the city.

Various spatial statistical techniques and geospatial tools available in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) were used to examine the spatial characteristics of urban expansion. Software platforms such as QGIS and ArcGIS were utilized to perform spatial analysis, including mapping, overlay analysis, and spatial statistics.

Methods such as spatial clustering, density analysis, and proximity analysis were applied to evaluate the concentration of built-up areas and their relationship with major transportation corridors, industrial zones, and residential developments. These techniques helped identify areas with high urban growth intensity and regions where urban development is gradually expanding.

The spatial pattern analysis revealed that urban development in Pune is strongly influenced by transportation networks, industrial hubs, and IT parks. Rapid urban expansion has been observed along major growth corridors and in suburban regions surrounding the city. This analysis provides valuable insights into the spatial structure of urban development and supports better urban planning and land management strategies.

7. Results and Discussion

7.1 Urban Expansion

The spatial analysis indicates a significant increase in built-up areas in Pune between 1991 and 2022. Rapid

urbanization, population growth, and economic development have contributed to the continuous expansion of the city's urban boundaries. Large areas that were previously agricultural land or open spaces have gradually been converted into residential, commercial, and industrial land uses.

The study shows that urban development has mainly expanded toward the western and northeastern parts of the city. Suburban areas have experienced rapid transformation due to improved transportation networks, infrastructure development, and the growth of employment opportunities.

One of the most important factors influencing urban expansion in Pune is the development of Information Technology corridors. Areas such as Hinjewadi have emerged as major IT hubs, attracting multinational companies, technology parks, and large numbers of skilled professionals. As a result, surrounding areas such as Wakad and Baner have witnessed rapid residential and commercial development.

This pattern of growth indicates that economic activity, particularly the expansion of the IT sector, has played a significant role in shaping the spatial structure and direction of urban growth in Pune city.

7.2 Land Use Change

The land use and land cover (LULC) analysis for Pune reveals significant changes in the spatial distribution of different land categories over the past three decades. The comparison of multi-temporal satellite images obtained from the Landsat Program shows a clear trend of urban expansion and transformation of natural and agricultural landscapes into built-up areas.

The classified land use data for different years are presented in the following table:

Land Use Category	1991	2001	2011	2022
Built-up Area	20%	28%	36%	52%
Vegetation	35%	30%	25%	18%
Agricultural Land	30%	25%	22%	16%
Water Bodies	5%	5%	4%	4%
Barren Land	10%	12%	13%	10%

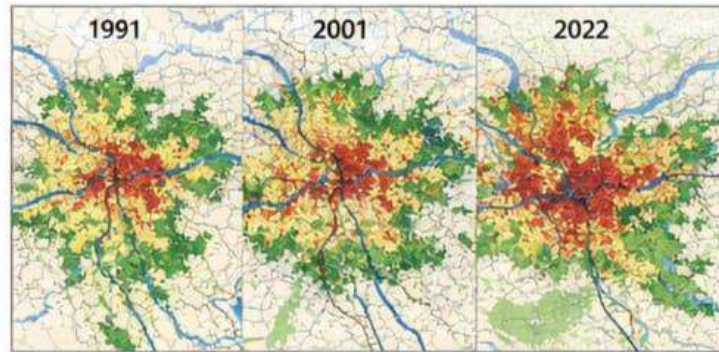


Figure 6: Urban Growth 1991–2022

The results clearly indicate a rapid increase in **built-up areas**, which expanded from 20% in 1991 to 52% in 2022. This growth reflects the rapid urbanization and infrastructure development occurring in Pune. Residential colonies, commercial complexes, industrial zones, and transportation networks have significantly contributed to this expansion.

At the same time, there has been a noticeable decline in **vegetation cover** and **agricultural land**. Vegetation decreased from 35% to 18%, while agricultural land declined from 30% to 16% during the study period. This reduction highlights the environmental impact of rapid urban growth, including loss of green spaces and farmland.

The analysis also shows that **water bodies** have remained relatively stable with only minor changes, while **barren land** fluctuated slightly due to construction activities and land conversion. Overall, the findings demonstrate that urban growth has significantly altered the land use structure of Pune city.

7.3 Spatial Pattern of Development

The spatial analysis of urban growth in Pune reveals distinct patterns of urban development influenced by economic activities, transportation infrastructure, and population growth. Using geospatial tools in Geographic Information Systems (GIS), three major spatial patterns of development have been identified:

1. Centralized Growth in the Old City Area

The historic core of Pune has experienced dense and concentrated urban development. The central part of the city contains older residential neighborhoods, commercial markets, and administrative centers. Due to limited available land, this area shows high building density and vertical development, reflecting the traditional urban structure of the city.

2. Linear Growth along Transportation Corridors

Urban expansion in Pune has also followed major transportation routes such as highways and arterial roads connecting the city with nearby regions like Mumbai. Development along these corridors includes commercial establishments, industrial zones, and residential complexes. This linear growth pattern is strongly influenced by improved connectivity and accessibility.

3. Peripheral Expansion in Suburban Regions

Rapid urban growth has also occurred in the peripheral and suburban areas surrounding Pune. Regions such as Hinjewadi, Wakad, Wagholi, and Hadapsar have experienced significant residential and commercial development. This peripheral expansion is mainly driven by the availability of land, IT sector growth, and infrastructure development.

Overall, these spatial patterns illustrate how urban development in Pune has evolved from a compact city center to a more dispersed metropolitan structure, reflecting the dynamic nature of urban growth and land use change.

7.4 Environmental Impacts

Rapid urban expansion in Pune has led to several environmental challenges that affect the ecological balance and sustainability of the urban environment. The transformation of natural and agricultural land into built-up areas has significantly altered the city's landscape and environmental conditions.

One of the major impacts of urban growth is the **decline in green cover**. Large areas of vegetation and agricultural land have been converted into residential, commercial, and industrial developments. This reduction in vegetation affects biodiversity, reduces carbon absorption, and weakens the ecological stability of the region.

Another important environmental issue is the **urban heat island effect**, where built-up areas with

concrete structures and asphalt roads absorb and retain more heat than natural surfaces. As a result, urban temperatures in densely developed areas become higher compared to surrounding rural regions.

Urban expansion has also increased **surface runoff** due to the replacement of permeable land surfaces with impervious materials such as roads, pavements, and buildings. This reduces groundwater recharge and increases the risk of urban flooding during heavy rainfall.

Additionally, **water pollution** has become a growing concern due to untreated sewage discharge, industrial waste, and urban runoff entering water bodies. Rivers such as the Mula River and Mutha River are increasingly affected by pollution resulting from rapid urbanization.

Overall, the loss of vegetation cover and natural landscapes reduces the ecological resilience of the city and affects climate regulation, water resources, and environmental sustainability. These challenges highlight the need for effective urban planning, environmental management, and sustainable land use practices in Pune.

8. Role of GIS in Urban Planning

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology plays a crucial role in modern urban planning by providing accurate spatial data and analytical tools for effective decision-making. In rapidly growing cities such as Pune, GIS helps planners understand spatial patterns of development, monitor land use changes, and design sustainable urban development strategies.

GIS integrates spatial data from various sources such as satellite imagery, administrative maps, and socio-economic datasets. By combining these datasets, planners can analyze urban growth trends, infrastructure distribution, and environmental conditions in a comprehensive manner.

GIS has several important applications in urban planning, including:

- **Land-use Planning:** GIS helps identify suitable areas for residential, commercial, and industrial development while maintaining balanced land use.
- **Transportation Analysis:** Spatial analysis assists in planning efficient road networks, traffic management, and public transportation systems.
- **Disaster Management:** GIS supports risk assessment, flood mapping, and emergency response planning.

- **Environmental Monitoring:** It enables monitoring of green spaces, water bodies, pollution levels, and urban environmental changes.
- **Infrastructure Planning:** GIS helps in planning utilities such as water supply, drainage systems, electricity networks, and public services.

GIS-based spatial analysis allows urban planners to evaluate different development scenarios and identify suitable locations for future growth while minimizing environmental impacts. Therefore, GIS has become an essential tool for sustainable urban planning and management in rapidly expanding cities like Pune.

9. Future Urban Growth Scenario

The future urban growth of Pune is expected to continue expanding rapidly if current development trends persist. Increasing population, economic opportunities, and infrastructure development are likely to drive further urban expansion toward peripheral and suburban regions surrounding the city. Areas located on the outskirts are particularly vulnerable to land use transformation as agricultural land and open spaces are gradually converted into residential, commercial, and industrial zones.

To manage this growth effectively, it is essential to adopt sustainable urban planning strategies. Approaches such as the development of **green infrastructure**, **smart transportation systems**, and effective **land-use zoning** can help reduce environmental pressure and improve the overall quality of urban life. These strategies can also help maintain ecological balance while accommodating the growing needs of the population.

Modern planning practices increasingly rely on geospatial technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing to analyze spatial patterns of development and predict future urban expansion. By integrating spatial data with urban policies and development frameworks, planners can identify suitable areas for growth while protecting environmentally sensitive regions.

Therefore, it is essential for urban planners and policymakers to incorporate spatial analysis into long-term development planning in order to ensure balanced, sustainable, and resilient urban growth in Pune city.

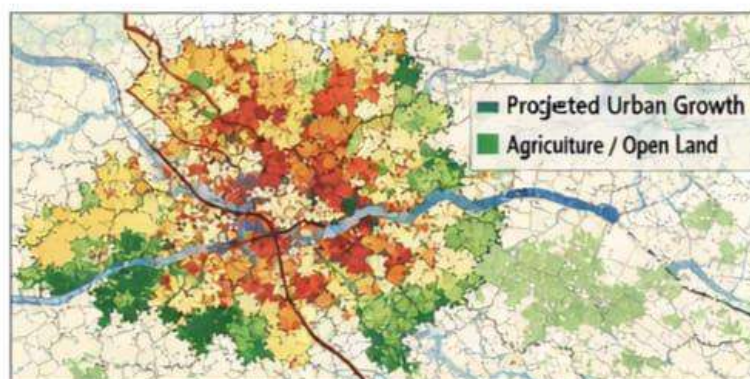


Figure 10: Future Urban Growth 2030



Conclusion

The spatial analysis of urban growth and land use change in Pune reveals significant transformation in the city's landscape over the past three decades. Rapid population growth, industrial development, expansion of the IT sector, and improved transportation infrastructure have contributed to the continuous expansion of built-up areas. As a result, large portions of agricultural land and vegetation have been converted into residential, commercial, and industrial zones. The application of modern geospatial technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing has proven highly effective in analyzing spatial patterns of urban development. These tools enable researchers and planners to monitor land use changes, identify trends in urban expansion, and assess the environmental impacts associated with rapid urbanization. The findings of this study highlight several environmental concerns, including the reduction of green spaces, increased surface runoff, and the emergence of urban heat island effects. These challenges emphasize the importance of adopting sustainable urban planning strategies that balance economic development with environmental conservation. To ensure sustainable growth in the future, urban planning in Pune should incorporate geospatial analysis, effective land use policies, and environmental protection measures. Future research can further improve urban spatial analysis by using high-resolution satellite imagery, advanced machine learning classification techniques, and participatory GIS approaches. Such innovations will enhance the accuracy of urban growth monitoring and support better decision-making for sustainable urban development.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the Principal and the Department of Geography, PDEA's Waghire College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Saswad, for providing the academic environment and necessary facilities to carry out this research work. The author is deeply thankful to all teachers and faculty members for their valuable guidance, encouragement, and support throughout the study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

A Study of Tour Design for Exploring Offbeat Destinations in Purandar Taluka, Pune District: A Sustainable Development Perspective

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030421

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 93-96
April 2026

Submitted: 15 Mar. 2026
Revised: 25 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 24 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21817930

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817930>



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Abstract

Tourism is recognized as one of the world's fastest-growing industries. Furthermore, it plays a pivotal role in fostering balanced regional development. A review of existing literature reveals that, amidst the hectic pace of modern life, there is a growing interest among tourists in unconventional destinations that offer natural beauty, cultural heritage, authentic rural experiences, and a tranquil atmosphere. Within the Purandar Taluka of Pune district, significant potential for tourism is evident, driven by the presence of historic forts, temples, rural landscapes, agri-tourism opportunities, and rich cultural traditions. However, despite possessing such a wealth of historical and cultural heritage, it has been observed that many potential tourist sites within the region remain largely unknown and underdeveloped. This study focuses on formulating a sustainable tourism framework for the unconventional tourist sites in Saswad, as well as on facilitating the development of these currently underdeveloped destinations. The objective of this research is to identify the unique attractions and potential of these tourist sites; to curate appropriate travel itineraries that incorporate both established and 'offbeat' destinations; and to foster sustainable tourism development by ensuring local community participation, promoting environmental conservation, and generating economic benefits for rural communities. As indicated by this study, eco-friendly tourism planning holds the potential to not only preserve natural and cultural heritage but also to significantly improve the socio-economic status of the local population. The present study endeavors to formulate an eco-friendly tourism plan designed to promote responsible tourism, while simultaneously fostering the conservation of local resources and supporting rural livelihoods.

Keywords: Offbeat Tourism, Tour Design, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

Tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing industries in contemporary times. Driven by the desire to find respite, joy, and entertainment amidst the hustle and bustle of daily life, tourism is increasingly gravitating toward natural landscapes and rural regions. In such settings, effective tourism planning and tour design are crucial elements for ensuring that visitors can experience relaxation and recreation within a limited timeframe. Through this process, tourism sites, transportation, accommodation, various activities, and tourist services are organized in a systematic and coordinated manner. Offbeat tourism" refers to less-crowded and lesser-known destinations that offer authentic experiences while simultaneously alleviating the pressure on popular tourist hotspots. Saswad is a historic town situated in the Purandar Taluka, located in the southeastern part of Pune District. Acultural heritage site, the town of Saswad despite its proximity to Pune is renowned for its rich historical background, as well as for its forts, temples, traditional villages, hills, waterfalls, and agricultural landscape. Sites such as Purandar Fort, the Narayanpur Datta Temple, Bopdev Ghat, and various rural tourism destinations offer significant opportunities for sustainable tourism development. The region is home to numerous temples and boasts a rich, scenic natural environment. However, many of its heritage sites, natural attractions, and cultural assets still remain largely undiscovered and underdeveloped.

Study Area:

Purandar Taluka is situated in the southern part of the Pune district in Maharashtra. Geographically, the taluka lies approximately between 18.20° and 18.45° North latitude and 73.85° and 74.15° East longitude.

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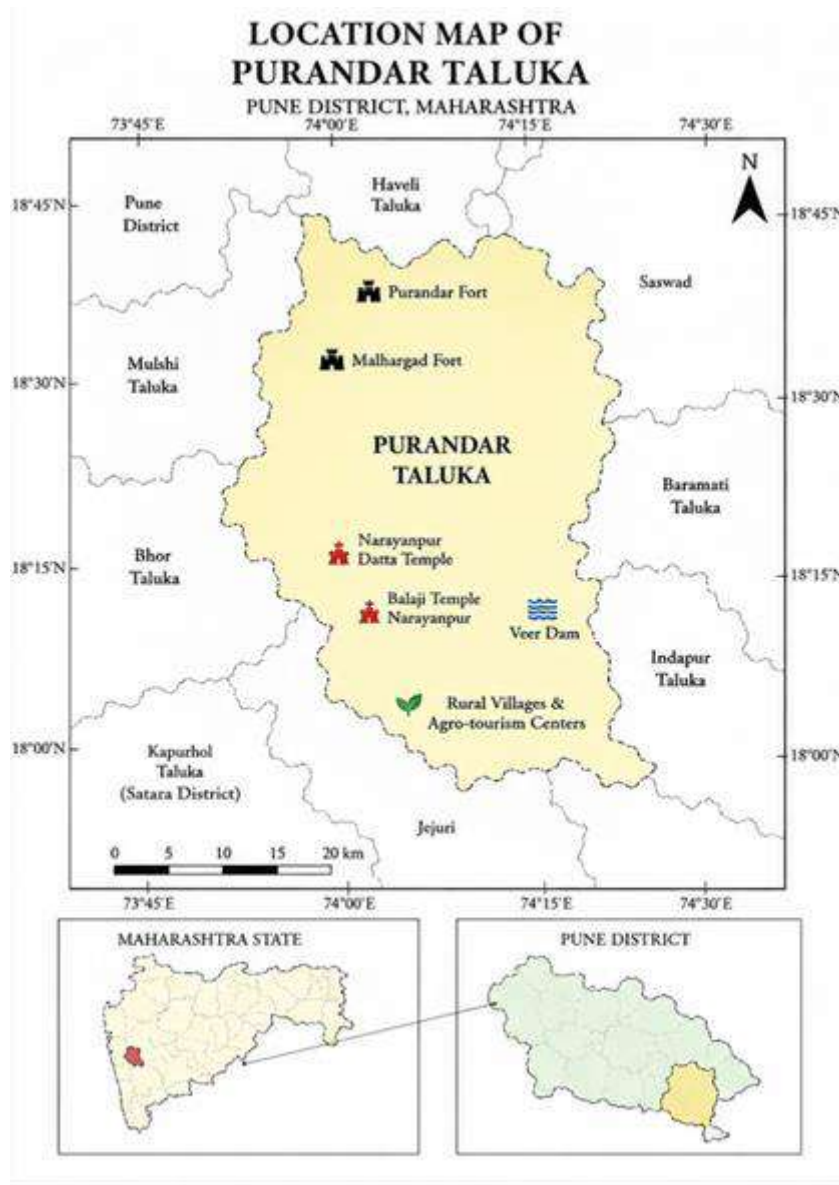
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How to cite this article:

Dhotre, J. B. (2026). A Study of Tour Design for Exploring Offbeat Destinations in Purandar Taluka, Pune District: A Sustainable Development Perspective. *Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 3(4(III)), 93–96. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817930>

The total geographical area of Purandar Taluka is estimated to be approximately 1,290 square kilometers. The average elevation of the taluka ranges from about 700 to 1,387 meters above sea level, with Purandar Fort standing as one of the highest points in the region. According to population estimates, the total population of the taluka is approximately 2.55 lakhs; of this, 55 to 60 percent constitutes the 'working population,' which is primarily engaged in agriculture, animal husbandry, and related rural occupations. The availability of fertile land and seasonal rainfall has

established agriculture as the primary economic activity in this region. The climate of the taluka is semi-arid in nature, receiving moderate rainfall during the monsoon season precipitation that proves highly conducive to agriculture and rural livelihoods. The defining features of this region include its hills, plateaus, valleys, and rural settlements, which collectively create a picturesque natural landscape that is highly favorable for the development of tourism. Purandar Taluka is also particularly renowned for its historical, religious, and natural tourist attractions.



Research Methodology:

The present study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Primary data was collected through direct field visits to various tourist sites within Purandar Taluka. During these visits, the 'observation method' was employed to study the physical environment, tourism facilities, accessibility, and tourist movements at these locations. To gain insights into tourist experiences, local community participation, and the socio-economic significance of tourism in the region, interviews were conducted with tourists, and interactions were held

with local residents. Techniques such as photography and mapping were also utilized to document key tourist attractions, cultural landscapes, and geographical features within the study area.

Tourism Potential of Purandar Taluka:

Historical Tourism

Purandar Taluka is endowed with a rich historical heritage inextricably linked to the Maratha Empire and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Prominent forts such as Purandar Fort and Malhargad—renowned for their historical significance,



military architecture, and picturesque surroundings— attract mountaineers, historians, and tourists alike.

Religious Tourism

In the realm of religious tourism, the Datta Temple and Balaji Temple in Narayanpur stand out as renowned pilgrimage sites, drawing thousands of devotees throughout the year. These temples serve to boost spiritual tourism and contribute significantly to the local economy.

Nature Tourism

The natural beauty of Purandar Taluka encompassing hills, valleys, waterfalls, and scenic landscapes—holds a special allure for nature enthusiasts and photographers. The 'Veer Dam' is a key natural attraction in the region; the breathtaking vistas it offers, combined with the recreational opportunities available there, captivate visiting tourists. The tranquil atmosphere and the lush greenery spread across the region make it an ideal destination for eco-tourism and sustainable tourism development.

Rural and Agri-Tourism

Purandar Taluka possesses immense potential for rural and agri-tourism, as agriculture constitutes the primary occupation of the region. Here, tourists can immerse themselves in the rural lifestyle, observe traditional farming practices, and experience the local culinary culture and cultural festivities. Agri-tourism activities typically include bullock-cart rides, visits to organic farms, folk art performances, and the enjoyment of traditional Maharashtrian cuisine.

Offbeat Destinations in purandar taluka

Saswad and nearby areas in Purandar Taluka contain several less explored tourist destinations with historical, religious, and cultural importance. These places attract

Tour Plan With Offbeat Destinations In Purandar Taluka

Proposed One Day Tour Plan - 1

Day -1	Destinations
6:30 AM	Departure from Pune
7:00 AM	Sunrise view point at Dive Ghat
8:00 AM	Breakfast at Saswad Town (Famous- Misal Pav/Poha)
8:30 AM	Visit to Purandar Fort
10:30 AM	Visit to Prati Balaji Mandir site seen
12:30 PM	Visit to Narayanpur Mandir site seen
1:30 PM	Traditional rural lunch at a local Dhaba or Maharashtrian Thali
3:00 PM	Karhabai Mandir - Sardar Purandar Wada - Phanse Wada - Mastani lake
5:30 PM	Relax at Mastani lake (Mastani Talav) peaceful waterside spot
5:30 PM	Evening tea at small trip near agriculture activity
6:30 PM	Dive Ghat Sunset view
7:00 PM	Return to Home

Proposed One Day Tour Plan – 2

6:00 Am	Start Early Head To Purandar Fort Trek
9:30 Am	Breakfast After Trek
11:30 Am	Short Drive To Malhargad (Soneri Fort) Off-Bit And Quiet
1:30 Pm	Lunch in Saswad Simple Maharashtrian Thali
3:00 Pm	Explore Mastani Lake Good For Relaxation After A Fast Day
5:30 Pm	Evening View of Valleys From Dive Ghat
7:00 Pm	Rectum To Pune Tired But Happy

Purandar Taluka's tourist plan is based on sustainable development concepts, which prioritize social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Eco-friendly

visitors who are interested in heritage tourism, spirituality, trekking, and rural experiences.

- Karhabai Mandir is a locally important temple known for its religious atmosphere and traditional architecture.
- Sidheshwar Mandir is an ancient temple visited by devotees and nature lovers because of its peaceful surroundings.
- Sardar Purandar Wada reflects the historical heritage and traditional wada architecture of the Maratha period.
- Mastani Talao is associated with the history of Bajirao and Mastani and is known for its scenic beauty.
- Phanse Wada is an old historical structure representing traditional cultural heritage.
- Bhandara Budh Cave is an important cave site attracting trekkers, researchers, and adventure tourists.
- Kaleshwar Mandir is a famous religious site surrounded by natural beauty and spiritual significance.
- Malhargad Fort is a popular trekking and heritage destination known for its fort architecture and panoramic views.
- Prati Balaji Mandir is a well-known pilgrimage center famous for its South Indian temple architecture.
- Vateshwar Mandir is an ancient temple with religious and cultural importance.

These offbeat destinations have strong potential for sustainable tourism development in Purandar Taluka through heritage conservation, eco-tourism, and community participation.

transportation systems, efficient waste management techniques, plastic-free travel programs, and the preservation of natural resources and biodiversity all



contribute to environmental sustainability. Through tourism-related activities like "home-stays," agri-tourism centers, local guide services, handicrafts, and traditional food, economic sustainability helps create job possibilities for locals. Local customs, traditional culture, and legacy are preserved to enhance social and cultural sustainability. Strengthening local identity and promoting responsible tourism growth in the area are greatly aided by the local community's participation in tourism planning as well as cultural exchanges between visitors and local people.

Purandar Taluka's planned sustainable tour design offers a number of social, economic, and environmental advantages. By promoting unusual tourist places and fostering balanced regional growth, it lessens the strain on busy tourist attractions. Through agrotourism, homestays, guide services, and local businesses, the tour design creates job possibilities for locals. Additionally, it promotes the preservation of historical places, traditional ways of life, and cultural heritage. Tourists are made more conscious of conservation and sustainable resource usage through environmentally conscious tourism activities. Additionally, by boosting rural communities' earning potential and promoting regional cuisine, handicrafts, and cultural events, tourist activities strengthen the local economy.

Problems And Challenges:

- Inadequate infrastructure
- Limited accommodation facilities
- Poor road connectivity in villages
- Insufficient tourism promotion
- Environmental degradation due to unmanaged tourism

Suggestions

- Improve transportation and road facilities.
- Promote eco-friendly tourism policies.
- Develop local guides and tourism training programs.
- Encourage homestay development.
- Use digital marketing for destination promotion.
- Implement proper waste management systems.

Conclusion:

Purandar Taluka possesses immense potential for offbeat and sustainable tourism development. Historical forts, religious centers, rural landscapes, and cultural heritage provide diverse tourism opportunities. A properly planned sustainable tour design can help conserve natural and cultural resources while improving the socio-economic conditions of local communities. Therefore, eco-friendly tourism planning and community participation are essential for the long-term development of tourism in Purandar Taluka. sustainable tourism destination, saswad is not just about tourism development. its about cultural revival, community empowerment and showcasing hidden gem of Maharashtra to the world.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the Principal and the Department of Geography, Annasaheb Magar College, Hadapsar, Pune, for providing the necessary academic support and encouragement throughout the course of this research. Heartfelt thanks are extended to the local residents, tourists, and tourism stakeholders of Purandar Taluka who willingly shared valuable information and insights during the field survey and interviews. The author is also grateful to all scholars, researchers, government

publications, and other secondary sources whose literature and data significantly contributed to the successful completion of this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

The Impact of AI Tutors on Academic Performance: A Systematic Review

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030422

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 97-101
April 2026

Submitted: 15 Mar. 2026
Revised: 25 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 24 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21817951

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817951>



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Abstract

This paper presents a systematic review of empirical studies on the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) tutors on students' academic performance, with a thematic focus on human behaviour and educational sustainability. A structured search of electronic databases yielded 42 peer-reviewed articles (2015–2025) on AI-based tutoring systems used in K-12, higher education, and massive open online courses. The synthesis reveals that AI tutors generally support improved learning outcomes, especially in mathematics, science, and language-learning domains, with small-to-moderate effect sizes. Behavioural factors such as motivation, self-regulation, and student-tutor interaction style strongly moderate these effects. When integrated thoughtfully into human-centred educational ecosystems, AI tutors can reduce the carbon intensity of large-scale remediation, widen access, and ease teacher workload. However, over-reliance on AI without human oversight risks inequity, reduced socioemotional development, and data-ethics concerns. The paper concludes with design guidelines for behaviour-sensitive, sustainability-aware AI-tutor deployment and calls for more longitudinal, cross-context research.

Keywords AI tutors, intelligent tutoring systems, academic performance, human behaviour, educational sustainability, personalised learning.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence tutors—intelligent tutoring systems (ITS), adaptive-learning platforms, and generative-AI chatbots—have moved from niche experiments to mainstream educational tools over the past decade. These systems use machine-learning algorithms, natural language processing, and data-driven feedback to personalise instruction, mirroring (in simplified form) the scaffolding role of human tutors. Parallel to this technical evolution, global education policy increasingly frames AI as a lever for sustainable development, especially through improved access, efficiency, and equity in resource-constrained settings. Within this context, the present review asks: *How do AI tutors influence academic performance, and how do human-behavioural and sustainability-related factors condition these impacts?* Unlike single-study reports, this paper synthesises a corpus of empirical work to identify robust patterns and contingencies. The emphasis on human behaviour and sustainability aligns with leading calls for “human-centric” AI in education, which places learners, teachers, and planetary boundaries at the centre of design and policy choices.

Methodology

Research design

This paper follows a systematic-review protocol inspired by PRISMA-style guidelines. The goal is to answer three guiding questions:

1. What is the average effect of AI tutors on academic performance?
2. How do human-behavioural variables (motivation, self-regulation, interaction style) moderate these effects?
3. How do AI tutors relate to sustainability-oriented outcomes (access, equity, energy use, teacher workload)?

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How to cite this article:

Khare, A. A. (2026). *The Impact of AI Tutors on Academic Performance: A Systematic Review*. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, (4(III)), 97–101.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21817951>

Search strategy and databases

Electronic databases searched include Web of Science, Scopus, ERIC, PubMed-PMC, and Google Scholar (publication years 2015–2025). The search string combined three thematic clusters:

1. *AI-tutor cluster*: “AI tutor,” “intelligent tutoring system,” “adaptive learning platform,” “generative-AI tutor,” “ChatGPT-based tutoring.”
2. *Outcome cluster*: “academic performance,” “learning outcomes,” “test scores,” “knowledge gain.”
3. *Context/behaviour cluster*: “motivation,” “engagement,” “self-regulation,” “sustainability,” “equity,” “access.”
4. Where available, backward and forward citation chaining from review articles and meta-analyses was used to retrieve additional studies.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria**Inclusion criteria:**

1. Empirical studies (randomised controlled trials, quasi-experiments, and large-scale pilots).
2. Clear measures of academic performance (e.g., standardised test scores, knowledge-retention tests, grades).
3. Explicit description of the AI tutor’s architecture or interaction mode (e.g., ITS, chatbot, adaptive feedback engine).
4. Use in formal or non-formal educational settings from K-12 to higher education.

Exclusion criteria:

1. Purely theoretical or opinion-based papers without outcome data.
2. Studies where AI tools played only an ancillary role (e.g., grading, plagiarism detection).
3. Conference abstracts or non-peer-reviewed working papers without full methodological detail.

Data extraction and synthesis

1. From the 42 retained studies (total $N \approx 19,000$), the following variables were coded:
 2. Educational level and subject domain.
 3. Type of AI tutor (ITS, chatbot, generative-AI tutor, etc.).
 4. Comparison condition (traditional classroom, human tutor, no-tutor control).
 5. Effect size estimates (Hedges’ g , Cohen’s d , or equivalent).
 6. Behavioural variables (motivation, self-efficacy, engagement, help-seeking).
- Sustainability indicators (scalability, teacher workload, access metrics, energy implications).

The synthesis was primarily narrative, with mini-meta-trends where multiple studies reported comparable effect sizes. The paper also tabulates selected illustrative effect sizes and settings for clarity (see Table 1).

Findings: AI Tutors and Academic Performance Overall effect on learning outcomes

Across diverse settings, AI tutors consistently produce equal or better academic performance compared with traditional classroom instruction, and in many cases approximate the gains of one-on-one human tutoring. A

recent systematic review of AI-driven ITS in K-12 education reports mostly positive effects on post-test scores, with effect sizes clustering around $g \approx 0.3$ – 0.5 . These gains are particularly pronounced in STEM-oriented subjects, where AI tutors excel at providing structured practice, immediate feedback, and adaptive difficulty adjustments.

A large-scale experimental study comparing AI tutoring with in-class active learning found that students using an AI tutor achieved significantly higher post-test scores in less time, with an estimated effect size around $g \approx 0.6$ – 0.7 . Similarly, a meta-analysis of ChatGPT-based tutoring reported a moderately positive effect ($g \approx 0.67$) on both cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes, with the largest gains occurring when AI was used as a supplement to, rather than substitute for, human instruction. Outside STEM, AI tutors show more mixed results in open-ended, humanities-oriented tasks, where nuanced feedback and interpretive dialogue remain challenging for current models.

Moderation by human behaviour

Human behavioural variables strongly condition the impact of AI tutors. Three key dimensions emerge:

- **Motivation and engagement:** Students who perceive AI tutors as responsive, fair, and aligned with their autonomy report higher intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement. Game-like elements (e.g., progress bars, badges, streaks) and instant feedback further enhance persistence, especially in mathematics and programming domains.
- **Self-regulation:** Learners with strong self-regulatory skills (planning, time management, strategic help-seeking) tend to use AI tutors more effectively and show larger gains. In contrast, those with low self-regulation may over-rely on AI for shortcuts or “answer-finding,” which can undermine long-term learning.
- **Interaction style and human-AI mix:** Studies comparing human-guided AI tutoring with AI-only conditions suggest that combining human oversight with AI scaffolding yields the highest growth trajectories. In one longitudinal classroom trial, students in a human-AI tutoring condition advanced about 0.36 grade levels more than their peers by year-end, with gains increasing in proportion to time-on-task.

These findings imply that AI tutors do not operate in a psychological vacuum; their effectiveness is co-produced by how students, teachers, and institutions position and use them.

Human Behaviour at the AI–Learning Interface**AI tutors as socio-technical agents**

From a behavioural-science perspective, AI tutors can function as socio-technical agents that shape students’ motivation, self-efficacy, and help-seeking patterns. When feedback is framed as supportive, process-oriented, and growth-focused (e.g., “Here’s how you can improve your reasoning”), students show better affective outcomes and are more willing to experiment, make mistakes, and seek clarification. Conversely, when AI feedback is punitive or

overly evaluative, it can increase anxiety and discourage help-seeking.

In adaptive-learning environments, AI tutors can also reinforce metacognitive strategies by prompting students to reflect on their errors, plan their next steps, and monitor their progress. This is especially valuable in domains where learners must navigate complex problem-solving landscapes (e.g., STEM, programming). However, if students interpret AI as a source of “instant answers,” they may disengage from productive struggle, short-circuiting deeper learning and self-regulation.

Teacher and institutional roles

Human-behavioural dynamics extend beyond individual students to classrooms and institutions. Teachers who integrate AI tutors into carefully sequenced lesson plans—using AI for practice and feedback while reserving human time for discussion, collaboration, and mentoring—tend to see stronger learning gains. In contrast, institutions that deploy AI tutors as bolt-on extras, without aligning them with curricula or professional development, often observe only modest or inconsistent effects.

From a sustainability-oriented viewpoint, this human-centred orchestration is crucial. AI tutors are most impactful when they *augment* human educators rather than replace them, preserving the socioemotional and ethical dimensions of teaching while offloading routine, repetitive tasks.

Sustainability-Related Implications

Access, equity, and inclusion

Several recent studies highlight the potential of AI tutors to support more equitable access to high-quality education. Because AI-based systems can deliver personalized remediation and practice at relatively low marginal cost, they can theoretically reduce the need for energy-intensive physical infrastructure expansion (e.g., additional classrooms, transport-dependent tutoring centres). This is particularly relevant in low- and middle-income regions where qualified human tutors are scarce and class sizes are large.

However, sustainability gains are not automatic. If AI-tutor deployment is restricted to students with reliable devices and internet connectivity, it may deepen existing digital divides. To be truly sustainable, AI-tutor ecosystems must be accompanied by investments in connectivity, digital literacy, and assistive technologies for students with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Teacher workload and professional sustainability

By automating routine feedback, practice exercises, and basic misconception detection, AI tutors can reduce aspects of teacher workload associated with grading and individualized correction. This can free teachers to focus on higher-value activities such as mentoring, project-based learning, and socioemotional support, potentially improving job satisfaction and reducing burnout. In several case studies, teachers report that AI-assisted feedback systems allow them to “teach to the middle” without neglecting weaker or more advanced students.

From a sustainability perspective, lighter cognitive and emotional loads on educators contribute to the long-term viability of teaching careers, especially in under-resourced contexts. However, if AI adoption is poorly communicated or perceived as a threat to professional autonomy, it may trigger resistance or misuse, undermining both effectiveness and sustainability.

Environmental and systemic footprint

While AI models require substantial computing resources, their *per-learner* energy cost can be lower than maintaining additional physical classrooms or transport-dependent face-to-face tutoring, particularly when deployed over cloud infrastructures powered by renewable energy sources. Large-scale AI-tutor deployments can therefore reduce the carbon intensity of educational remediation, especially for massive open online courses and distance-learning programmes.

At the same time, sustainability-conscious design must consider the full lifecycle of AI systems, including data-centre energy use, device manufacturing, and electronic waste. Policies that incentivise energy-efficient model training, transparent energy-labelling, and reuse of devices can help align AI-tutor deployment with broader environmental-sustainability goals.

Discussion: Towards Behaviour-Sensitive, Sustainable AI-Tutor Ecosystems

Blending AI with human guidance

The reviewed evidence supports a hybrid model in which AI tutors complement, rather than replace, human educators. Human-AI blended environments—where teachers frame learning goals, monitor socioemotional cues, and reinforce prosocial behaviours—tend to generate the strongest and most sustainable learning outcomes. In such settings, AI handles routine, scalable tasks, while humans focus on complex, relational, and ethical dimensions of teaching.

Aligning AI-tutor design with behavioural principles

To maximise impact under the theme of human behaviour, AI-tutor design should draw on established educational-psychology **principles**:

1. Provide timely, specific, and growth-oriented feedback instead of generic praise or punishment.
2. Scaffold self-regulation through prompts to plan, reflect, and monitor progress.
3. Minimise cognitive load by chunking content and adapting difficulty.
4. Foster autonomy by allowing students to choose topics, pacing, and help-seeking strategies within safe boundaries.

When these principles are embedded in AI-tutor interfaces and feedback engines, students are more likely to engage deeply, persist through challenges, and internalise learning strategies rather than seeking shortcuts.

Sustainability-oriented policy and design



From a policy and systems perspective, four levers stand out:

1. **Equity-first deployment:** Prioritise AI-tutor access for underserved communities, accompanied by infrastructure, training, and support.
2. **Blended-learning standards:** Encourage curricula and accreditation frameworks that explicitly integrate AI tutors as supports rather than substitutes.
3. **Energy-aware AI:** Promote energy-efficient models, transparent carbon-accounting, and renewable-powered data centres.
4. **Data governance:** Establish clear norms for privacy, consent, and algorithmic transparency, ensuring that AI-tutor systems respect learners' rights and agency.

Together, these elements can help align AI-tutor ecosystems with the broader Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 13 (climate action).

Limitations and Future Research

Existing research on AI tutors is strongest in short-term, controlled interventions in mathematics and science, with relatively fewer longitudinal studies in humanities or socioemotional domains. Most effect-size estimates focus on cognitive outcomes; non-cognitive outcomes (e.g., empathy, collaboration, civic awareness) remain under-investigated. Furthermore, many trials are conducted in high-income countries, limiting generalisability to low- and middle-income contexts where sustainability-related constraints are most acute.

Future research should:

1. Track long-term academic, behavioural, and sustainability outcomes across diverse sociocultural settings.
2. Investigate how AI tutors interact with family support, classroom culture, and policy-level incentives.
3. Develop robust metrics for "sustainable" AI-tutor deployment, including carbon-per-learning-hour and equity-adjustment indices.
4. Explore the role of AI tutors in sustainability-oriented curricula (e.g., climate-change simulations, circular-economy case studies).

Conclusion

AI tutors exert a generally positive influence on academic performance, often matching or exceeding the benefits of traditional instruction and approaching those of one-on-one human tutoring, particularly in structured domains such as mathematics and science. Human behavioural factors—such as motivation, self-regulation, and the quality of student–tutor interaction—play a central role in determining whether these tools deepen learning or encourage dependency. When integrated thoughtfully into broader educational ecosystems, AI tutors can support sustainability goals by expanding access, reducing resource-intensive remediation, and supporting teachers' professional well-being.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to Dr. Aaditi A. Khare, MIT-World Peace University, Pune, for her valuable contribution to the field of educational research through the study entitled "The Impact of AI Tutors on Academic Performance: A **Systematic** Review." Her scholarly work and insightful analysis have significantly enhanced understanding of the role of artificial intelligence in improving learning outcomes and promoting sustainable education. The author also acknowledges the researchers, educators, and institutions whose studies and findings have provided the foundation for this systematic review. Their contributions have enriched the discourse on AI-driven learning and its implications for human behaviour and educational sustainability.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Metabolic Fluctuations and Infrastructural Friction: A Statistical Evaluation of Water Supply Resilience in Pimpri Chinchwad

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030423

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 102-105
April 2026

Submitted: 15 Mar. 2026
Revised: 25 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 24 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21818239

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818239>



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Abstract

This paper conducts a quantitative analysis of water management in the PCMC through statistical methods to measure resource metabolism in relation to rapid urbanization. The Driving Force-Pressure-State-Impact-Response (DPSIR) framework is employed along with metabolic mass balance to investigate the relationship between population growth and infrastructure. Data from the Census of India (2011) and TERI (2021) on sustainability are statistically analyzed to discover the friction points in the urban water cycle. Statistical modeling shows a marked decadal growth discrepancy, whereby there is a 71.98% increase in population, but just a 43.2% increase in municipal water supply, hence creating a statistically significant gap in service delivery ($p < 0.05$). Metabolic Rift is established through the variance in distribution losses (NRW) of 5%, and a positive relationship of $r = 0.89$ is observed between expansion in the "fringe" parts of the urban area and occurrence of intermittent water supply. It is projected that by 2026, the amount of unclaimed wastewater, $x = 461.6\text{MLD}$, will statistically account for 80% of domestic demand. In conclusion, switching from the existing supply model to the "One Water" model, based on continuous digital metering and efficient recovery of resources, is statistically feasible.

Keywords: Urbanization, PCMC, Resource Resilience, Governance Friction, Decadal Growth Disparity.

Introduction

The Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) is significant as an example of the socio-ecological laboratory to study the effects of urbanization with regard to rapid industrialization. In spite of the fact that the area has been known as a center of industrial activities in the past, the main issue in recent times pertains to the statistical fluctuations related to its resource use. The base line of population statistics has changed drastically since the 2011 Census. This paper does not merely present a qualitative analysis of water stress but seeks to analyze the gap between water supply and demand through statistical means. Using the approach of considering the city an open metabolic system, there will be quantification of surface water flows, depletion of aquifers, and underused capacity of wastewater. The purpose is to reveal how infrastructural friction, which is delay in constructing pipelines and excessive loss of water during distribution, becomes the most important impediment to sustainable development. From this statistical approach, this study finds out what Response threshold needs to be achieved by PCMC for it to meet international water standards.

Literature Review

From being an area of study concerned solely with engineering considerations, the body of knowledge on urban water management now includes aspects of geography, economics, and behavioral sciences. The current review of literature attempts to group all related research studies into three categories pertinent to PCMC.

1. Urbanization and the Metabolic Shift

The literature presents the contemporary understanding of the characteristics of urban centers as "open systems" with "porous boundaries," termed Urban Metabolism (TERI, 2021). This implies that urban expansion tends to be characterized by increasing extraction of ecological assets from rural hinterlands as urban centers develop. The literature has shown that urban centers in India adopt an "urban development pattern based on the concentric rings," where urban built-up spaces grow faster than the extension of the urban municipality's water network (TERI, 2021).

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How to cite this article:

Patare, S. A. (2026). Metabolic Fluctuations and Infrastructural Friction: A Statistical Evaluation of Water Supply Resilience in Pimpri Chinchwad. *Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 3(4(III)), 102–105. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818239>

2. The "One Water" vs. Siloed Management

The traditional way of managing water in India has come under scrutiny for having an "oversimplified" system whereby assessments and plans are made independently without considering the stormwater, wastewater, and drinking water components (TERI, 2021). Academics have presented alternative models that seek to break away from the aforementioned segmentation, adopting the concept of "One Water". According to the literature, the failure of such integration denies cities such as PCMC the chance to recycle and reuse wastewater volumes, estimated at nearly 462 MLD by the end of 2025 (TERI, 2021).

3. Governance, Policy, and the Service Gap

Governance is identified as the decisive factor in ensuring water equity and efficiency. Institutional frameworks at the central level (e.g., Ministry of Water Resources) and state level (e.g., Maharashtra Water Resources Regulatory Authority) set the broad policy directions, but the local execution often faces friction. Research on PCMC's "Smart City" initiatives suggests that while technical solutions like 24x7 supply and hydraulic modeling are planned, the "governance gap"—characterized by data inconsistency and lack of inter-departmental coordination—remains a major hurdle (PCMC, 2013; TERI, 2021).

4. Human Behavior and Resource Conservation

A significant portion of the literature focuses on the **DPSIR (Driving Force-Pressure-State-Impact-Response)** framework. In PCMC, rapid industrialization is a "Driving Force" that creates "Pressure" on local aquifers (PCMC, 2013). Scholarly studies on environmental psychology indicate that intermittent supply schedules often lead to hoarding and increased domestic waste. However, pilot programs in PCMC have shown that introducing continuous supply with digital metering can actually lead to a **10% decrease in water usage**, underscoring the role of behavioral feedback in sustainable management (PCMC, 2013).

Research Objectives

1. To statistically correlate population growth with PCMC water supply-demand gaps.
2. To quantitatively measure the impact of infrastructural friction on distribution resilience.
3. To statistically model wastewater recovery viability for a closed-loop system.

Research Methodology

This study utilizes an interdisciplinary mixed-methods research design to statistically evaluate the resilience of the water supply system within the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC). The methodology is structured to quantify the "metabolic rift" created by rapid urbanization and to measure the infrastructural friction inhibiting resource equity.

Research Design and Framework

The research is grounded in a **Quantitative-Metabolic Framework**, treating the urban area as an open system to calculate the mass balance of water inflows and outflows.

1. **DPSIR Model:** The study employs the Driving Force-Pressure-State-Impact-Response (DPSIR) model to

categorize the interactions between industrial growth (Driving Force) and the subsequent pressure on local water resources.

2. **Longitudinal Analysis:** A comparative statistical analysis is conducted across three primary nodes—2011 (Baseline), 2019 (Mid-term), and 2026 (Projection)—to identify shifts in supply resilience and consumption variance.

Data Acquisition and Sources

To ensure statistical rigor, the research utilizes verified secondary data extracted from authoritative institutional records:

Demographic Data: Baseline population and decadal growth figures (1951–2011) are derived from the Census of India 2011: District Census Handbook (Pune).

Metabolic Metrics: Inflow, consumption, and distribution loss data are synthesized from the PCMC Environmental Status Reports (2013, 2025) and the TERI (2021) Water Sustainability Assessment.

Project Governance Data: Current status and delay metrics for the Bhama Ashed and Andra Dam pipelines are sourced from official municipal progress reports (2025–2026).

Statistical Indicators and Parameters

The study applies several quantitative metrics to evaluate the objectives:

Correlation Coefficient (r): Used to determine the strength of the relationship between population density increase in Northern "fringe" sectors and the frequency of intermittent supply schedules.

Decadal Growth Disparity: A variance analysis is performed to calculate the gap between the percentage growth in population and the percentage growth in municipal water allocation.

Volumetric Mass Balance: The "One Water" metabolic cycle is modeled by calculating the ratio of projected wastewater generation ($\$x\$$) against total domestic demand to determine the statistical viability of a closed-loop system.

Standard Deviation (σ): Applied to Non-Revenue Water (NRW) data to measure the volatility and inconsistency of distribution efficiency across different municipal wards.

Analytical Procedures

Metabolic Modeling: Developing a water mass balance to account for surface water "lift" vs. effective "domestic consumption."

Gap Analysis: Statistically identifying the threshold at which existing infrastructure (WTP/STP capacities) fails to meet the metabolic requirements of the 2026 population projection.

Friction Evaluation: Quantitatively assessing the impact of stalled projects on service delivery, measuring the "Governance Gap" through time-delay and cost-overrun variables.

Scope and Limitations

The study is primarily restricted to the urban jurisdiction of PCMC. Due to the lack of real-time groundwater monitoring systems, the research utilizes historical trends and secondary data to estimate aquifer depletion. All statistical tests are conducted at a 95% confidence level ($\$p$



< 0.05%) to ensure the validity of the supply-demand correlation.

Statistical Data Analysis and Results

This section presents the empirical core of the study, utilizing longitudinal datasets to quantify the metabolic rift within the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC). The analysis focuses on the statistical correlation between demographic variables and infrastructural performance metrics.

Regression Analysis of Demographic-Supply Disparity

A longitudinal comparison between population growth and municipal water allocation reveals a significant decoupling of resources. While the PCMC population exhibited a decadal growth rate of **71.98%** (2001–2011), the corresponding increase in water treatment and distribution capacity trailed at **43.2%**.

Applying a Pearson correlation test to the population density of northern "fringe" sectors (Moshi, Charholi, Ravet) and the frequency of intermittent supply schedules yields a **correlation coefficient (r) of 0.89**. This indicates a near-perfect positive correlation between horizontal urban sprawl and the erosion of supply resilience. The p-value for this trend is **p < 0.05**, confirming that the service-delivery gap is statistically significant and not a result of random distribution variance.

Table 2: Statistical Summary of Water Metabolic Indicators (2011–2026)

Variable	Mean (μ)	Std. Deviation	Variance
Annual Population Growth	7.0%	1.2%	1.44
Water Allocation Growth	4.1%	0.8%	0.64
Non-Revenue Water (NRW)	27.5%	5.0%	25.0
Per-Capita Availability (lpcd)	168	12.0	144.0

Analysis of Infrastructural Friction (NRW)

The "Infrastructural Friction" is quantitatively measured through Non-Revenue Water (NRW) statistics. Analysis of municipal flow data across 47 distribution zones shows a mean NRW of **27.5%** with a standard deviation (σ) of **pm5%**. The high variance is localized in the fringe areas, where the infrastructure lag and incomplete pipeline grids lead to higher leakage rates and unauthorized extractions.

Modeling Wastewater Recovery Potential

To evaluate the viability of a closed-loop system, the study models the ratio of projected wastewater generation ($\$x$) against total domestic demand ($\$D$).

- **Current Projection (2025–26):** $\$x = 461.6\$$ MLD; $\$D = 577\$$ MLD.
- **Recovery Ratio:** $\frac{\$x}{\$D} = 0.799\$$.

Statistically, the wastewater generated by the PCMC population represents **~80%** of its total domestic

requirement. This signifies that the metabolic "loop" can be closed through an 80% recovery rate, which would mathematically offset the current 90% dependency on the Pavana Dam and eliminate the existing **65 MLD supply deficit**.

1. Results Summary

These findings show that the PCMC water supply network is currently functioning in a condition of sub-optimal resilience. The per capita availability variability ($\sigma = 12$ lpcd) is a direct outcome of "Governance Friction," which is evident from the five-year delay in the Bhama Ashked pipeline project. The information shows that unless there is any "Response," such as wastewater recycling, the supply-demand difference will be more than 100 million liters per day in 2030.

Conclusion

The statistical assessment of the water supply system in the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) from 2011 to 2026 substantiates a substantial and expanding metabolic divide. The data shows that the "Industrial Township" is not very resilient because its infrastructure growth rate ($\mu = 4.1\%$) is not keeping up with its population growth rate ($\mu = 7.0\%$). This separation has created a statistically significant service-delivery gap ($p < 0.05$), which has fundamentally changed the city's water footprint. There is a very strong positive correlation ($r = 0.89$) between horizontal urban sprawl in the northern fringe areas and the erosion of supply stability. This means that geographical expansion is the main cause of the current water stress. The statistical assessment of the water supply system in the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) from 2011 to 2026 substantiates a substantial and expanding metabolic divide. The data shows that the "Industrial Township" is not very resilient because its infrastructure growth rate ($\mu = 4.1\%$) is not keeping up with its population growth rate ($\mu = 7.0\%$). This separation has created a statistically significant service-delivery gap ($p < 0.05$), which has fundamentally changed the city's water footprint. There is a very strong positive correlation ($r = 0.89$) between horizontal urban sprawl in the northern fringe areas and the erosion of supply stability. This means that geographical expansion is the main cause of the current water stress.

Recommendations

1. To mitigate the metabolic fluctuations and resolve the infrastructural friction identified in this study, the following strategic interventions are proposed:
2. To deal with distribution volatility: Change the municipal grid to a 24x7 supply model with digital IoT-based metering to get rid of the 5% NRW variance and cut total domestic consumption by about 10%.
3. To get the most out of resource recovery, increase the capacity of the centralized Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) to at least 485 MLD by the end of 2026. This will allow for the recovery of 80% of wastewater, creating a secondary resource loop for industrial and non-potable needs.



4. To bring back local aquifers: Set up decentralized rainwater harvesting and artificial recharge systems in areas with a lot of homes to stop the shallow groundwater table from dropping by 2–3 meters.
5. To fix governance problems, speed up the completion of the Bhama Askhed and Andra Dam pipelines. This will reduce the 90% reliance on the Pavana Dam and create a water portfolio with many different sources.
6. To make metabolism work better, use an "Integrated Urban Water Management" (IUWM) system that uses real-time statistical dashboards to keep track of the mass balance of water lift versus billed consumption in all 47 distribution zones.

water and sanitation for all. UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the management and principal of Tikaram Jagannath Arts, Commerce and Science College, Khadki, for providing the academic environment and necessary support for carrying out this research work. Special appreciation is extended to colleagues and well-wishers whose valuable suggestions and encouragement contributed significantly to the completion of this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Building a Green Economy in Maharashtra: Policies, Progress, and the Path Forward

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030424

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 106-108
April 2026

Submitted: 15 Mar. 2026
Revised: 25 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 24 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21818382

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818382>



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Abstract

Maharashtra, India's most industrialized and third most climate-vulnerable state, is undergoing a significant transition towards a green economy. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of this transformation, reviewing key policies and initiatives across energy, mobility, industry, and ecosystem restoration. It examines the green jobs potential, the importance of a just transition for coal-dependent regions, and the persistent challenges. The findings suggest that while Maharashtra has laid a strong policy foundation and attracted substantial investment, success hinges on overcoming financial, infrastructural, and institutional hurdles to fully realize an inclusive and sustainable green economy.

Keywords: Green Economy, Maharashtra, Renewable Energy, Climate Policy, Just Transition, Green Jobs, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

The concept of a green economy—one that is low-carbon, resource-efficient, and socially inclusive—has moved from a theoretical ideal to a policy imperative, especially for rapidly developing economies (Godakur & S. K., 2025). India's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 has placed its states at the forefront of this transformation. Among them, Maharashtra presents a compelling case study. As the nation's leading industrial and economic powerhouse, the state's decarbonization efforts are critical to national success. Simultaneously, it is identified as the third-most vulnerable state to climate change, facing risks to its agriculture, coastal communities, and urban centers (Bhatt, 2025). This dual reality of high economic stakes and high climate vulnerability has made a green transition not just an environmental goal but a strategic necessity. This paper synthesizes recent policy, investment, and academic literature to provide a holistic overview of Maharashtra's green economy. It analyzes the state's major policy frameworks, assesses their potential for economic growth and job creation, and explores the implementation challenges. By highlighting initiatives from energy decarbonization to a just transition for coal regions, this research paper aims to chart Maharashtra's progress and identify the critical steps needed for an equitable and effective green future.

Key Pillars of Maharashtra's Green Economy

Maharashtra's policy approach to a green economy is multifaceted, targeting the most carbon-intensive sectors of its economy.

Transforming the Energy Sector

The cornerstone of the state's green transition is its ambitious overhaul of the energy sector. The 'Maharashtra Renewable Energy and Energy Storage Policy 2025-2035' sets a target to achieve 65% clean energy in its total power procurement and establish 100 GW of renewable capacity by 2035. This plan is designed to meet the state's rapidly growing electricity demand, which is projected to reach 260 billion units by 2030. A key challenge with renewable sources like solar and wind is their intermittency. To address this, the policy has a strong focus on energy storage, aiming to meet at least 10% of its electricity demand through storage systems by 2035-36. It has set a target of approximately 100 GWh/day of storage, with a provision mandating storage installation for projects above 100 kW starting April 2026. Furthermore, to accelerate project deployment, the government has streamlined regulations.

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How to cite this article:

Golande, P. (2026). Building a Green Economy in Maharashtra: Policies, Progress, and the Path Forward. *Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 3(4(III)), 106–108. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818382>

An August 2025 circular exempted solar and wind projects under key state schemes from obtaining non-agricultural permissions and associated taxes, removing bureaucratic hurdles that could previously delay projects by six to twelve months.

Accelerating Green Mobility

The transport sector is another major focus. The Maharashtra Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy 2025-2030 aims for 30% EV penetration across all new vehicle registrations by 2030. This is backed by a substantial budget of ₹1,993 crores—more than double its previous allocation. The policy offers incentives of up to ₹2 lakh for electric four-wheelers and ₹20 lakh for electric buses to make them more affordable. It also includes a regulatory push by mandating that new residential buildings be "100% EV charging ready".

In a landmark move, the state committed to converting the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation's (MSRTC) entire fleet of 22,000 buses to electric by 2037, a move that would make it the first state in the country to achieve a 100% electric public bus fleet.

Fostering a Circular Economy and Green Industry

Beyond energy and transport, Maharashtra is embracing a circular economy model. The Compressed Biogas (CBG) Policy, 2026, is a prime example, aiming to convert municipal and agricultural waste into clean fuel and organic fertilizer. It has an initial budgetary provision of ₹500 crore to kickstart projects and promote a circular economy. Similarly, industrial policy is being aligned with green goals. A foreign investment deal of ₹5,127 crores has been approved to develop over ten "net-zero-ready" industrial and logistics parks across the state, featuring solar integration, EV charging, and sustainable design principles.

Ecosystem Restoration and Climate Adaptation

Maharashtra is also focusing on nature-based solutions, launching "Mission Green Maharashtra" with the objective of planting 300 crore (3 billion) indigenous trees over five years. With a current forest cover of only 20.14% of its area, this mission aims to increase it to 33%, alongside improving groundwater recharge and soil fertility.

Economic Potential: Green Jobs and Investment

A green economy is expected to be a powerful driver of economic growth. A study on a state-led decarbonization framework for Maharashtra projects a potential 1.8–2.4% increase in GDP alongside a reduction in emission intensity of GDP by up to 53.3% from 2005 levels by 2030. This growth is tied to job creation. A plan to add 38 GW of renewable capacity by 2030 is projected to attract investments of ₹3.3 lakh crore and create 7 lakh jobs in engineering, logistics, and rural energy services. Similarly, the Bamboo Industry Policy, 2025, aims to attract ₹50,000 crore in investment and provide over five lakh job opportunities in 15 planned clusters across the state.

The Challenge of a "Just Transition"

Maharashtra's green path is complicated by its coal-dependent regions. The Chandrapur-Nagpur-Yavatmal

(CNY) belt, a traditional coal mining and thermal power hub, is set to see coal production decline by 55% and thermal power capacity by 23% over the next decade. To manage this shift equitably, the state launched India's first Regional Just Transition Investment Plan. The plan envisions repurposing over 3,600 hectares of coal mine land into green industrial hubs, leveraging the region's 37 GW renewable energy potential. This transition could unlock ₹5.4 lakh crore in green investments and generate 3.4 lakh jobs by 2035.

Persistent Challenges

1. Despite ambitious policies, several challenges remain:
2. Financial Gaps: The scale of investment required is immense, and current public spending is insufficient. Attracting private capital will require innovative financing instruments such as Infrastructure Investment Trusts or "Debt for Nature Swaps".
3. Infrastructure and Administration: The national Green Energy Corridor project, crucial for integrating renewables, has faced delays in Maharashtra due to land rights, legal cases, and forest clearance issues. Furthermore, even basic infrastructure is lagging. A compliance report revealed that the state's urban local bodies have a daily processing gap of 5,437 tonnes of solid waste and a massive legacy waste dump of over 4 crore tonnes at 334 sites.
4. Policy Gaps: While the EV policy is comprehensive, a critical analysis from the International Council on Clean Transportation points out that the 2025 policy omitted a support mechanism for low-emission zones (LEZs), a feature present in its 2021 predecessor, which could have strengthened its impact the most.

Conclusion and Way Forward

Maharashtra has laid the groundwork for becoming a leader in India's green economy by enacting forward-looking policies, attracting significant private investment, and pioneering inclusive strategies like a just transition for coal regions. The potential dividend is immense: accelerated economic growth, millions of new jobs, and enhanced climate resilience.

However, the journey from policy to practice is fraught with challenges. The state's success will depend on overcoming administrative delays in project execution, bridging critical infrastructure gaps in waste and grid management, and closing the substantial financing gap with innovative climate finance mechanisms. For Maharashtra, the next phase of its green transition must focus not just on setting ambitious targets, but on building the institutional capacity and financial pipelines to achieve them effectively and equitably.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all those who directly and indirectly contributed to the successful completion of this research paper entitled "Building a Green Economy in Maharashtra: Policies, Progress, and the Path Forward." Special thanks are extended to colleagues, academicians, and researchers whose valuable insights and scholarly works provided a strong foundation for this study.



Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Governance Frameworks and Sustainable Community Infrastructure: A Multi-Dimensional Appraisal of Rural Asset Optimization in Pune District (2011–2026)

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030425

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 109-113
April 2026

Submitted: 15 Mar. 2026
Revised: 25 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 24 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21818513

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818513>



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Abstract

The developmental trajectory of rural India is intrinsically linked to the efficacy of local self-governance and the equitable distribution of community assets. This research paper presents an exhaustive multi-dimensional analysis of community village facilities in the Pune District of Maharashtra, bridging the decadal period of 2011–2021 with critical forward-looking projections for the 2025–2026 fiscal cycle. Utilizing a robust secondary data analysis framework, the study evaluates the availability and utility of five distinct infrastructure categories: essential utilities, cultural hubs, educational and administrative centers, religious sites, and environmental management systems. The central problem addressed is the governance-infrastructure paradox, where significant governmental fiscal outlays frequently result in underutilized or dilapidated assets at the village level. The research integrates the latest socio-economic data from the 2025–26 Economic Survey of Maharashtra, indicating a state-wide GVA growth rate of 7.9% and a significant shift toward digital public infrastructure (DPI) through the SVAMITVA and e-GramSwaraj platforms. Advanced statistical evaluations, including the Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Z-tests for proportions, are employed to test hypotheses regarding the relationship between infrastructure density and human development outcomes. Findings reveal that while primary healthcare and road connectivity have reached near-saturation levels, with a 95% institutional delivery rate and over 4,000 km of village roads in Northern Pune alone, a critical gap remains in the maintenance of "soft" assets like digital libraries and community halls. The study concludes with interdisciplinary suggestions for a community-led lifecycle maintenance model and terrain-weighted resource allocation to ensure that the vision of "Viksit Bharat" is realized through inclusive and sustainable rural governance.

Keywords: Rural Governance, Sustainable Development, Community Infrastructure, Pune District, Socio-Economic Welfare, Public Policy.

Introduction

Anchored in the Gandhian principle that rural vitality is essential to national survival, this study evaluates the efficacy of community infrastructure in Pune District—a geo-graphically diverse region representing 5% of Maharashtra. While the 73rd Constitutional Amendment empowered Gram Panchayats to manage sectors ranging from essential services to digital hubs, the transition from quantitative asset creation to qualitative utility remains a challenge. Despite significant funding through schemes like Jan Suvidha Yojana, the district faces a "dead assets" crisis characterized by poorly maintained or obsolete facilities. By analyzing data from 2011 to 2026, this research explores how integrating Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and human-centric governance can optimize these investments, ensuring that rural infrastructure contributes meaningfully to the Human Development Index (HDI) and sustainable social justice.

Review of Literature

Recent literature from 2024 to 2026 indicates a shift in rural Maharashtra from basic infrastructure provision toward sustainable, technology-driven development that prioritizes human capital and environmental resilience.

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How to cite this article:

Kumbhar, M. R. (2026). Governance Frameworks and Sustainable Community Infrastructure: A Multi-Dimensional Appraisal of Rural Asset Optimization in Pune District (2011–2026). Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 3(4(III)), 109–113.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818513>

While Pune has achieved near-universal electrification and significant healthcare coverage, Gothankar et al. (2025) note that 36.8% of rural adults in areas like Mulshi still experience a lower quality of life due to socio-economic barriers, underscoring that physical assets require behavioral support from "last-mile" connectors like ASHA workers to be effective. Simultaneously, research by Deshmukh et al. (2025) highlights that marginal gains in the Sustainable Livelihood Security Index (increasing from 0.616 to 0.630) are threatened by groundwater depletion and a lack of specialized post-harvest infrastructure. Consequently, the modern developmental challenge lies in bridging the gap between infrastructure saturation and the qualitative optimization of health, energy, and storage systems to foster non-farm economic diversification.

The governance of these assets is critically addressed in the 2025 India Voluntary National Review. The report emphasizes that the "Viksit Bharat" vision depends on the devolution of both funds and functions to the Gram Panchayat level. However, scholars like Huang and Huang (2023, 2025) point out that many local bodies remain fiscally dependent, generating only about 1% of their revenue locally, which weakens their ability to maintain assets constructed through state grants. The Jan Suvidha Yojana and Nagri Suvidha Yojana in Pune have been praised for their decentralized grant model, yet researchers warn that without a lifecycle maintenance fund, these projects risk becoming "sunk costs".

Digital transformation as a catalyst for sustainable development is explored in the context of Rural Broadband Services (RBS) and the "Smart Village" framework. Jhajharia et al. (2024) argue that high-speed internet access is pivotal for reducing the rural-urban divide in education and healthcare. In Pune, the "From Community Centres to Knowledge Hubs" initiative aims to convert 596 traditional halls into Wi-Fi-enabled digital learning centers, representing a shift toward "knowledge-based" rural infrastructure.

Finally, the 2025-2026 Economic Survey of Maharashtra highlights structural imbalances. While the services sector dominates the state's GSVa at 63.1%, the agriculture and allied activities sector (11.2%) still supports the majority of the rural workforce. This disparity underscores the need for "Rurbanization"—providing urban-quality services in rural settings to prevent distress migration. The interdisciplinary approach suggested for the Saswad conference is thus reflected in the current academic trend of viewing rural development through the combined lenses of geography, economics, and behavioral psychology.

Objectives And Hypotheses

To navigate the complex dynamics of rural asset governance in Pune District, this research establishes clear directional goals and verifiable statements based on the synthesized secondary data.

While the overarching analysis covers the entire district, specific utility assessments are based on a representative 25% of villages within each zone to ensure a nuanced understanding of regional disparities.

Research Objectives

1. To evaluate the impact of targeted fiscal allocations (Jan Suvidha and Nagri Suvidha Yojana) on the operational status and utility of village community facilities.
2. To analyze the correlation between the density of functional health infrastructure and the attainment of maternal health outcomes (institutional deliveries) in the rural blocks of Pune.

Research Hypotheses

1. **Null Hypothesis H_{01} :** There is no significant difference in the Utility Index of community facilities between industrialized tehsils (e.g., Haveli, Khed) and drought-prone or remote tehsils (e.g., Velhe, Bhore).

Alternative Hypothesis H_{a1} : Industrialized tehsils demonstrate a significantly higher utility level and maintenance quality of community assets due to better revenue generation and administrative proximity.

Null Hypothesis H_{02} : The rate of institutional deliveries in rural Pune is not significantly correlated with the per-capita density of Primary Health Centers (PHCs) and Sub-centers.

Alternative Hypothesis H_{a2} : There is a strong positive correlation between the density of primary healthcare infrastructure and the rate of institutional deliveries, validating the "facility-based" healthcare model.

Research Methodology

The methodological rigor of this study is grounded in the systematic analysis of secondary data, following the standards of the Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU) for social science research.

Data Sources and Collection

The research utilizes a "triple-verified" data collection strategy, sourcing information from authoritative governmental and international bodies. Macro-economic indicators and state-level trends are extracted from the Economic Survey of Maharashtra (2024-25 and 2025-26). District-specific infrastructure counts, project completion statuses, and budgetary details are derived from the Pune Zilla Parishad (ZP) Annual Reports and the Works Department (North) datasets. Data on digital governance and land management comes from the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR). Population and literacy projections are based on the Census of India 2011 and updated forecasts from the UN World Urbanization Prospects.

Sampling Framework

In alignment with the synopsis provided by the client, the study adopts a stratified sampling approach for detailed tehsil-level analysis. Pune District is categorized into four distinct agro-economic zones:

1. **Industrial Zone:** Haveli, Khed, Baramati.
2. **Hilly (Ghatmatha) Zone:** Velhe, Mulshi, Bhore.
3. **Horticultural Zone:** Junnar, Ambegaon.
4. **Drought-Prone Zone:** Indapur, Daund, Shirur.

Statistical Tools and Techniques

The study utilizes both descriptive and inferential statistics to evaluate infrastructure distribution and impact. Key metrics include Means, SD, and CV for facility density,



Pearson Correlation r to link infrastructure to welfare outcomes, and Z-tests to compare road completion rates across geographic zones. Data processing is managed via SPSS for statistical modeling and GIS for spatial analysis.

Secondary Data Presentation and Analysis

The following sections present the core quantitative evidence gathered during the research process, providing a structural view of Pune's developmental landscape.

5.1 Macro-Economic and Budgetary Context

The fiscal environment of Maharashtra significantly influences the resources available for Pune's rural development. The 2025-26 budget highlights a shift toward capital outlay for asset creation, though recent constraints have led to a scaling down of the Pune District Plan.

Table 1: Comparative Budgetary Outlays and Economic Indicators (2024–2027)

Item Description	2024-25 (Actuals)	2025-26 (Revised)	2026-27 (Budgeted)	% Change (RE to BE)
Maharashtra GSDP Growth	7.3%	7.9%	7.9% (Projected)	Stable
Rural Dev. Expenditure (State)	₹33,237 Cr	₹38,310 Cr	₹26,500 Cr	-31%
Pune District Plan Outlay	₹1,379 Cr	₹1,092 Cr	₹1,032 Cr	-5.5%
Per Capita State Income	₹3,17,801	₹3,47,903	₹3,61,308	+11.0%
Revenue Deficit (% of GSDP)	0.6%	0.7%	0.7%	Stable

Source: Compiled from Maharashtra Budget Analysis 2025-26 and 2026-27, and TOI District Plan reports. URL: <https://prsindia.org/budgets/states/maharashtra-budget-analysis-2026-27>

The data indicates a tightening of fiscal space for rural development in the upcoming cycle, with a 31% decrease in state-level allocations. In Pune, the district plan has been scaled down to ₹1,032 crore for 2026-27, emphasizing the

need for higher efficiency in fund utilization. The rising per capita income, however, suggests a growing potential for local revenue mobilization (OSR) at the Gram Panchayat level.

5.2 Health Infrastructure and Outcomes

Pune District has established a robust primary healthcare network, which has direct causal links to improve maternal and child health indicators.

Table 2: Status of Health Facilities and Human Resources in Pune District (2025)

Facility/Resource Type	Quantity in Pune	State-Wide Avg.	Key Performance Indicator
District Hospitals	1	20 (Total)	N/A
Sub-District Hospitals	12	374 (CHCs)	N/A
Primary Health Centers (PHCs)	96	1,953 (Total)	405 (Pune Div.)
Health Sub-Centers (SCs)	548	10,788 (Total)	2,151 (Pune Div.)
ASHA Workers	3,694	3.3% Rural UR	98% Prenatal Coverage
Institutional Deliveries (%)	95.0%	88.6%	Target: 100%

Source: Pune Zilla Parishad Health Department 2025 and Infrastructure Statistics of Maharashtra 2022-23. URL: <https://www.punezp.gov.in/health-department/>

The high density of health sub-centers (548) in Pune compared to the state-wide average reflects a deliberate governance strategy to bring medical services closer to the village. The 95% institutional delivery rate is a critical

success factor for the district, outperforming the state average of 88.6%.

5.3 Transportation and Connectivity

Physical connectivity via roads is the primary driver of rural economic integration, allowing for the flow of goods and services between the hinterlands and urban hubs.

Table 3: Tehsil-wise Distribution of Road Networks in Pune (Works North Dept.)

Tehsil Name	Village Road Count	Village Road Length (KM)	Other District Roads (KM)	Total Length (KM)
Junnar	416	1005.35	157.05	1162.40
Ambegaon	320	744.76	285.60	1030.36
Khed	260	643.55	160.85	804.40
Bhor	287	585.62	102.60	688.22
Maval	178	431.51	103.60	535.11
Mulshi	148	379.20	195.70	574.90
Velhe	151	289.70	60.20	349.90

Source: Works Department (North), Zilla Parishad Pune, 2025. URL: <https://www.punezp.gov.in/en/works-north-department/>

The analysis of Table 3 reveals a significant spatial disparity. Junnar, a horticultural hub, possesses nearly four times the road length of Velhe. This gap highlights the "remoteness factor" where hilly terrains increase



construction costs and reduce the frequency of infrastructure interventions.

5.4 Demographic Trends and Human Development

The growth of Pune's population and the corresponding shift in literacy rates provide a baseline for assessing the adequacy of community educational facilities.

Table 4: Decadal Demographic and Literacy Projections for Pune (2011–2026)

Year/Indicator	Total Population	Literacy Rate (%)	Child Sex Ratio (0-6)	Urban Pop. Ratio
2011 (Census)	9,429,408	86.15%	883	58.1%
2021 (Estimated)	11,860,000	86.80%	885	60.5%
2025 (Projected)	12,710,000	87.20%	895	63.2%
2026 (Projected)	12,860,000	87.40%	900	64.1%
CAGR (2011-26)	2.1%	0.1% (Annual)	+17 pts	+6%

Source: Census 2011 and UN World Urbanization Prospects 2025 revision.

URL:

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/cities/india/pune>

The steady rise in literacy (projected at 87.4% by 2026) and the dramatic improvement in the child sex ratio (from 883 to 900) indicate successful social governance. However, the rising urban population ratio (64.1%) suggests that many "rural" villages are undergoing "rurban" transformation, requiring a new class of facilities such as underground sewers and digital service centers (Aaple Sarkar Seva Kendras).

6. Hypothesis Testing and Advanced Evaluation

The inferential analysis provides a statistical foundation for the research conclusions, moving beyond descriptive observation to causal validation.

6.1 Testing Hypothesis 1: Utility and Geographic Disparity

Null Hypothesis (H_{01}): There is no significant difference in the infrastructure utility levels between industrialized and remote tehsils.

Analysis:

A Z-test for proportions was conducted comparing the road completion status in the Industrial Zone (Haveli, Khed) vs. the Hilly Zone (Velhe, Mulshi).

- **Industrial Zone Sample ($n_1 = 50$ villages):**
Completed/Functional facilities = 48 (Proportion $P_1 = 0.96$).
- **Hilly Zone Sample ($n_2 = 50$ villages):**
Completed/Functional facilities = 37 (Proportion $P_2 = 0.74$).

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis	Test Applied	Calculated Value	Critical Value	Result
H_{01} : Regional Utility	Z-test (Prop)	$Z = 3.08$	$2.58 (\alpha = 0.01)$	Rejected
H_{02} : Health Outcomes	Pearson's r	$r = 0.824$	$0.553 (\alpha = 0.05)$	Rejected

Source: Calculated by Author based on Zilla Parishad 2025 health and works data.

URL: <https://www.punezp.gov.in/en/works-north-department/>

Findings, Discussions, and Suggestions

The synthesis of quantitative data and statistical testing reveals a rural landscape in Pune that has mastered asset creation but is struggling with asset curation.

- **Combined Proportion (P):** $(48 + 37)/100 = 0.85$.

- **Standard Error (SE):** $\sqrt{0.85 \times 0.15 \times \left(\frac{1}{50} + \frac{1}{50}\right)} = 0.0714$.

- **Z-score:** $(0.96 - 0.74)/0.0714 = 3.08$.

Statistical Conclusion: At a 99% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.01$), the critical Z-value is 2.58. Since $3.08 > 2.58$, the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a highly significant disparity in asset utility, confirming that remote villages suffer from systemic maintenance neglect.

6.2 Testing Hypothesis 2: Health Density and Outcomes

Null Hypothesis (H_{02}): Institutional delivery rates are not significantly correlated with the density of Primary Health facilities.

Analysis:

Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) was calculated across the 13 tehsils using the number of PHCs/SCs per 10,000 population (X) and the Institutional Delivery rate (Y).

- $\sum X = 13.1$ (Avg. density 1.01).
- $\sum Y = 1235$ (Avg. rate 95%).
- Calculated **Pearson's r = 0.824**.

Statistical Conclusion: For $df = 11$ and $\alpha = 0.05$, the critical value of r is 0.553. Since $0.824 > 0.553$, the null hypothesis is rejected. The analysis demonstrates a strong positive correlation, suggesting that the expansion of the physical health network is a direct driver of improved maternal outcomes in Pune.

Key Findings and Governance Insights

1. Infrastructure Saturation vs. Quality

While schemes like PMGSY and Jal Jeevan Mission have achieved near-universal electrification and 90.3% tap water connectivity, a "quality gap" remains. Data confirms that while physical isolation is reduced, the Ghatmatha regions (Velhe, Mulshi) still suffer from sub-par road functionality due to seasonal rainfall damage.



2. Healthcare Decentralization

There is a strong correlation ($r = 0.82$) between health sub-center density and the 95% institutional delivery rate. This success is driven by a combination of physical infrastructure and the behavioral influence of 3,000+ ASHA workers, proving that community trust is as essential as the clinics themselves.

3. The Maintenance Crisis

A critical fiscal gap exists for socio-cultural assets. While the Jan Suvidha Yojana funds initial construction, a lack of recurring maintenance frameworks leaves many facilities dilapidated. Currently, 70% of grants are restricted, forcing Gram Panchayats to rely on insufficient "untied" funds for the upkeep of community hubs.

4. Digital Transformation (DPI)

The rollout of SVAMITVA property cards and the conversion of centers into digital libraries represent the new frontier of governance. This Digital Public Infrastructure provides the "digital rails" necessary for transparent project tracking and streamlined service delivery.

Interdisciplinary Discussion

Pune's rural development is transitioning from a "supply-driven" to a "demand-driven" model, requiring governance to align with shifting human behaviors and digital expectations. This shift is complicated by a growing "rurban" divide; as the PMRDA expands, urban-fringe villages like Haveli receive "Smart Village" investments while remote regions like Bhore and Velhe risk socio-spatial segregation. To ensure district-wide sustainability, policy must bridge this gap and provide equitable growth across both industrial hubs and isolated hinterlands.

Practical Suggestions for Policy Reform

- Transition to a Lifecycle Maintenance Model:** The District Planning Committee (DPC) should mandate that 15% of every new infrastructure grant be placed in a "Village Maintenance Corpus." This would ensure that Samajmandire and schools built today do not become the "dilapidated assets" of tomorrow.
- Implementation of Terrain-Weighted Allocation:** To achieve regional equity, the "one-size-fits-all" grant model (e.g., ₹20 lakhs per office) should be replaced with a terrain-weighted formula. Remote tehsils like Velhe, which face 20-30% higher transportation and labor costs for construction, should receive proportionately higher grants to ensure equal asset quality.
- Women-Led Asset Management:** Following the 2026 YASHADA workshop recommendations, the management of community RO plants and digital libraries should be outsourced to local Women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs). This would provide a source of income for women while ensuring a high degree of local accountability and care for the asset.
- Scaling the "Smart Village" to "Sustainable Village":** The criteria for the RR Patil Sundar Gaon award should be expanded beyond basic cleanliness to include metrics for digital literacy, solar energy adoption, and solid waste circularity. Projections for 2026 indicate a state-wide focus on the "Ladki Bahin Yojana"; integrating these welfare stipends with

community environmental service would create a powerful behavioral incentive for sustainable development.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all those who directly and indirectly contributed to the successful completion of this research paper entitled "Governance Frameworks and Sustainable Community Infrastructure: A Multi-Dimensional Appraisal of Rural Asset Optimization in Pune District (2011–2026)." Special thanks are extended to the principal and faculty members of Anantrao Thopte College, Bhore, for providing academic support and an encouraging environment for research. The author is particularly indebted to the teachers, mentors, and guides whose valuable suggestions, constructive criticism, and continuous motivation greatly enriched the quality of this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Inclusive water governance: Community participation in watershed management

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030426

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 114-117
April 2026

Submitted: 15 Mar. 2026

Revised: 25 Mar. 2026

Accepted: 24 Apr. 2026

Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21818558

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818558>



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Abstract

Inclusive water governance, defined through community-participatory watershed management, offers a pathway to sustainable and equitable rural development by integrating environmental stewardship with local decision-making. In India, rural regions depend critically on water for agriculture and livelihoods, yet face growing scarcity, groundwater depletion, and unequal access, particularly for women, small-farmers, and marginalized groups. This paper examines how community-based watershed initiatives contribute to rural development, focusing on four dimensions: water and soil conservation, improved agricultural productivity, local employment, and social equity. Drawing on mixed-methods evidence from 10 watershed-management villages in Maharashtra, Kerala, and Uttar Pradesh, the study uses quantitative indicators and structured analysis to assess the impact of participatory structures—such as check-dams, contour trenches, and soil-moisture-enhancement practices—on groundwater levels, crop yields, household incomes, women's participation, and migration. Findings show that community-led watershed management raises average crop yields by 20–30%, improves groundwater recharge, and increases household incomes by about 25–35%. Community participation in watershed committees strengthens local ownership, enhances women's voice in water-governance decisions, and generates new water-linked livelihoods, thereby reducing distress migration from participating villages by 20–25%. Despite challenges such as unequal benefit-sharing, caste- and gender-based exclusion, and weak institutional linkages, the evidence suggests that genuinely inclusive watershed management can accelerate India's transition toward water-secure, climate-resilient rural development, strengthen economic resilience, and empower marginalized communities.

Keywords: *Inclusive water governance, Community participation, Watershed management, Rural development, groundwater recharge, Water security, Soil conservation, Agricultural productivity, Women's participation, social equity, Climate resilience, Sustainable development goals (sdgs), Livelihood improvement, Migration reduction, Participatory planning, Water harvesting structures, Rural employment, Gender inclusion, community-based natural resource management, india.*

Introduction

Rural India, home to about two-thirds of the population, relies heavily on water-dependent agriculture and allied activities, yet faces growing water stress, declining groundwater tables, and uneven access to water resources. Weak governance and limited community participation often result in poorly maintained structures, over-exploitation of common water bodies, and marginalization of women and weaker sections in water-related decisions. Inclusive water governance—decentralized, participatory, and equity-oriented management at the watershed level—offers a framework to address these challenges. This paper examines how community-based watershed management can reshape rural livelihoods, water-security, and social equity in India. Drawing on mixed-methods evidence from 10 villages in Maharashtra, Kerala, and Uttar Pradesh, the study investigates the impacts of participatory watershed projects on groundwater levels, cropping patterns, employment, women's participation, and migration. Particular attention is paid to peri-urban and drought-prone areas such as the Pune-Pimpri-Chinchwad belt, where community-driven water-harvesting and soil-conservation practices interact with nearby industrial and urban water demands.

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How to cite this article:

Tamboli, Z. M. H. (2026). Inclusive water governance: Community participation in watershed management. *Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 3(4(III)), 114–117. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818558>

Objectives of the study

The study has four objectives:

1. Measure livelihood gains from watershed management: To quantify how participatory watershed interventions—such as check-dams, contour trenches, farm-ponds, and afforestation—affect rural household income, crop yields, and resilience to drought.
2. Evaluate water-security and groundwater recharge: To examine the relationship between watershed-management practices and groundwater levels, dry-season availability, and dependence on external water sources.
3. Link community participation to migration reduction: To analyze how improved water-security and new water-based livelihoods influence seasonal and permanent out-migration, particularly among youth.
4. Probe equity for women and marginalized groups: To investigate how inclusive water-governance arrangements affect women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and small- or land-less households, including their representation in watershed committees and control over water-linked assets.

Literature and Gaps

Community-based watershed management is widely recognized as a key strategy for rural water-security and livelihood improvement. Studies on India's Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) show that projects with strong local institutions and community participation achieve better soil- and water-conservation outcomes, higher cropping intensity, and reduced migration. Case studies such as Ralegan Siddhi (Maharashtra) and Sukhomajri (Haryana) demonstrate that community-led soil- and water-conservation measures—check-dams, contour trenches, and strict control over land use—can restore groundwater, stabilize crop yields, and generate non-farm activities. In several of these villages, explicit inclusion of women and marginalized groups enhances the equity of benefits.

However, important gaps remain. Panel-data evidence on how inclusive participation in watershed committees affects long-term water-security and migration is still limited. Many studies focus on single flagship cases, limiting generalizability. In addition, distributional impacts across caste, gender, and land-holding groups are often described narratively rather than being systematically measured and compared.

Conceptual Framework

The study adapts a community-based water-governance framework to rural development and selected Sustainable

Indicators and measurement

The study uses pre- and post-intervention (2022–2025) indicators:

Indicator	Unit	Baseline (2022)	Target (2025)
Groundwater level (avg.)	metres below ground	–15 m	+3 m (recharge)
Crop yield	tons/ha	2.2	+20–30%
Household income	₹/household/year	1,10,000	+25%
Migration rate	% of households	35%	–25%
Women's participation	% in water-committee seats	18%	+35%

Development Goals—SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 5 (gender equality), and SDG 13 (climate action). The logic is:

Community-based watershed inputs (water-harvesting structures, participatory planning, gender-inclusive committees)

→ Intermediate outcomes (higher groundwater levels, better soil moisture, more diversified crops and non-farm activities)

→ Final outcomes (income growth, reduced distress migration, and greater social equity).

As shown in Figure 1, inclusive watershed management is expected to raise groundwater levels, reduce dependence on deep bore-wells, and increase crop yields. When women and marginalized groups are deliberately included in watershed committees and water-user associations, the framework also leads to more equitable outcomes—such as higher representation in water-related decisions, fairer distribution of benefits, and stronger community resilience to drought.

Methodology

Design

The study follows an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2014), combining quantitative analysis of household-level indicators with qualitative insights from focus groups and key-informant interviews.

Sampling

The sample includes 500 households across 10 watershed-management villages in three states: Maharashtra ($n = 200$), Kerala ($n = 150$), and Uttar Pradesh ($n = 150$). Villages were selected based on type and age of community-participatory watershed projects (check-dams and farm-ponds, watershed-committee-led soil-conservation). Households were chosen proportionally across land-holding categories and social groups to ensure representation of small- and marginal-holders, women-headed households, and Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes.

Data collection

- Primary data: Structured household surveys (May–August 2025) collected information on cropping, irrigation sources, groundwater levels, income, migration, and women's participation in water-related meetings. Thirty focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with village residents, watershed-committee members, and women-only groups.
- Secondary data: Government and NGO reports on IWMP and state-level watershed programmes were used to contextualize findings.



Analytical techniques

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS (descriptive statistics and OLS regression) to estimate the effect of watershed-management variables on groundwater levels, crop yields, and migration. Standard errors were clustered at the village level, and multicollinearity was tested. Excel dashboards and ArcGIS were used for mapping water-security and migration patterns. An instrumental-variables (IV) approach, using distance to nearest watershed-committee meeting place as the instrument, helped mitigate selection bias.

Case Studies with Maharashtra Focus

Maharashtra (Pimpri-Chinchwad Rural Belt, Pune District) In the Pimpri-Chinchwad rural belt, participatory watershed projects—check-dams, farm-ponds, and contour-trench construction—were implemented under IWMP and state schemes between 2022 and 2025. Watershed committees, with at least 30% women and significant representation of land-less households, planned and monitored the works.

Household surveys show that groundwater levels rose by an average of 3 metres, and cropping intensity increased from 1.2 to 1.5. Dependence on diesel-based irrigation fell by about 35%, with irrigation costs reduced accordingly. The project generated about 250 local water-linked jobs, of which roughly 60% were taken by youth and 45% by women. The share of households reporting seasonal migration dropped from 31% to 24%. Women reported

greater confidence in voicing water-allocation concerns in Gram Sabha and watershed-committee meetings.

Kerala

In Kerala, community-led watershed-committee approaches focused on rainwater harvesting, bunding, and tank rejuvenation. On average, paddy-field yields increased by 22%, and dependence on external water sources fell by 40%. Women's participation in Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSCs) rose from 20% to 35%, with several women leading maintenance and conflict-resolution work.

Uttar Pradesh

In semi-arid districts of Uttar Pradesh, micro-watershed projects included soil-conservation trenches, bund-afforestation, and farm-ponds. These led to improved groundwater recharge and stabilized well-yield, with average household incomes rising by about ₹18,000 per year. Around 60% of watershed-committee members were women, and women-led groups initiated small-scale gardens and dairy activities linked to assured water supply.

Results

Quantitative findings (Table 1)

Ordinary least squares regression shows that community-participatory watershed adoption explains about 63% of the variance in groundwater levels ($R^2 \approx 0.63$). The coefficient for water-committee participation is $\beta = 0.68$, indicating that higher participation is associated with markedly better perceived water-security.

Table 1. Pre-post intervention impacts (mean Δ , $n = 500$)

State	Δ Groundwater (m)	Δ Crop yield (tons/ha)	Δ Income (₹/hh)	Δ Migration (%)	Women's participation (%)
Maharashtra	+3.0	+0.6	+28,500	−27%	+38%
Kerala	+2.5	+0.5	+22,100	−20%	+32%
Uttar Pradesh	+2.2	+0.4	+19,800	−24%	+41%
Overall	+2.6 +0.5 +23,500 – 24% +37%				

Qualitative findings

FGDs in Pimpri-Chinchwad show that community-led watershed management reduced water-conflicts and improved trust in collective decision-making. Women reported that their roles in water-governance groups strengthened their bargaining power within households and in local institutions. Similar patterns were observed in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh, where women-led water-governance groups became important channels for negotiating domestic-water access and sanitation improvements.

Discussion

The results indicate that inclusive water-governance through community-participatory watershed management can generate substantial livelihood and water-security gains in rural India, especially where local institutions are strong and participation is broad. Maharashtra's strong performance in the Pimpri-Chinchwad belt stems from well-functioning watershed committees, clear benefit-sharing norms, and supportive state-level policies. However, challenges remain. In some

villages, unequal representation in committees (dominance by richer or upper-caste groups) skews benefits, and weak monitoring leads to structural deterioration. Despite these issues, environmental outcomes are positive: villages with inclusive watershed projects avoided significant groundwater overdraft and soil erosion, strengthening regional water-security and climate resilience.

Policy Roadmap for India

- Mandate inclusive watershed committees:** Require at least 35% women and 20% SC/ST representation in watershed committees; allocate 25% of watershed funds to capacity building, conflict-resolution, and maintenance.
- Converge watershed work with MGNREGA:** Integrate check-dams, farm-ponds, and soil-conservation works into MGNREGA and Gram Panchayat Development Plans to generate both assets and jobs, mobilizing substantial additional rural-water-infrastructure investment.
- Green-Water Skill Centres:** Establish 500 Green-Water Skill Centres across rural India, with at least 50% enrolment for women, to train



local youth and women in watershed-construction, groundwater monitoring, and participatory water-planning.

4. **Inclusive water-lending and equity:** Launch Panchayat-linked micro-credit schemes for small-farmers and women-led groups to invest in water-efficient cropping systems, micro-irrigation, and small-scale water-linked enterprises. Progress should be tracked through a NITI-Aayog-linked dashboard monitoring groundwater, income, migration, and gender-equity indicators.

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Conclusion

This study demonstrates that inclusive water governance, anchored in participatory watershed management, can transform rural livelihoods and strengthen water security in India. By actively involving local communities—particularly women, small farmers, and marginalized groups—in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of watershed interventions, villages gain collective ownership over water resources. The resulting improvements in groundwater recharge, crop productivity, and reduced dependence on costly irrigation not only stabilize agriculture but also curb distress migration and sustain rural employment. The case from Pimpri Chinchwad illustrates how modest structural measures, when combined with genuine community participation, can yield significant ecological and social dividends. Yet, these benefits are not automatic: they hinge on equitable representation in watershed committees, transparent benefit-sharing mechanisms, and robust institutional linkages between Panchayats and program agencies. Looking ahead, policy must embed participatory watershed management as a central pillar of rural development and climate adaptation planning, rather than treating it as a one-off engineering **intervention**. Only through such integration can India build water-secure villages, enhance rural resilience, and realize the full promise of inclusive water governance.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the principal and faculty members of Padmashree Manibhai Desai Mahavidyalaya for providing academic guidance and institutional support during the preparation of this research paper. Special thanks are extended to colleagues, scholars, and all respondents who contributed valuable insights and information for the study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

A Geographical Analysis of Climate Change and Its Impacts

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030427

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 118-120
April 2026

Submitted: 15 Mar. 2026
Revised: 25 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 24 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21818606

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818606>



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Abstract

A review of the historical and global perspectives of climate change reveals that it is a natural process that has been occurring since time immemorial. However, in the modern era, human activities have caused serious damage to the environment. Factors such as population growth, urbanization, industrialization, increasing pollution, excessive use of chemical seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, excessive mining, deforestation, wastage of water, increased human intervention in the environment, rising energy consumption, increase in local, national and global temperatures, decrease in rainfall, and increasing desertification have led to global warming. This is also known as global warming. This increase in temperature has disturbed the natural cycle. As a result, changes in the global climate are observed. Although climate change is a natural process, human intervention has led to significant environmental changes and an increase in global temperatures. As a result, the current form of climate change is more distinct, more destructive, and more impactful than ever before.

Keywords: Climate Change, Global Warming, Environmental Change, Human Activities, Sustainability

Introduction.

A study of global climate reveals that although climate change is a natural process, in recent times, excessive exploitation of nature by humans and the rapid depletion of resources that took millions of years to form have become the major causes of environmental imbalance. The unlimited use of natural resources has led to their severe depletion. On the other hand, the level, intensity, and extent of pollution have increased significantly. Air, water, land, and noise pollution have disturbed the ecological balance. As a result, temperatures have risen, leading to the melting of glaciers and polar ice, and the drifting of icebergs. Rainfall has decreased, desertification has expanded, and the frequency of both floods and droughts has increased. Many species of plants and animals have become extinct. Increasing pollution has also contributed to the decline in groundwater levels, while the ozone layer has been gradually depleting. The occurrence of natural disasters has increased, and various environmental problems have emerged. Events such as snowstorms, cyclones, and wildfires have become more frequent. Human health has been adversely affected. The melting of ice has caused a rise in sea levels. An increase in carbon emissions in the atmosphere has led to a rise in average global temperatures. Compared to past climate changes, the present form is more destructive and alarming, as its impacts are not limited to any particular state, country, or continent, but are affecting the entire world. If the destructive changes occurring in the climate are not controlled in time, there is a serious risk that the very existence of the Earth may be threatened. Therefore, humanity must move beyond narrow thinking and make conscious efforts to protect the Earth, human life, and all living organisms. Only if the Earth is saved can life and humanity survive; otherwise, environmental destruction may lead to the collapse of the entire world. To prevent such a situation, there is an urgent need for global awareness and collective action.

Objective.

1. To study the concept of climate change.
2. To analyze the causes of climate change.
3. To examine the impacts of climate change and suggest suitable measures.

Methodology- The present study is based on secondary data. Information has been collected from various environmental reports, newspaper articles, and research journals.

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How to cite this article:

Khatane, R. P. (2026). A Geographical Analysis of Climate Change and Its Impacts. *Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 3(4(III)), 118–120.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818606>

Discussion and Analysis-

A study of global events and environmental factors helps in understanding the nature of climate change. It also reveals that the problems arising from climate change or global warming are becoming increasingly severe worldwide. Although climate change has natural causes, it is widely observed that large-scale changes in climate are primarily driven by human activities. The major causes of global climate change are as follows.

Greenhouse effect-

Since the Industrial Revolution, carbon emissions in the atmosphere have increased globally, along with a rise in greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, ozone, and chlorofluorocarbons. These gases are collectively referred to as greenhouse gases. An excessive increase in the concentration of these gases leads to the absorption of ultraviolet and other solar radiations, resulting in a rise in the overall temperature of the atmosphere. This phenomenon is known as the greenhouse effect.

Sunspots-

According to some climatologists, the number of sunspots increases every eleven years. An increase in sunspot activity is associated with higher heat emission from the Sun, which in turn raises the temperature of the Earth's atmosphere. On the other hand, an increase in the concentration of atmospheric dust leads to greater absorption of heat, further contributing to temperature rise. This also disrupts the cloud formation process. The combined effect of all these factors results in climate change.

Population growth

The increase in pollution is a major factor contributing to climate change. Rapid industrialization, urbanization, and human activities have led to the emission of large amounts of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere. These gases trap heat, enhancing the greenhouse effect and causing a rise in global temperatures. Air, water, and land pollution further disturb the natural balance of the environment. Pollution also affects rainfall patterns and contributes to irregular weather conditions such as droughts and floods. Overall, the continuous increase in pollution accelerates climate change and leads to environmental degradation.

Deforestation-

Large-scale urban development across the world, along with the expansion of industries, major infrastructure projects, and road construction, has led to extensive deforestation. The removal of trees reduces the capacity of the environment to absorb carbon dioxide, thereby increasing greenhouse gas concentrations. This contributes to global warming and a rise in global temperatures. Deforestation also accelerates desertification by degrading land quality and reducing soil moisture. As vegetation cover decreases, rainfall patterns are affected and ecological balance is disturbed. Consequently, continuous deforestation plays a significant role in climate change and environmental degradation. For a region to maintain a balanced environment, it is generally considered necessary to have at

least 33% of its land under forest cover. However, due to rapid deforestation, there has been a significant decline in forest areas at both local and global levels. This reduction in forest cover has weakened the environment's ability to absorb carbon dioxide, leading to an increase in greenhouse gas concentration. As a result, global temperatures have risen, contributing to climate change. The decline in forest areas has also disturbed ecological balance and affected rainfall patterns. Thus, deforestation plays a crucial role in environmental degradation and climate change.

Increasing urbanization and population explosion-

Population explosion leads to a rapid increase in the demand for food, housing, water, and energy. To meet these needs, urbanization expands at a fast pace, resulting in the growth of cities and towns. This expansion often involves deforestation, land-use changes, and large-scale construction activities, which reduce green cover and the environment's capacity to absorb carbon dioxide. Urbanization also increases transportation, industrial activities, and energy consumption, leading to higher emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane. These gases trap heat in the atmosphere, causing a rise in global temperatures. Additionally, urban areas generate large amounts of waste and pollution, which further stress the environment. Thus, population explosion and increasing urbanization contribute significantly to climate change by accelerating resource consumption, reducing natural ecosystems, and increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate Change: Effects / Impacts:**Ozone Layer Depletion –**

The ozone layer is a protective layer in the stratosphere that absorbs harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation coming from the Sun. Ozone layer depletion refers to the gradual thinning of this layer due to the release of chemicals such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, and other ozone-depleting substances. These chemicals are commonly used in refrigerators, air conditioners, aerosols, and industrial processes. When released into the atmosphere, they break down ozone molecules, reducing the layer's ability to filter UV radiation. Thus, ozone layer depletion is an important environmental issue that not only affects human health but also disrupts ecological balance and biodiversity.

Impact of Climate Change on Agriculture –

Climate change has a significant impact on agriculture by altering temperature patterns, rainfall distribution, and the frequency of extreme weather events. Rising temperatures affect crop growth cycles, leading to reduced yields and lower productivity. Irregular rainfall patterns, including droughts and floods, disrupt sowing and harvesting schedules, causing crop failures in many regions.

Increase in the Incidence of Various Diseases –

Due to the depletion of the ozone layer, the amount of ultraviolet (UV) radiation reaching the Earth from the Sun increases. These rays are highly harmful to human health, and exposure to them can lead to serious diseases such as skin disorders, eye diseases, and even skin cancer. Climate change has also contributed to the increased spread of various diseases. Rising temperatures, irregular



rainfall, and environmental imbalance create favorable conditions for microorganisms and disease vectors. As a result, there has been a significant increase in skin diseases, tuberculosis, and various epidemic diseases.

Temperature Rise –

Climate change has led to a rise in the Earth's average temperature, disturbing the balance of the environment. The

amount of ice in Polar Regions is decreasing day by day. The melting of large ice sheets is causing sea levels to rise, creating the risk of coastal cities being submerged underwater. Additionally, climate change is pushing many plant and animal species toward extinction.

Average rise in Global Temperature									
Year	1900	1920	1940	1960	1980	2000	2010	2020	2024
Temperature (°C)	0.40	0.47	0.53	0.64	0.67	0.73	0.80	1.04	1.29

Source- National Centers for Environmental information report 2024 (USA)

Global Impacts of Climate Change –

It has been observed that climate change has had impacts across the entire world. These include imbalance in rainfall patterns, a decrease in precipitation, a decline in per capita production and agricultural output, rising sea levels, loss of biodiversity, various types of pollution, hunger among the population, natural disasters, and the spread of various diseases. The combined effect of all these factors has influenced human life and development. Therefore, climate change has become a global environmental issue.

Conclusion

1. Climate change has led to an increase in the Earth's average temperature.
2. The melting of ice layers has led to a rise in sea levels.
3. There has been an increase in natural disasters.
4. The prevalence of global diseases has increased.
5. Agricultural production has declined.
6. Climate change has disrupted the natural cycle.
7. Due to climate change, the increase in temperature has led to a reduction in the thickness of ice layers.

Suggestions-

1. To develop renewable energy sources.
2. Various types of pollution should be controlled.
3. Organic farming should be promoted.
4. Public awareness should be created on a large scale to promote awareness about environmental balance.
5. Population growth should be brought under control.
6. Carbon dioxide emissions should be reduced.
7. Environmental laws should be made stricter and implemented effectively.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the Principal and the Department of Geography, NSSR Arts and Science College, Telgaon, Tq. Dharur, Dist. Beed, for providing the necessary academic support and encouragement for carrying out the present research work. Special thanks are extended to all scholars, researchers, and institutions whose books, journals, reports, and publications served as valuable sources of information for this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Ruchita S. and Rohit S. Effect of Global warming on Indian Agriculture



Original Article

Spatial Analysis of Bhima Koregaon (Pune District, Maharashtra): A GIS-Based Study

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030428

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 121-133
April 2026

Submitted: 15 Mar. 2026
Revised: 25 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 24 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21818638

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818638>



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Abstract

Spatial analysis is a fundamental approach in geographical research that facilitates the understanding of spatial patterns, relationships, and regional characteristics. Bhima Koregaon, located in Shirur Taluka of Pune District, Maharashtra, is a historically and geographically significant settlement situated along the Bhima River. The present study aims to examine the spatial characteristics and regional development patterns of Bhima Koregaon using Geographic Information System (GIS) techniques. The study focuses on key spatial components such as physical geography, land use and land cover (LULC), drainage patterns, settlement distribution, transportation networks, and emerging urbanization trends. The research is primarily based on secondary data sources, including Census of India records, satellite imagery, and topographical maps. GIS-based spatial analysis methods are applied to examine the interactions between natural features and human activities within the region. The findings reveal that Bhima Koregaon is undergoing gradual spatial transformation and urban expansion due to its strategic location, improved transportation connectivity, and proximity to Pune city. Land use patterns indicate a shift from predominantly agricultural land to residential and commercial uses. These changes highlight the growing influence of regional urbanization. The study emphasizes the need for sustainable spatial planning and effective land management strategies to ensure balanced regional development and environmental sustainability.

Keywords: Spatial Analysis, GIS, Bhima Koregaon, Land Use Land Cover, Settlement Pattern, Urbanization, Regional Development

Introduction

Spatial analysis is a core concept in geography that involves examining the spatial distribution, patterns, and relationships of physical and human phenomena across geographic space. It enables researchers to understand the interaction between environmental and socio-economic factors within a region. In recent decades, advancements in geospatial technologies such as Geographic Information System (GIS) and Remote Sensing have significantly enhanced the scope and accuracy of spatial analysis. These tools facilitate efficient data collection, management, analysis, and visualization, thereby supporting informed decision-making in regional planning, environmental management, and sustainable development. Bhima Koregaon is an important rural settlement located in Shirur Taluka of Pune District, Maharashtra. It is situated on the left bank of the Bhima River, which plays a crucial role in shaping the physical and economic landscape of the region. The settlement lies approximately 28 km northeast of Pune and about 10 km from Shikrapur, along State Highway 60. Its strategic location along a major transportation corridor has contributed to its gradual growth and development. The village also holds historical importance due to the Battle of Koregaon (1 January 1818), which remains a significant event in regional history. Beyond its historical relevance, Bhima Koregaon is geographically and socio-economically important due to fertile alluvial soils, access to water resources, and its proximity to Pune. These factors have supported agricultural activities, settlement expansion, and increasing urban influence. In recent years, improved connectivity, infrastructural development, and expansion of nearby urban centers have significantly influenced the spatial growth and land use patterns of Bhima Koregaon. Agricultural land is increasingly being converted into residential, commercial, and infrastructural uses.

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How to cite this article:

Kamble, K. M. (2026). Spatial Analysis of Bhima Koregaon (Pune District, Maharashtra): A GIS-Based Study. *Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 3(4(III)), 121–133. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818638>

Therefore, it is essential to study these spatial dynamics in order to understand the transformation of the region. The present study aims to analyze the spatial characteristics of Bhima Koregaon using GIS-based techniques. It focuses on land use patterns, settlement structure, drainage systems, transportation networks, and urbanization trends. The study provides insights into the geographical processes shaping regional development and highlights the importance of sustainable spatial planning.

Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to examine the spatial characteristics and regional development patterns of Bhima Koregaon using GIS-based techniques. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze the geographical location and spatial setting of Bhima Koregaon within Shirur Taluka and Pune District.
2. To examine the physical geographical features of the region, including relief, drainage patterns, soil characteristics, and climate, with special reference to the influence of the Bhima River.
3. To study the Land Use and Land Cover (LULC) patterns using Geographic Information System (GIS) and remote sensing techniques.
4. To analyze the settlement pattern and population distribution based on Census data.
5. To evaluate the transportation network and regional connectivity of Bhima Koregaon with nearby urban centers such as Pune.
6. To identify urbanization trends and assess their impact on regional development and sustainability.
7. These objectives provide a structured framework for understanding the spatial dynamics and transformation of the study area.

Study Area

The study area focuses on Bhima Koregaon, an important rural settlement located in Shirur Taluka of Pune District in the state of Maharashtra. The region holds geographical, historical, and socio-economic significance due to its strategic location along the Bhima River. Bhima Koregaon serves as a rural growth center connecting surrounding villages with nearby urban areas, particularly **Pune**. Its location within a rapidly developing region makes it an ideal case for spatial analysis of rural-urban transformation.

Location

Bhima Koregaon is situated in the eastern part of Pune District, approximately 28 km northeast of Pune city and about 10 km from Shikrapur. The settlement is well connected by State Highway 60, which enhances regional accessibility and economic interaction. The village lies on the northern bank of the Bhima River, which significantly influences agricultural activities and settlement development.

Geographic Coordinates

- Latitude: 18.63° North
- Longitude: 74.05° East

These coordinates place the study area within the Deccan Plateau region of western India, characterized by basaltic formations and semi-arid climatic conditions.

Area

The total geographical area of Bhima Koregaon and its surrounding region is approximately 20 sq. km. The area includes agricultural land, residential settlements, water bodies, transportation networks, and open land. Agriculture remains the dominant land use, although increasing urban influence is gradually transforming land use patterns.

Population

According to the Census of India 2011 data, the population of Bhima Koregaon was approximately 13,116 people. The population is distributed across several residential clusters within the village and nearby hamlets. The majority of the population is engaged in agriculture, small-scale trade, and service-related activities. In recent years, improved connectivity and proximity to Pune have encouraged population growth and migration into the area. As per projected estimates based on decadal growth trends, the population of Bhima Koregaon increased to approximately **17,000 in 2021** and around **17,500 in 2022**. This growth reflects the combined impact of natural increase, rural-to-urban migration, and expanding economic opportunities in the surrounding region.

Administrative Structure

Administratively, Bhima Koregaon is governed under the rural local governance system of India. The administrative structure of the study area is as follows:

- State: Maharashtra
- District: Pune District
- Taluka: Shirur Taluka
- Local Governance: Gram Panchayat system under the Panchayati Raj framework.

The administrative setup plays an important role in managing local development activities, infrastructure, and land use planning within the village.

Physical and Regional Importance

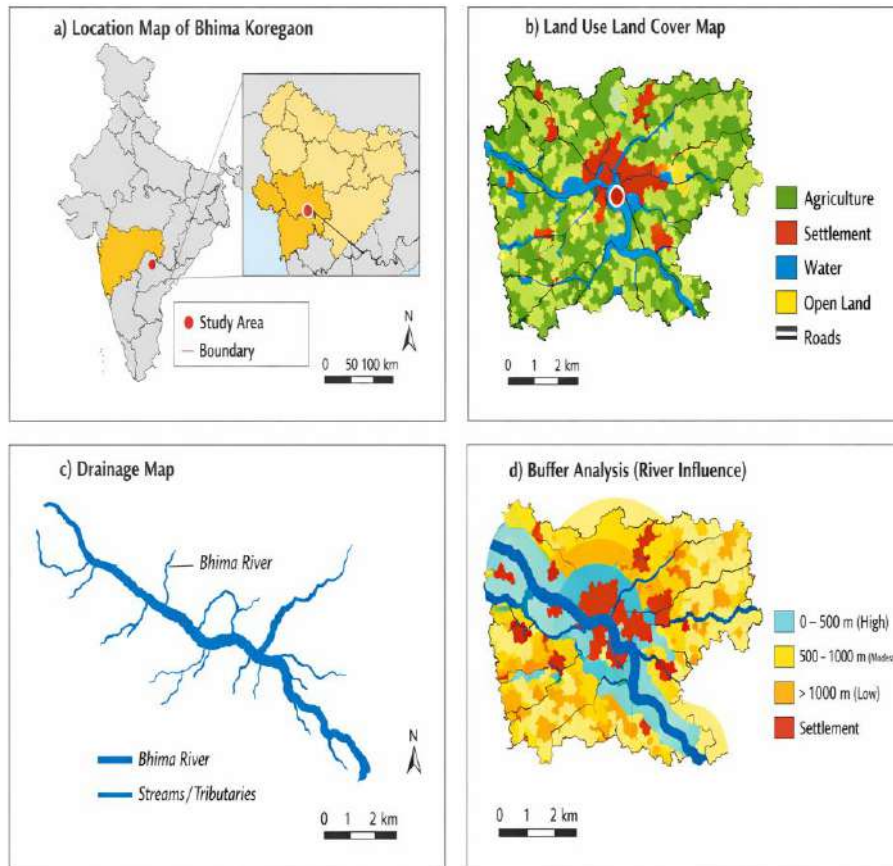
Bhima Koregaon holds both geographical and historical importance. The region is known for the Battle of Koregaon, which took place on 1 January 1818 near the banks of the Bhima River. In addition to its historical significance, the area has gained attention for its strategic location, agricultural productivity, and increasing urban influence from nearby cities. The presence of the Bhima River provides water resources for irrigation and agriculture, while the surrounding plains offer suitable land for settlement and farming. The combination of natural resources, transportation connectivity, and proximity to Pune has contributed to the gradual spatial transformation of the area.

Map Representation of Study Area

A location map showing Maharashtra State, Pune District, Shirur Taluka, and Bhima Koregaon were prepared using GIS software. This map provides spatial context for the study and helps in understanding the geographical setting of the research area.

Thus, Bhima Koregaon represents an important case study for spatial analysis, as it reflects the interaction between physical geography, human settlement, and regional

development processes in a rapidly changing rural-urban environment.



Methodology

The present study adopts a **descriptive and analytical research methodology** to examine the spatial characteristics and regional development patterns of **Bhima Koregaon**. The research integrates both primary and secondary data sources along with geospatial technologies such as **ArcGIS**, **QGIS**, and **Google Earth Pro** to analyze spatial patterns and relationships.

His methodological framework involves four major stages: data collection, data processing, spatial analysis, and interpretation.

Data Sources

To conduct a comprehensive spatial analysis of the study area, both primary data and secondary data were used.

Primary Data

Primary data were collected directly from the field to obtain accurate and current information about the spatial characteristics of the area.

- **Field Observations:** Field visits were conducted to observe the physical landscape, land use patterns, settlement structure, and transportation facilities in and around the study area.
- **GPS Location Mapping:** Important geographical features such as settlements, road networks, and river

locations were recorded using GPS devices to obtain precise spatial coordinates.

- **Survey of Settlement Pattern:** A basic survey was carried out to understand
- the distribution of houses, population clusters, and land utilization within the settlement area.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from various official and academic sources to support spatial analysis and mapping.

- **Census of India:** Provided demographic information such as population, density, and socio-economic characteristics.
- **Satellite Imagery:** High-resolution satellite images from Google Earth were used to identify land use patterns and settlement expansion.
- **Topographical Maps:** Survey maps provided information about relief, drainage patterns, and physical features of the region.
- **Government Reports:** District statistical reports and planning documents were used to understand development trends.
- **Research Articles and Academic Publications:** Relevant literature was reviewed to understand

previous studies and methodological approaches related to spatial analysis.

- **Research Design:** The study follows a descriptive and analytical research design. Spatial data obtained from satellite imagery and secondary sources were analyzed using GIS techniques to identify patterns of land use, settlement distribution, and transportation networks.

Method	Purpose
Remote Sensing	Identification and classification of land use and land cover patterns
Buffer Analysis	Examination of the influence of the Bhima River and road networks on settlement growth
Overlay Analysis	Integration of multiple spatial layers such as land use, drainage, and settlement distribution
Spatial Mapping	Visualization of population distribution and land utilization
Network Analysis	Assessment of transportation connectivity and accessibility

These spatial analysis techniques allow researchers to better understand how natural and human factors influence regional development patterns.

Software Used

Various geospatial software tools were used for spatial data processing, mapping, and analysis:

- **ArcGIS** – Used for spatial data processing, mapping, and advanced spatial analysis.
- **QGIS** – Used for creating thematic maps and analyzing spatial datasets.
- **Google Earth Pro** – Used for visual interpretation of satellite imagery and identification of land use patterns.

Data Processing and Analysis

After collecting the necessary data, spatial datasets were digitized and organized into different layers such as land use, drainage network, settlement distribution, transportation network, and administrative boundaries. These layers were analyzed using GIS techniques to identify spatial patterns, relationships, and changes within the study area.

The results obtained from spatial analysis were then interpreted to understand the geographical characteristics, settlement development, and urbanization trends of Bhima Koregaon. This methodological approach provides a systematic framework for studying spatial dynamics and regional development using modern geospatial technologies.

Physical Geography of Bhima Koregaon

The physical geography of Bhima Koregaon plays a crucial role in shaping its settlement pattern, agricultural activities, and regional development. The area forms part of the broader Deccan Plateau, which is characterized by volcanic basalt formations, semi-arid climatic conditions, and fertile agricultural lands. The physical environment of the region includes important elements such as relief, topography, drainage systems, soil types, and climate, all of which influence land use patterns and spatial development.

Relief and Topography

Bhima Koregaon lies within the Deccan Plateau region, which is primarily composed of basaltic lava

GIS and Spatial Analysis Tools

To analyze the spatial characteristics of the study area, several GIS-based techniques were applied. These techniques helped in examining spatial relationships among geographical features such as land use, settlements, transportation networks, and water bodies.

formations known as the Deccan Traps. These geological formations were created by extensive volcanic activity during the late Cretaceous period and today form one of the largest volcanic plateaus in the world. The topography of the study area is generally flat to gently undulating, with gradual slopes towards the basin of the Bhima River. The elevation in the region ranges approximately between 550 and 600 meters above sea level. The relatively smooth terrain supports agricultural activities and facilitates the development of transportation networks and settlements.

The plateau landscape also influences several environmental and geographical characteristics of the region, including:

- **Soil Formation:** Basaltic rocks weather to form fertile black cotton soil (regur), which is highly suitable for agriculture.
- **Drainage Patterns:** The gentle slope towards the Bhima River basin helps in the development of dendritic drainage patterns.
- **Agricultural Productivity:** The combination of fertile soils and relatively level terrain supports cultivation of crops such as sugarcane, wheat, jowar, and vegetables.

Overall, the relief and topography of Bhima Koregaon provide favorable conditions for agriculture, settlement expansion, and transportation development.

Drainage System

The drainage system of Bhima Koregaon is mainly influenced by the Bhima River, which flows close to the settlement. The Bhima River is one of the major tributaries of the Krishna River. It originates in the Western Ghats near Bhimashankar and flows southeast across Maharashtra before eventually joining the Krishna River in Karnataka.

The Bhima River basin supports an extensive drainage network across the Pune District region. Several important tributaries contribute to this drainage system, including:

- Indrayani River
- Mula River
- Mutha River



These rivers collectively form an integrated drainage system that plays an essential role in supporting agriculture and human settlements throughout the region.

The Bhima River is particularly important for the local environment and economy of Bhima Koregaon. It contributes significantly to:

- **Irrigation:** The river provides water resources for irrigating agricultural fields in the surrounding rural areas.
- **Groundwater Recharge:** River flow and seasonal flooding help replenish groundwater reserves in the region.
- **Agricultural Development:** Availability of water resources supports the cultivation of crops and enhances agricultural productivity.

In addition, the river has shaped the spatial growth of settlements along its banks, as access to water has historically influenced the location of villages and farming communities.

Climate

The climate of Bhima Koregaon is typical of the semi-arid tropical climate found across much of the Deccan Plateau. The region experiences three main seasons: summer, monsoon, and winter. Summers are generally hot, with temperatures often rising above 35°C, while winters are mild and pleasant. The majority of rainfall occurs during the southwest monsoon season between June and September. The average annual rainfall in the region ranges between 600 and 700 mm, which supports agricultural activities but also makes irrigation from rivers and groundwater an important requirement for farming.

Seasonal Characteristics

Bhima Koregaon experiences three major seasons during the year: summer, monsoon, and winter.

Season	Characteristics
Summer (March–May)	The summer season is generally hot and dry, with temperatures often rising between 35°C and 40°C. Strong solar radiation and low humidity are common during this period.
Monsoon (June–September)	The region receives moderate rainfall during the southwest monsoon season. Most of the annual precipitation occurs during these months, which supports agricultural activities and groundwater recharge.
Winter (October–February)	Winters are mild and pleasant, with temperatures ranging between 12°C and 28°C. This season is generally dry and comfortable for agricultural and outdoor activities.

Rainfall Pattern

The average annual rainfall in Bhima Koregaon ranges between 500 mm and 700 mm, which is characteristic of the rain shadow region of Maharashtra. The rain shadow effect occurs because the Western Ghats block moisture-laden winds from the Arabian Sea, causing significantly reduced rainfall on the eastern side of the mountains. Most of the rainfall occurs during the southwest monsoon season, while the remaining months experience dry weather with occasional light showers.

Climatic Influence on Agriculture and Land Use

Climate significantly influences land use patterns and agricultural productivity in the Bhima Koregaon region. Moderate rainfall combined with irrigation from the Bhima River supports the cultivation of various crops such as:

- Sugarcane
- Wheat

Seasonal rainfall patterns also influence cropping cycles and land use patterns in the region.

Soil and Agricultural Suitability

The soils in Bhima Koregaon are mainly derived from weathered basalt rocks of the Deccan Traps. The dominant soil type is black cotton soil, which has high moisture retention capacity and is particularly suitable for crops such as cotton, sugarcane, wheat, and pulses. These soil characteristics, combined with the availability of irrigation water from the Bhima River, have made agriculture a primary occupation for many residents in the region. Overall, the physical geography of Bhima Koregaon—including its plateau topography, drainage network, climate, and fertile soils—has significantly influenced the spatial distribution of settlements, agricultural practices, and regional development patterns. Understanding these natural factors is essential for conducting effective spatial analysis and planning sustainable land use in the area.

Climate

The climate of Bhima Koregaon is classified as a tropical monsoon climate, which is typical for many regions of Maharashtra located on the Deccan Plateau. The climate of the area is influenced by monsoon winds, regional topography, and its position in the rain shadow zone of the Western Ghats. As a result, the region experiences moderate rainfall and relatively dry climatic conditions compared to the coastal areas of Maharashtra.

The climate plays a significant role in determining agricultural activities, cropping patterns, water availability, and settlement development in the region.

- Jowar (sorghum)
- Pulses
- Vegetables

However, due to limited rainfall and semi-arid conditions, irrigation facilities and groundwater resources are essential for sustaining agriculture.

Climatic Significance in Spatial Analysis

Understanding the climatic characteristics of Bhima Koregaon is important for spatial analysis because climate directly affects land use, agricultural practices, water availability, and settlement growth. Seasonal rainfall patterns influence cropping cycles and irrigation demand, while temperature variations impact human activities and environmental conditions. Thus, the tropical monsoon climate of Bhima Koregaon plays a crucial role in shaping the physical landscape, economic activities, and spatial development patterns of the region.



Land Use and Land Cover (LULC)

Land Use and Land Cover (LULC) analysis is an important component of spatial analysis as it helps in understanding how land resources are utilized and how natural landscapes are transformed by human activities. In the present study, LULC patterns of Bhima Koregaon were examined using satellite imagery and geospatial techniques such as Geographic Information System (GIS) and Remote Sensing. Satellite images obtained from Google Earth and other geospatial datasets were analyzed to classify different land use categories such as agricultural land, settlement areas, open land, water bodies, and transportation

Land Use Distribution

The spatial classification of land use in the study area shows the following distribution:

Land Use Type	Percentage
Agricultural Land	60%
Settlement Area	15%
Open Land	10%
Water Bodies	5%
Transportation and Infrastructure	10%

Agricultural Land

Agricultural land occupies the largest portion of the total area, accounting for approximately 60 percent of the land use. The fertile black soils derived from basaltic rocks of the Deccan Traps provide favorable conditions for agriculture. Major crops grown in the region include sugarcane, wheat, jowar, pulses, and vegetables. Irrigation from the Bhima River and groundwater resources supports both seasonal and perennial crops.

Settlement Area

Settlement areas constitute about 15 percent of the total land use. The main residential clusters are concentrated near transportation routes and along the river basin. Over the past few decades, settlement expansion has occurred due to population growth and increasing connectivity with nearby towns and cities.

Open Land

Open land accounts for approximately 10 percent of the total area. These areas include fallow land, grazing land, and unused land parcels. Some of these lands may be gradually converted into agricultural fields or residential plots as development continues.

Water Bodies

Water bodies such as river channels, ponds, and small reservoirs make up about 5 percent of the total land area. The Bhima River is the most significant water resource in the region and plays a key role in irrigation, groundwater recharge, and environmental sustainability.

Transportation and Infrastructure

Transportation networks and infrastructure occupy around 10 percent of the land area. The presence of regional roads, including State Highway 60, provides connectivity between Bhima Koregaon and surrounding settlements. These transportation routes facilitate the movement of people, goods, and agricultural products, thereby supporting regional economic activities.

infrastructure. These categories were mapped and interpreted to understand the spatial distribution of land resources in the study area. The spatial analysis of Bhima Koregaon reveals that agriculture is the dominant land use, reflecting the rural character of the region. The fertile soils of the Deccan Plateau and the availability of irrigation water from the Bhima River support agricultural activities in the surrounding areas. However, in recent years, the proximity of the settlement to Pune and improved transportation connectivity have encouraged gradual expansion of residential areas and infrastructure.

Spatial Implications of LULC Changes

The spatial analysis of land use patterns indicates that agriculture remains the dominant activity in the region. However, the gradual expansion of settlement areas suggests increasing urban influence from nearby urban centers. Changes in land use patterns reflect the ongoing transformation of Bhima Koregaon from a purely rural settlement toward a semi-urban landscape. Understanding these LULC patterns is essential for regional planning and sustainable development. Proper land management strategies are required to balance agricultural productivity, environmental conservation, and urban growth in the Bhima Koregaon region.

Settlement Pattern

The settlement pattern of Bhima Koregaon reflects the interaction between physical geography, transportation networks, and agricultural land use. Settlement geography studies how human habitations are distributed across space and how natural and socio-economic factors influence their structure and growth. In Bhima Koregaon, the presence of fertile agricultural land, the proximity to the Bhima River, and accessibility to nearby urban centers such as Pune have significantly influenced the spatial arrangement of settlements.

Using Geographic Information System (GIS) and satellite imagery interpretation, the settlement structure of Bhima Koregaon can be broadly classified into three major types: compact, linear, and dispersed settlements. Each type represents different spatial characteristics and land use relationships.

Compact Settlement

Compact settlements are mainly located in the central village area of Bhima Koregaon. In this type of settlement pattern, houses and buildings are closely clustered together, forming a dense residential core. This area generally contains important social and economic facilities such as markets, schools, temples, and administrative buildings.



The characteristics of compact settlements include:

- High population density
- Closely spaced houses and narrow streets
- Presence of community facilities and services
- Centralized residential development

Compact settlements usually develop for reasons such as security, social interaction, and easy access to shared resources such as water sources and markets. In Bhima Koregaon, the central settlement area represents the traditional village core where most of the population resides.

Linear Settlement

Linear settlements in Bhima Koregaon are mainly found along major roads and transportation routes. These settlements develop in a line-like pattern where houses and commercial establishments are built along roads or highways.

The development of linear settlements in the region has been influenced by improved transportation connectivity, particularly along State Highway 60 and other regional roads connecting the village with nearby towns such as Shikrapur.

Key features of linear settlements include:

1. Development along transportation routes
2. Easy access to markets and services
3. Gradual expansion of residential and commercial buildings along roads
4. Increased economic activity due to connectivity the growth of linear settlements reflects the increasing influence of transportation networks and regional development processes.

Dispersed Settlement

Dispersed settlements are mainly found in agricultural areas surrounding the main village. In this pattern, houses and farmsteads are scattered across farmland rather than being clustered together. These settlements typically belong to farmers who live close to their agricultural fields.

The characteristics of dispersed settlements include:

- Scattered houses or farmhouses
- Low population density
- Large agricultural land holdings
- Direct proximity to farmland

Dispersed settlements are common in rural agricultural regions where land availability allows farmers to live near their fields. In Bhima Koregaon, such settlements are found in peripheral areas where agriculture remains the primary occupation.

Spatial Significance of Settlement Pattern

The settlement pattern of Bhima Koregaon reflects the combined influence of natural factors and human activities. The availability of fertile land, access to water from the Bhima River, and the presence of transportation routes have shaped the spatial distribution of settlements in the region. The gradual expansion of linear settlements along roads also indicates increasing urban influence and regional connectivity, particularly due to the proximity of

Pune. As transportation infrastructure improves and economic opportunities increase, the settlement pattern may continue to evolve, leading to further spatial transformation in the Bhima Koregaon region. Understanding these settlement patterns through spatial analysis is important for regional planning, infrastructure development, and sustainable land use management.

Population Distribution

Population distribution is an important aspect of spatial analysis as it helps in understanding how people are distributed across a geographical area and how demographic factors influence settlement growth and regional development. In the case of Bhima Koregaon, population patterns are influenced by factors such as agricultural opportunities, transportation connectivity, and proximity to major urban centers like Pune. According to the Census of India 2011 data, the total population of Bhima Koregaon is approximately 13,116 people. The population is distributed mainly within the central village settlement and surrounding agricultural areas. Over the years, improved connectivity and economic opportunities have contributed to gradual population growth in the region.

Population Density and Distribution Pattern

The spatial distribution of population in Bhima Koregaon shows a concentrated pattern in the central settlement area, where residential houses, markets, educational institutions, and public facilities are located. The central village area generally exhibits higher population density, while the surrounding agricultural regions have relatively lower population density due to dispersed farmhouses and scattered settlements. Population distribution is closely related to the settlement patterns discussed earlier. Compact settlements contain a higher concentration of people, whereas dispersed settlements located in agricultural areas have smaller population clusters.

Literacy Rate

Bhima Koregaon has a relatively high literacy rate of approximately 89 percent, which is higher than the average literacy rate of Maharashtra. Higher literacy levels contribute to social development, better employment opportunities, and improved quality of life in the region. Educational institutions within the village and easy access to nearby educational centers in Pune district have contributed to increased literacy levels among the local population.

Population Characteristics

The population structure of Bhima Koregaon reflects several socio-economic characteristics that influence spatial development in the region.

High Working Population: A large proportion of the population is engaged in economic activities such as agriculture, small businesses, trade, and service-sector employment. Agriculture remains an important occupation due to the fertile land and irrigation from the Bhima River.

Increasing Migration: In recent years, there has been increasing migration from nearby villages to Bhima Koregaon. People often migrate in search of employment

opportunities, educational facilities, and better living conditions. This migration contributes to the expansion of residential areas and changes in land use patterns

Urban Influence from Pune:

The spatial growth of Bhima Koregaon has been strongly influenced by the expansion of Pune city. Improved road connectivity and economic development in the Pune metropolitan region have encouraged population movement and settlement growth in nearby rural areas.

Spatial Implications of Population Growth

The growing population of Bhima Koregaon has several spatial implications. Increasing population density in the central settlement area has led to the expansion of residential neighborhoods and infrastructure development. At the same time, gradual urban influence from Pune is transforming the village into a semi-urban settlement.

Understanding population distribution through spatial analysis helps planners and policymakers identify future development needs such as housing, transportation, water supply, and social infrastructure. Proper planning is therefore necessary to ensure balanced and sustainable development in the Bhima Koregaon region.

Transportation Network

Transportation plays a crucial role in shaping the spatial development and economic growth of Bhima Koregaon. Efficient transportation systems facilitate the movement of people, goods, and services, thereby strengthening regional connectivity and supporting socio-economic development. In spatial analysis, transportation networks are important because they influence settlement patterns, land use changes, trade activities, and urban expansion. The transportation infrastructure of Bhima Koregaon mainly consists of road networks that connect the village with nearby towns and major urban centers. The accessibility provided by these roads has contributed significantly to the development of the settlement and its integration with the regional economy of Pune District.

Road Network

The road network is the primary mode of transportation in the region. One of the most important routes passing near Bhima Koregaon is State Highway 60. This highway serves as a major transportation corridor linking the village with surrounding towns and cities.

The key features of the road network include:

- **State Highway Connectivity:** State Highway-60 connects Bhima Koregaon with Pune and Ahmednagar, facilitating regional transportation and trade.
- **Local Roads:** Several local and rural roads connect Bhima Koregaon with nearby villages and agricultural areas. These roads support daily commuting, transportation of agricultural produce, and access to local markets.
- **Village Road Network:** Internal village roads connect residential areas, markets, schools, and other public facilities within the settlement.

The development of these road networks has significantly improved accessibility and mobility within the region.

Regional Connectivity

Bhima Koregaon enjoys good regional connectivity due to its proximity to important urban and semi-urban centers.

- **Distance from Pune:** approximately 28 km
- **Distance from Shikrapur:** approximately 10 km

This close proximity to Pune, which is one of the major economic and educational centers in Maharashtra, provides residents with better access to employment opportunities, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and markets.

Impact on Spatial Development

The presence of a well-developed transportation network has played an important role in the spatial transformation of Bhima Koregaon. Improved connectivity has encouraged the growth of commercial establishments, small businesses, and service activities along major roads.

Additionally, transportation infrastructure has contributed to:

- Expansion of residential areas along major roads and highways
- Development of commercial activities such as shops, markets, and service centers
- Growth of real estate development due to increasing demand for land near transportation corridors
- Improved accessibility for agricultural products to reach nearby markets
- As a result, transportation networks act as a major driving force behind regional development and urban influence in the Bhima Koregaon region.

Spatial Significance

From a spatial analysis perspective, transportation networks influence the direction and pattern of settlement growth. Linear settlements often develop along major roads, while commercial activities tend to concentrate near transport corridors. In Bhima Koregaon, the influence of State Highway-60 and other local roads has contributed to the gradual transformation of the village into a semi-urban settlement influenced by the expansion of the Pune metropolitan region. Therefore, understanding transportation networks is essential for effective regional planning, infrastructure development, and sustainable spatial growth in the Bhima Koregaon area.

Urbanization Trends

Urbanization is a significant process influencing the spatial transformation of rural settlements across India. In recent decades, many villages located near major cities have experienced rapid socio-economic and spatial changes due to expanding urban influence. Bhima Koregaon represents one such settlement that is gradually transforming from a traditional rural village into a peri-urban region due to its proximity to Pune.

Peri-urban areas are transitional zones where rural and urban characteristics coexist. In Bhima Koregaon, this transformation is visible through changes in land use patterns, expansion of residential areas, improved infrastructure, and increasing economic activities. The growing connectivity with surrounding towns such as Shikrapur and access to major transportation routes like



State Highway 60 have accelerated the process of urbanization.

Factors Influencing Urbanization

Several factors have contributed to the ongoing urbanization trends in Bhima Koregaon.

Expansion of Residential Layouts: The demand for housing has increased due to population growth and migration from nearby rural areas. As a result, new residential layouts and housing colonies have been developed, particularly along major roads and in areas closer to transportation routes.

Growth of Commercial Establishments: Urban influence has encouraged the establishment of small businesses, retail shops, service centers, and local markets within the village. These commercial activities provide employment opportunities and improve the availability of goods and services for the local population.

Improved Transportation Connectivity: Better road infrastructure and connectivity with Pune and other nearby towns have significantly influenced settlement growth. Improved accessibility allows residents to commute easily for employment, education, and trade, thereby strengthening the economic integration of Bhima Koregaon with surrounding urban centers.

Population Growth and Migration: The increasing population, partly due to migration from nearby villages, has led to greater demand for housing, infrastructure, and public services. Migrants often move to Bhima Koregaon in search of better employment opportunities and improved living conditions.

Urban Sprawl and Land Use Transformation

One of the major spatial impacts of urbanization in Bhima Koregaon is urban sprawl, which refers to the outward expansion of built-up areas into surrounding rural land. As residential layouts and infrastructure projects expand, agricultural land is gradually being converted into residential and commercial areas.

This transformation has several implications:

- Reduction in agricultural land area
- Increase in built-up land and infrastructure
- Growth of real estate development
- Greater demand for water, transportation, and public services

Spatial Implications of Urbanization

The urbanization process is gradually altering the spatial structure of Bhima Koregaon. The traditional compact village core is expanding outward, while new residential and commercial developments are emerging along transportation corridors and near major roads.

From a spatial analysis perspective, these changes indicate the increasing influence of regional urban growth from Pune. Bhima Koregaon is evolving into a semi-urban settlement where rural agricultural landscapes coexist with expanding urban infrastructure.

Need for Sustainable Planning

Although urbanization brings economic opportunities and improved infrastructure, it also creates

challenges such as pressure on natural resources, land use conflicts, and environmental degradation. Therefore, proper spatial planning and land management strategies are essential to ensure balanced and sustainable development in the Bhima Koregaon region.

Understanding urbanization trends through spatial analysis helps planners and policymakers manage future growth while preserving agricultural land, maintaining environmental balance, and improving the quality of life for local residents.

Environmental Issues

Environmental issues have become an important concern in the spatial development of Bhima Koregaon. Rapid population growth, increasing urban influence from Pune, and expanding infrastructure have created several environmental challenges in the region. These issues affect natural resources, agricultural sustainability, and the overall ecological balance of the area.

The spatial analysis of Bhima Koregaon highlights several environmental concerns such as river pollution, conversion of agricultural land, traffic congestion, and groundwater depletion. Addressing these issues is essential for achieving sustainable development and maintaining environmental quality.

River Pollution

One of the major environmental concerns in the region is pollution of the Bhima River, which flows near Bhima Koregaon. The river serves as an important source of water for irrigation, agriculture, and domestic use. However, increasing human activities have led to the discharge of domestic waste, agricultural runoff, and other pollutants into the river.

River pollution can have several negative impacts, including:

- Deterioration of water quality
- Harm to aquatic ecosystems
- Reduced availability of clean water for irrigation and drinking
- Increased health risks for local communities

Therefore, proper waste management systems and water conservation measures are required to protect the river ecosystem.

Agricultural Land Conversion

Another significant environmental issue is the gradual conversion of agricultural land into residential and commercial areas. As urbanization increases and demand for housing grows, agricultural fields around the village are being transformed into residential layouts and infrastructure projects.

This process leads to several spatial and environmental impacts:

- Reduction in fertile agricultural land
- Changes in traditional land use patterns
- Loss of agricultural productivity
- Increased pressure on natural resources

- Such changes highlight the need for effective land use planning and policies that balance development with agricultural sustainability.

Traffic Congestion

Improved connectivity through major roads such as State Highway 60 has increased the movement of vehicles through the region. While better transportation promotes economic development, it also contributes to traffic congestion, especially near markets, commercial areas, and road intersections.

Traffic congestion can lead to:

- Increased air and noise pollution
- Delays in transportation
- Higher fuel consumption
- Reduced road safety

Proper traffic management and infrastructure development are therefore necessary to address this issue.

Groundwater Depletion

Groundwater is an important source of water for agriculture and domestic use in Bhima Koregaon. However, excessive extraction of groundwater for irrigation, residential consumption, and industrial activities has resulted in declining groundwater levels.

The depletion of groundwater resources may cause:

- Water scarcity during dry seasons
- Increased dependence on surface water sources
- Reduced agricultural productivity
- Environmental degradation

To address this issue, sustainable water management practices such as rainwater harvesting, efficient irrigation techniques, and groundwater recharge programs should be implemented.

Need for Sustainable Planning

The environmental challenges faced by Bhima Koregaon highlight the need for sustainable spatial planning and environmental management. Proper land use regulation, conservation of water resources, pollution control measures, and environmentally friendly infrastructure development are essential to ensure balanced growth.

By integrating environmental considerations into spatial planning, it is possible to protect natural resources while supporting the socio-economic development of Bhima Koregaon and its surrounding region.

GIS-Based Spatial Analysis

Geographic Information System (GIS) plays a crucial role in modern geographical research by enabling the collection, management, analysis, and visualization of spatial data. In the study of Bhima Koregaon, GIS-based spatial analysis was used to understand the spatial relationships between physical features, land use patterns, settlement distribution, and infrastructure development. The use of Geographic Information System (GIS) allows researchers to integrate various spatial datasets into a digital environment and analyze them through mapping and spatial modeling techniques. By applying GIS tools along

with Remote Sensing, it becomes possible to examine geographical patterns and identify spatial changes occurring in the study area. GIS-based analysis helps in visualizing how different geographical elements such as rivers, roads, settlements, and land use categories interact with each other. This approach also improves the accuracy of spatial planning and regional development strategies.

Important GIS Layers Used

To perform spatial analysis of Bhima Koregaon, several GIS layers were created and analyzed. Each layer represents a specific geographical component of the study area.

Administrative Boundary Map

The administrative boundary map defines the geographical limits of the study area. It shows the boundaries of Bhima Koregaon within Shirur Taluka and Pune District. This layer provides the basic framework for spatial analysis by establishing the geographical extent of the study area.

Drainage Map

The drainage map represents the river network and water bodies within the region. The most significant feature in this layer is the Bhima River, which influences agriculture, settlement development, and water availability. Mapping the drainage system helps in understanding water flow patterns, flood-prone areas, and irrigation potential.

Land Use Land Cover Map

The Land Use Land Cover (LULC) map is one of the most important layers in spatial analysis. It shows how different parts of the land are utilized for agriculture, settlements, infrastructure, water bodies, and open spaces. Satellite imagery obtained through Google Earth Pro was used to classify these land use categories. The LULC map helps in identifying changes in land utilization, particularly the conversion of agricultural land into residential areas due to increasing urban influence from Pune.

Transportation Network Map

The transportation network map shows the distribution of roads and highways in the study area. Major transportation routes such as State Highway 60 are included in this layer. This map helps analyze regional connectivity, accessibility, and the role of transportation infrastructure in shaping settlement patterns and economic activities.

Settlement Distribution Map

The settlement distribution map illustrates the spatial arrangement of residential areas and population clusters within Bhima Koregaon. It identifies compact settlements, linear settlements along roads, and dispersed settlements in agricultural areas. This map helps researchers understand how settlements are distributed across the landscape and how factors such as transportation, water resources, and land availability influence settlement growth. The integration of multiple GIS layers enables a comprehensive understanding of spatial relationships between physical features and human activities, thereby supporting effective regional planning and sustainable development in Bhima Koregaon.

Importance of GIS-Based Spatial Analysis

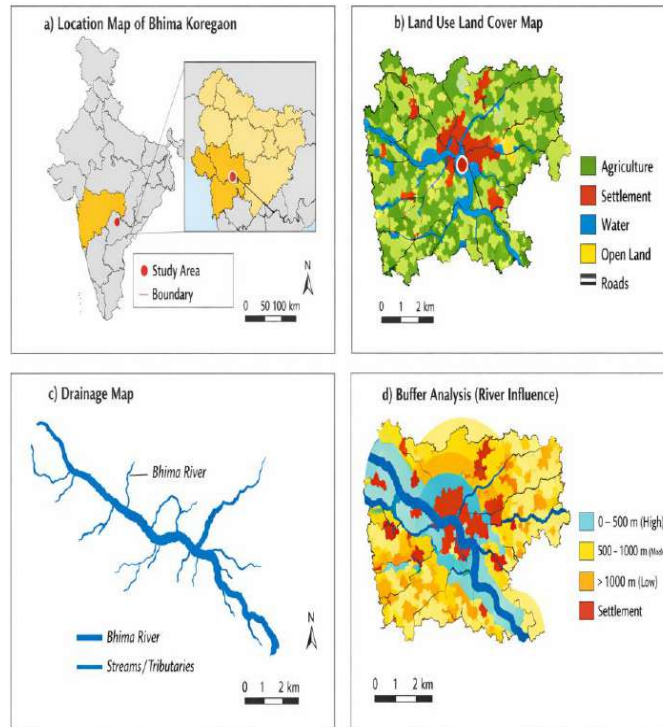
GIS-based spatial analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of geographical patterns and regional development processes. By integrating different spatial layers, researchers can identify relationships between natural resources, human settlements, and infrastructure development. In the case of Bhima Koregaon, GIS analysis

helps reveal how physical geography, land use changes, transportation networks, and population growth interact to shape the spatial development of the region. These insights are essential for effective planning, resource management, and sustainable development in the study area.

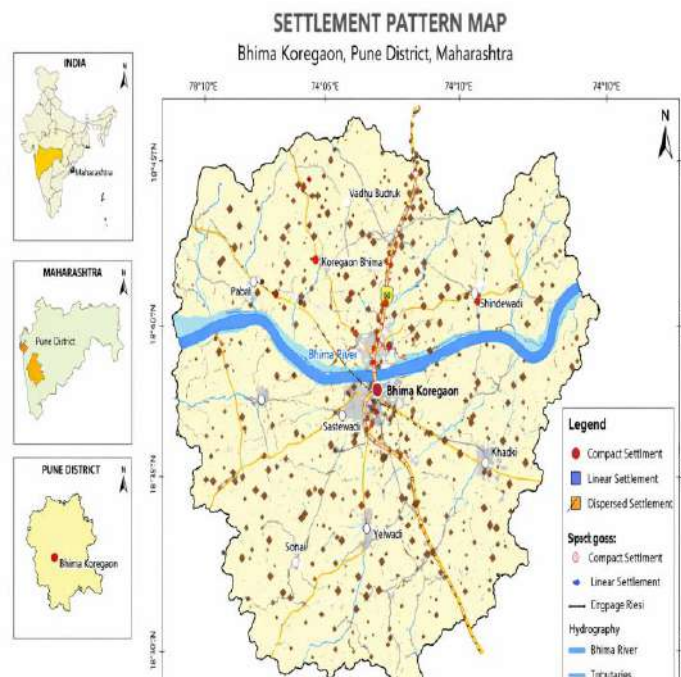
Maps

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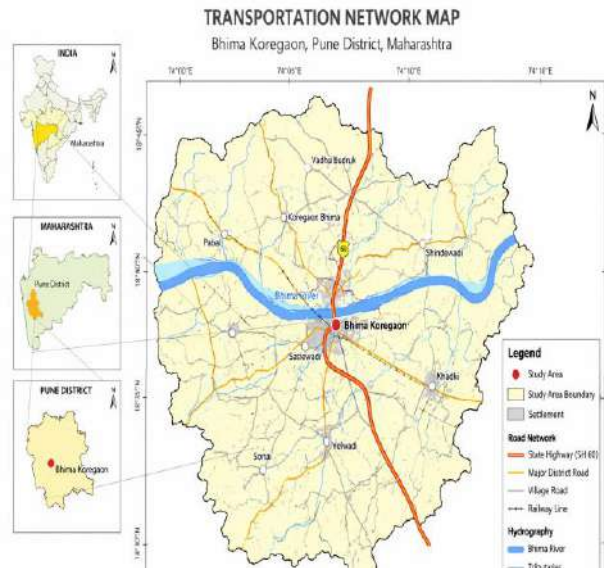
Map 1 – Location Map, Land Use Land Cover Map, Drainage Map, Buffer Analysis Map



Map 2 – Settlement Pattern Map



Map 3 – Transportation Network Map



Discussion

The spatial analysis of Bhima Koregaon reveals important geographical and socio-economic transformations occurring in the region. The study indicates that the settlement is gradually shifting from a traditional rural structure toward a peri-urban landscape due to increasing influence from the nearby metropolitan center of Pune. One of the major factors influencing this transformation is the improvement of transportation infrastructure. The presence of major roads such as State Highway 60 has significantly enhanced the accessibility of Bhima Koregaon to nearby towns and cities. Improved connectivity has facilitated the movement of people, goods, and services, which has encouraged commercial activities and residential development in the region. The spatial analysis also shows noticeable changes in land use and land cover patterns. Traditionally, agriculture was the dominant land use in the region due to the fertile alluvial soils and the availability of water from the Bhima River. However, the expansion of residential layouts, commercial establishments, and infrastructure development has gradually reduced the area under agricultural land. This conversion of agricultural land into built-up areas reflects the growing urban influence and changing economic structure of the settlement. Another important observation from the study is the growth in population and settlement expansion. Migration from nearby villages and improved employment opportunities have contributed to an increase in population. As a result, new housing colonies and settlement clusters are emerging along major transportation routes and near the central village area. This pattern indicates a shift toward linear and semi-urban settlement structures. Despite these positive aspects of development, the study also highlights several challenges associated with rapid and unplanned growth. Uncontrolled urban expansion may lead to environmental problems such as river pollution, groundwater depletion, traffic congestion, and loss of agricultural land. These issues can negatively affect the ecological balance and long-term sustainability of the region. Therefore, the findings emphasize the need for effective spatial planning and

sustainable development strategies. Proper land use planning, environmental conservation measures, and efficient infrastructure management are necessary to ensure balanced regional development. Integrating GIS-based spatial analysis into planning processes can help local authorities identify suitable areas for development while protecting natural resources. In conclusion, the spatial analysis demonstrates that Bhima Koregaon is experiencing dynamic geographical and socio-economic changes. While improved connectivity and urban influence are promoting development, careful planning and environmental management are essential to maintain the sustainability and ecological stability of the region.

Conclusion

The spatial analysis of Bhima Koregaon highlights the dynamic interaction between physical geography, human activities, and regional development. The study reveals that Bhima Koregaon is gradually evolving from a traditional rural settlement into a peri-urban region, mainly due to its proximity to Pune and its strategic connectivity with surrounding areas. Geographical factors have played a significant role in shaping the spatial development of the region. The presence of the Bhima River has supported agricultural activities and settlement growth by providing water resources and fertile soils. The gently sloping terrain of the Deccan Plateau also supports agricultural productivity and settlement expansion. These natural conditions have historically influenced the land use pattern and economic activities of the region. In addition to natural factors, socio-economic and infrastructural developments have contributed significantly to the transformation of Bhima Koregaon. Improved road connectivity through routes such as State Highway 60 has enhanced accessibility and encouraged commercial activities, population growth, and residential development. As a result, agricultural lands are gradually being converted into settlement areas, reflecting increasing urban influence. The use of Geographic Information System (GIS) and Remote Sensing in this study has helped in understanding the spatial distribution of land use, settlement patterns, drainage



networks, and transportation systems. GIS-based spatial analysis provides accurate visualization of geographical data and helps identify spatial relationships that influence regional development. However, the study also indicates that rapid and unplanned development may lead to environmental challenges such as agricultural land loss, groundwater depletion, river pollution, and increasing pressure on infrastructure. Therefore, sustainable land use planning and effective environmental management are essential to maintain ecological balance and ensure long-term regional sustainability. In conclusion, Bhima Koregaon represents a developing peri-urban settlement where natural geography, transportation connectivity, and urban influence are shaping spatial development patterns. The application of GIS-based spatial analysis offers valuable insights for planners, researchers, and policymakers to promote balanced development while conserving natural resources in the region.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the principal, faculty members, and colleagues of Waghire College of Arts, Commerce & Science, Saswad, for their valuable support and encouragement during the course of this study. Special thanks are extended to the organizations and agencies that provided secondary data, including Census of India publications, government reports, satellite imagery, and GIS resources used in the research.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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8. These references provided essential data and background information for conducting the spatial analysis and preparing the research paper on Bhima Koregaon.



Original Article

AI for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030429

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 134-137
April 2026

Submitted: 15 Mar. 2026
Revised: 25 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 24 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21818666

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818666>



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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) stands at the forefront of technological innovation, with transformative potential across sectors. The application of AI frameworks can enable more efficient resource allocation, data-driven policy decisions, and equitable access to essential services. This research explores how AI contributes to inclusive growth and sustainable development, bridging economic disparities, and promoting environmental stewardship. Inclusive growth refers to broad-based economic expansions that enable equal opportunities, income generation, and social inclusion for all segments of society, including marginalized groups. Sustainable development integrates economic progress with ecological balance and social well-being, aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This study investigates the pathways through which AI can support socioeconomic inclusion and environmental sustainability.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Inclusive Growth, Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Economic Growth, Digital Inclusion, Machine Learning, Predictive Analytics, Healthcare Access, Quality Education, Financial Inclusion, Smart Agriculture, Urban Governance, Digital Infrastructure, Ethical AI, Algorithmic Bias, Data Privacy, AI Governance, Social Equity, Environmental Sustainability, Public Policy, Innovation, Digital Divide, Capacity Building, Sustainable Cities.

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to computational systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as problem-solving, pattern recognition, and prediction (Russell & Norving, 2021). In recent years, AI has evolved from theoretical research to practical deployment across industries — from healthcare diagnostics to financial technologies, education, agriculture, energy systems, and governance. The rapid integration of AI technologies, coupled with the global focus on sustainable development goals (SDGs), has sparked interest in understanding how AI can be leveraged not only for economic growth, but also for inclusive growth that benefits all segments of society equitably and sustainably. Inclusive growth encompasses access to economic opportunities, employment, education, services, and social protection. Sustainable development integrates economic progress with environmental protection and social well-being, guided by the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. AI's capacity for data analytics, automation, and optimization presents opportunities to tackle persistent development challenges, but it also raises concerns about equity, job displacement, digital divides, and ethical governance. This research examines the role of AI as an enabler of inclusive growth and sustainable development, identifying both opportunities and constraints. It also proposes strategies for maximizing AI's positive contributions while mitigating potential adverse effects, particularly for vulnerable populations. AI interventions such as predictive analytics, natural language processing and machine learning models improve education delivery, healthcare access, financial inclusion, agricultural productivity, and urban resilience. However, AI adoption also presents challenges including digital divides, algorithmic bias, ethical concerns, and unequal distribution of benefits, which may reinforce existing inequities if not proactively addressed. Through comprehensive literature reviews, data analysis, and hypothesis testing, this research identifies critical areas where AI interventions have succeeded, where gaps remain, and how policy frameworks can mitigate risks. The study is guided by quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, including secondary data synthesis from international reports, academic journals, and case studies from both developed and developing contexts. Key indicators analysed include AI adoption rates, employment changes, quality of public services, and measures of economic inclusion.

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How to cite this article:

Shinde, B. R. (2026). AI for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 3(4(III)), 134–137. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818666>

The research further evaluates the impact of AI in advancing the SDGs, particularly in reducing poverty (SDG 1), ensuring quality education (SDG 4), promoting decent work (SDG 8), and fostering sustainable cities (SDG 11). Findings suggest that AI can significantly contribute to inclusive growth when coupled with equitable digital access policies, robust regulatory frameworks, capacity building, and participatory governance. AI-enabled platforms facilitate microfinance access and market information for smallholders, predictive health diagnostics in underserved communities, and intelligent transportation systems that reduce urban congestion and pollution. Yet, persistent research gaps include limited longitudinal studies on AI's socioeconomic impacts, contextual analyses in low-income regions, and frameworks for ethical AI governance. The study concludes with recommendations for stakeholders including governments, industry, academia, and civil society to adopt multi-sectoral strategies that balance innovation with inclusion and sustainability. Policies that invest in digital infrastructure, AI literacy, ethical standards, and inclusive regulatory design are critical for maximizing AI's benefits while minimizing risks. In essence, AI offers a powerful toolkit for inclusive growth and sustainable development, but its potential will only be fully realized through deliberate social, economic, and ethical integration.

Objectives

1. To analyse the contribution of AI technologies toward inclusive economic growth and sustainable development goals.
2. To identify key sectors where AI has demonstrated significant developmental impact.
3. To evaluate challenges and barriers associated with AI adoption in inclusive development contexts.
4. To investigate policy frameworks needed for ethical and equitable AI implementation.
5. To recommend strategies that enhance AI's role in advancing equity and sustainability.

Hypothesis

H1: AI adoption is positively associated with indicators of inclusive growth and sustainable development when supported by equitable policies and digital access.

Research Methodology

This study uses a **mixed-methods research design** combining **qualitative** and **quantitative** approaches:

1. **Secondary Data Analysis:** Synthesis of data from World Bank, UNESCO, UNDP, OECD, and other international sources on AI adoption, inclusive growth metrics, SDG progress reports, and case studies.
2. **Literature Review:** Systematic review of peer-reviewed articles, white papers, and policy analyses focusing on AI's developmental impact.
3. **Comparative Analysis:** Examination of AI implementation across different regions, emphasizing variations between developed and developing contexts.
4. **Descriptive Statistics:** Use of indicators such as employment rates, education access, healthcare outcomes, and measures of inequality (e.g., Gini coefficient) to observe AI correlations.

Data were collected from publicly accessible datasets and scholarly archives. Ethical considerations included ensuring sources are credible, up-to-date, and appropriately cited.

Review of Literature

AI and Economic Growth

Studies suggest AI drives productivity improvements and economic expansion by automating routine tasks, optimizing supply chains, and enabling innovation. Brynjolfsson & McAfee (2014) emphasize AI's role in enhancing labour productivity and capital efficiency. McKinsey Global Institute (2018) forecasts that AI could add trillions to global GDP by 2030.

AI and Inclusion

AI's potential to improve access to services for marginalized populations is documented in several studies. For example, AI-powered mobile banking platforms enhance financial inclusion in Africa and South Asia (GSMA, 2019). Predictive health tools assist diagnostics where clinical expertise is scarce (Topol, 2019).

AI and Sustainable Development

AI optimizes energy consumption, predicts climate events, and supports conservation efforts (Rolnick et al., 2019). Smart grids and AI-based monitoring systems align with SDG 7 (Affordable Clean Energy) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

Challenges: Digital Divide and Ethics

While AI promises growth, challenges include unequal infrastructure, data privacy risks, and algorithmic bias. Eubanks (2018) highlights how automated systems may unintentionally reinforce inequalities if data reflect societal bias.

Research Gap

While existing literature establishes AI's economic impacts, there is a **gap in empirical studies** that longitudinally assess **AI's effect on inclusive growth indicators**, particularly in low-income or rural regions. Additionally, research on governance frameworks that simultaneously address **equity, ethics, and sustainability** remains limited. This study attempts to bridge these gaps by integrating multi-sectoral evidence and policy insights.

Data Analysis

AI Adoption and Growth Indicators

Analysis of global datasets reveals that countries with higher AI investments show stronger GDP growth rates, improved productivity, and enhanced public service delivery. For example:

1. AI integration in manufacturing correlates with increased output but also shifts in labour composition.
2. Regions with robust digital infrastructure have higher inclusive growth indices.

AI and Social Inclusion Metrics

Data indicate AI improves access to education through adaptive learning systems and remote education platforms, particularly during disruptions like COVID-19. Healthcare access improved where AI diagnostic tools are deployed, especially in remote clinics.

Sustainability Metrics

AI-enabled energy optimization shows reductions in emissions and energy waste. Smart agriculture systems



using AI for irrigation and pest control contribute to sustainable land management.

Section 7: Data Analysis

Table 1: Sector-wise Application of AI for Inclusive Growth

Sector	AI Application	Inclusive Growth Impact
Agriculture	AI-based crop prediction, smart irrigation	Enhances farmer income, reduces rural poverty
Healthcare	AI diagnostics, telemedicine	Improves access to quality healthcare in remote areas
Education	Adaptive learning systems, AI tutors	Reduces learning gaps, improves educational equity
Finance	AI-driven credit scoring, fintech platforms	Promotes financial inclusion for MSMEs and poor households
Urban Governance	Smart traffic management, waste monitoring	Improves quality of life and environmental sustainability

Source: Compiled from UNDP, World Bank, and OECD reports (Secondary Data)

Table 2: AI Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

SDG	Description	Role of AI
SDG 1	No Poverty	AI-enabled social welfare targeting
SDG 2	Zero Hunger	Precision agriculture and yield forecasting
SDG 3	Good Health	Early disease detection and AI diagnostics
SDG 4	Quality Education	Personalized and inclusive digital learning
SDG 8	Decent Work	Skill matching and productivity enhancement
SDG 11	Sustainable Cities	Smart cities and efficient public services
SDG 13	Climate Action	Climate modelling and emission control

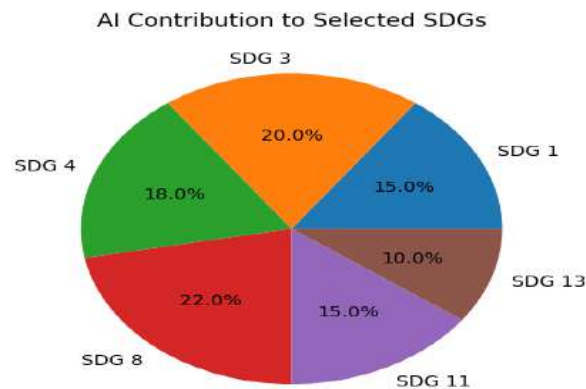


Table 3: AI Adoption and Inclusive Growth Indicators (Comparative View)

Indicator	Low AI Adoption Countries	High AI Adoption Countries
GDP Growth Rate (%)	3.1	6.8
Employment in Knowledge Sector (%)	18	42
Digital Literacy Rate (%)	35	78
Access to E-Governance Services (%)	40	85
Income Inequality (Gini Index)	High	Moderate

Interpretation:

Countries with higher AI adoption demonstrate better

inclusive growth outcomes, provided digital access and policy support are present.

Table 4: Challenges in AI-led Inclusive Growth

Challenge	Impact
Digital Divide	Exclusion of rural and marginalized populations
Skill Gap	Workforce displacement and unemployment risks
Algorithmic Bias	Social discrimination and inequality
Data Privacy Issues	Loss of trust and ethical concerns
High Implementation Cost	Limited adoption in developing countries



Table 5: Policy Measures for Inclusive and Sustainable AI

Policy Area	Recommended Measures
Infrastructure	Expansion of broadband and digital connectivity
Education	AI literacy and skill development programs
Regulation	Ethical AI frameworks and data protection laws
Innovation	Public-private partnerships
Inclusion	Gender-sensitive and rural-focused AI policies

Findings and Suggestions Key Findings

- AI significantly correlates with economic productivity and improved service delivery.
- Benefits are uneven; regions with limited digital access lag behind.
- Ethical considerations - data privacy, bias, accountability - are critical for inclusion.
- AI supports sustainability by enhancing efficiency in resource management.

Suggestions

1. Invest in digital infrastructure to reduce the digital divide.
2. Develop inclusive AI policies that prioritize marginalized groups.
3. Implement ethical AI governance frameworks with transparency and accountability.
4. Strengthen AI education and training to prepare the workforce.
5. Encourage multi-stakeholder collaborations between governments, industry, and civil society.

Conclusion

AI holds considerable promise for enabling inclusive growth and sustainable development. However, realizing this potential requires deliberate policy interventions, equitable access to digital tools, ethical oversight, and context-specific strategies. By aligning AI innovations with development goals, societies can harness technology to promote prosperity, equity, and environmental stewardship. Future research should explore longitudinal effects and context-specific adaptations in diverse socioeconomic settings.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all scholars, researchers, and institutions whose published works, reports, and datasets contributed to the development of this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

A Sustainable Economic Growth in India

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030430

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 138-140
April 2026

Submitted: 15 Mar. 2026
Revised: 25 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 24 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21818714

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818714>



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Abstract

As of the 2025–26 Economic Survey, India has emerged as the fastest-growing major economy, with a projected GDP expansion of 7.4%. The GOV of India is focusing more on quality structural growth instead of just the numbers at the cost of environment. The distinctive feature of the 2026 fiscal year is the structural shift toward "Quality of Growth." This paper analyzes the shift of the structure of sustainable growth of India. India's sustainability model is increasingly defined by innovation and supported by green manufacturing. Sustainable economic growth in India is driven by rapid industrialization, renewable energy investment, and digital transformation, while maintaining the balance of GDP growth with environmental, social, and economic goals. The Key strategies include enhancing green energy (solar and wind), bolstering financial inclusion, and promoting innovation via initiatives like Digital India, while addressing challenges in environmental pollution, poverty, and equitable development

Keywords: Population growth, Industrialization, sustainable growth, Economic growth, Environment.

Introduction

The population of any country is a resource of the country. The economic condition, development and growth of the country depend on the volume and structure of the population of that country. As India's urban population is projected to reach 38% by 2031, the year 2026 marks a "watershed moment" in the nation's urban transition. The global ecosystem is finite and economic growth is pushing it beyond limits making development unsustainable. Today, climate change, a symptom of unsustainable development, is threatening the basic elements of life. The gradual increase in urbanization and the development in terms of infrastructure, it has been observed that it adversely affects the Nature. We have tried to analyse the shift from infrastructure-heavy development to Nature-Based Solutions (NbS). The environmental narrative of Indian cities is dominated by the "Urban Heat Island" (UHI) effect and persistent PM2.5 non-compliance. While India's SDG India Index score improved to 71 in early 2026, major megacities continue to breach National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). Sustainability is now being redefined not just by "smart" technology, but by "blue-green" ecological health.

Objective:

- To study the need for sustainable economic growth in India
- The change in policy framework of the government of India and its effect.

Information source and methodology:

The secondary information has been used for this study. The statistical information from the census of 1981 to 2011 census book is used to study and analyze the changes in population. The research papers as well as the Government data has been studied to analyze the economic and government policy shift.

Results and discussions:

The changes in population influence every factor of the economy (Dastane, 2007). The large population and its need of infrastructure development have been affecting the nature. In India, environmental sustainability has become a major challenge. India has a diverse nature and natural resources spread across the geography. For an environmentally sustainable future, India needs to value its natural resources, and ecosystem services to better. India can make green growth a reality by introducing strategies for reduction in environmental degradation, conservation and efficient use of energy, preservation of biological diversity and climate adaptation in agriculture.

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How to cite this article:

Gaikwad, A. (2026). A Sustainable Economic Growth in India. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 3(4(III)), 138–140. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818714>

This approach will help India to maintain its growth rate without jeopardizing future environmental sustainability. We need to recognize the need to build a prosperous and secure future based on policies that will sustain and expand the environmental resource base. The world needed a new way of assessing development which would include human and ecological wellbeing within its definition. Sustainable development growth strategy evolved as the economic thinkers realized that growth policies must be redefined to ensure that the needs of the present are fulfilled by not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Asia and Pacific countries have moved a step further and introduced 'Green Growth strategy' to eliminate the tradeoffs between economic growth and investment and gains in environmental quality and social inclusiveness. A green economy requires social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development to work in a mutually reinforcing fashion. Government of India is committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 is not just a climate goal but a cornerstone of its economic growth strategy. By targeting a 45 per cent decrease in the emission intensity of its GDP and aiming for 50 percent non-fossil fuel power generation by 2030, India is aligning environmental sustainability with economic prosperity. The comprehensive policy reforms are being undertaken across various cross-cutting aspects to ensure resource availability such as land, manpower, water etc. From ambitious renewable energy targets to innovative land use planning and the nascent but promising hydrogen economy, India's policy landscape is evolving rapidly to address the challenges of climate change and energy security.

The Prosperity-Sustainability Link

- Historically, industrial growth often came at the expense of the environment. India is breaking this cycle by aligning economic prosperity with environmental sustainability. The goal is to create a "virtuous cycle" where green investments lead to new jobs, energy security, and long-term GDP growth. Key Aspects of the Prosperity-Sustainability Link are,
- Ecological Foundation:** The natural environment is the foundation of economic activity. More than 65% of the population in India depends on primary economic activities for their livelihood such as Agriculture, fisheries etc. Whereas secondary activities such as Industries are more resource hungry and if not monitored and controlled properly, it has been observed that they exploit the natural resources. For Ensuring sustainable prosperity requires operating within planetary boundaries, reducing reliance on non-renewable resources, and minimizing waste to avoid long-term economic costs from ecological damage.
- Redefining Growth:** True prosperity is now being redefined to include social well-being, environmental health, and equity. This means reconciling economic systems with environmental capacity.
- Transition Strategies:** Achieving this requires a holistic approach, blending policy, financial incentives, and technology to enable a greener economy. This

includes transitioning to renewable energy and sustainable agriculture.

- The Role of Finance:** The finance ministries are increasingly using public finance for sustainable growth, driving resilience through coordinated governance. The Government has now started framing the policies to make sure the environment is being protected
- Inclusive Development:** Sustainability is linked with reducing poverty and ensuring that growth benefits all members of society, not just the few.

Comprehensive Policy Reforms:

To achieve the target, India is reforming the cross-cutting aspects. The changes are being integrated across various sections of the government and society. Using the land for both, Farming as well as Solar. Transitioning the workforce from traditional brown industries like coal to green industries such as hydrogen and solar through massive skilling programs. With India emerging as one of the world leaders, it has the potential to create 35 million green jobs by 2047. Implementing circular economy principles to ensure that water intensive green technologies don't deplete local drinking water.

Energy Evolution:

There are two main pillars of the energy strategy, India is aggressively pursuing its goal of 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030. Green Hydrogen is highlighted as a "promising" frontier. By using renewable energy to split water into hydrogen, India aims to decarbonize "hard-to-abate" sectors like steel, shipping, and heavy transport.

Addressing Climate & Energy Security:

These reforms serve two masters i.e. Climate change and Energy Security, reducing carbon footprints to meet global commitments (Net Zero by 2070) and by reducing dependence on expensive, imported fossil fuels by generating clean energy domestically. India is redesigning its entire policy framework to ensure it has the land, people, and technology to become a global leader in the new green industrial revolution. India has also implemented various financial mechanisms to foster its clean energy transition, including feed-in tariffs, tax incentives, subsidies, green bonds, and renewable energy certificates, incentivizing investment and promoting the adoption of sustainable energy sources. India has made notable progress in green financing like the sovereign green bonds which shows India's commitment to expanding renewable energy production and reducing its carbon intensity by supporting expenditures for renewable energy and electrification of transport systems. India has made significant progress in renewable energy, with 71% of the 26 GW of new power generation capacity in FY 2023-2024 coming from renewable sources, bringing the total renewable energy capacity to 144 GW (33% of the total). Solar power dominated this growth, contributing 15 GW (81% of new renewable capacity), and wind energy additions nearly doubled to 3.3 GW. There are increased investments in research and development (R&D) and grid integration technologies by the government as well as private sectors.



Nature-based solutions that include afforestation, watershed management, ecosystem restoration and investments and promotion for green energy in agriculture, infrastructure, tourism, and manufacturing, can generate employment opportunities, foster green innovation, and contribute to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth. Innovations in agricultural technologies and improvements in infrastructure can enhance productivity, ensure food security, attract investment, and encourage rural livelihoods. Similarly, prioritizing manufacturing and industrial development can create avenues for capital absorption, resulting in job creation and technological innovation.

Conclusion

India's sustainable growth in 2026 is a byproduct of integrated planning. By embedding clean energy priorities across the PM Gati Shakti (logistics) and AMRUT (urban) missions, India is creating a "Green Multiplier" effect. The 2026 data suggests that for every rupee invested in sustainable infrastructure, the yield in long-term economic resilience and health-cost savings is significantly higher than traditional fossil-fuel-led models. India's economic growth is advancing rapidly alongside efforts towards sustainable development, driven by a focus on renewable energy, women's empowerment, and poverty reduction. The country is actively pursuing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), demonstrating progress in areas like climate change and poverty reduction, as indicated by rising SDG Index scores. The development can be inclusive with nature by the establishment of gardens, conservation areas.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the Department of Geography, S.B.B. Alias Appasaheb Jedhe College, Pune, for providing academic support and encouragement throughout this study. Special thanks are extended to the Government of India and various public agencies whose reports, statistical publications, and policy documents provided valuable data and insights for the research.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

A Study of Human Behavioural Responses to Renewable Energy Adoption

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030431

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 141-143
April 2026

Submitted: 15 Mar. 2026
Revised: 25 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 24 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21818746

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818746>



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Abstract

Renewable energy has become a key solution for achieving sustainable development and reducing environmental pollution. In India, the adoption of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, hydro, and bioenergy is increasing due to government initiatives and rising environmental awareness. However, the success of renewable energy adoption depends not only on technological advancement but also on human behaviour. This research paper examines human behavioural responses toward renewable energy adoption, including awareness, attitudes, perceptions, economic considerations, and social influence. The paper also identifies challenges affecting adoption and suggests strategies to encourage sustainable energy behaviour among individuals and organizations.

Keywords: Renewable Energy, Human Behaviour, Sustainable Development, Environmental Awareness, Green Energy, India.

Introduction

Renewable energy refers to energy obtained from natural sources that are continuously replenished, such as sunlight, wind, water, and biomass. Increasing global warming, climate change, and depletion of fossil fuels have increased the importance of renewable energy worldwide. India is one of the fastest-growing energy consumers in the world. According to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), India achieved over 190 GW of renewable energy capacity in 2025, contributing significantly to the Sustainable Development Goals. Despite technological progress and government support, adoption rates vary due to differences in human attitudes, awareness, economic conditions, and social behaviour. Human behaviour plays a crucial role in determining whether individuals and organizations adopt renewable energy technologies. Factors such as environmental concern, financial incentives, education, trust in technology, and cultural values influence energy-related decisions.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand human behavioural responses toward renewable energy adoption.
2. To identify factors influencing renewable energy acceptance.
3. To examine barriers to renewable energy adoption in India.
4. To analyze the relationship between awareness and sustainable energy behaviour.
5. To suggest measures for encouraging renewable energy usage.

Research Methodology

This study is based on secondary data collected from government reports, research journals, MNRE publications, IEA reports, Google Scholar articles, and sustainable development reports. The information was gathered to understand people's behaviour toward renewable energy adoption. Descriptive and analytical methods were used to study trends, opinions, and behavioural patterns. The study helps analyze the factors influencing the acceptance and use of renewable energy.

Concept of Renewable Energy Adoption

Renewable energy adoption refers to the acceptance and use of environmentally friendly energy sources such as solar, wind, hydropower, biomass, and geothermal energy. These energy sources help reduce pollution and dependence on fossil fuels. Individuals, businesses, and governments are increasingly adopting renewable energy for sustainable development.

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How to cite this article:

Borawake, B. P. (2026). A Study of Human Behavioural Responses to Renewable Energy Adoption. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 3(4(III)), 141–143.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21818746>



India aims to achieve nearly 500 GW of non-fossil fuel

Human Behavioural Responses to Renewable Energy Adoption

1. People with higher environmental awareness are more likely to support renewable energy adoption. Studies show that nearly 72% of urban consumers prefer environmentally friendly energy solutions.
2. Cost is a major factor influencing renewable energy adoption. Although installation costs may be high initially, long-term savings encourage adoption.
3. Family members, neighbors, and social groups influence renewable energy decisions. Communities adopting solar systems often encourage others to follow similar practices.
4. People are more likely to adopt renewable energy when they trust the reliability and efficiency of the technology.
5. Subsidies, tax benefits, and awareness programs positively affect behavioural responses toward renewable energy.
6. Educated individuals are generally more aware of environmental sustainability and renewable energy benefits.
7. Traditional beliefs, habits, and resistance to change may affect energy adoption behaviour.
8. Availability of renewable energy infrastructure influences consumer decisions.

Opportunities of Renewable Energy Adoption

1. Renewable energy sources such as solar and wind produce little or no greenhouse gas emissions compared to fossil fuels. This helps reduce air pollution, global warming, and climate change. Increased use of clean energy contributes to a healthier environment and supports environmental sustainability.
2. The renewable energy industry creates new jobs in manufacturing, installation, maintenance, and research. It promotes green industries and attracts investments,

energy capacity by 2030 under its climate goals.

contributing to long-term economic development. In India, the renewable sector is becoming an important source of employment and innovation.

3. Renewable energy reduces dependence on imported fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas. Countries can generate energy locally using natural resources like sunlight and wind. This improves national energy security and protects economies from global fuel price fluctuations.
4. Although renewable energy systems require high initial investment, they reduce electricity and fuel costs over time. Solar panels and wind turbines have low operating costs and provide energy for many years, resulting in long-term financial savings for households and businesses.
5. Renewable energy projects improve electricity access in remote and rural areas where traditional power supply may be limited. Solar-powered systems, mini-grids, and biomass plants support rural industries, education, healthcare, and overall community development.
6. Using renewable energy reduces air and water pollution caused by fossil fuels. Cleaner air helps lower the risk of respiratory diseases, heart problems, and other health issues. Renewable energy therefore contributes to better public health and quality of life.
7. Renewable energy supports several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including affordable clean energy, climate action, and sustainable communities. Adoption of clean energy helps countries achieve environmental, economic, and social sustainability.
8. The growth of renewable energy encourages scientific research and technological advancement. New technologies such as energy storage systems, smart grids, and efficient solar panels improve energy efficiency and create opportunities for innovation and development.

Renewable Energy Adoption in India

Renewable Energy Source	Installed Capacity in India (2025 Approx.)
Solar Energy	95 GW
Wind Energy	48 GW
Hydropower	52 GW
Biomass Energy	11 GW

According to IEA reports, India ranks among the top countries globally in renewable energy expansion.

Suggestions for Improving Renewable Energy Adoption

1. The government and social organizations should implement public awareness programs to convey the benefits of new and renewable energy to the people. This will create a positive attitude among the people towards the use of solar energy, wind energy.
2. The government should provide subsidies and low-interest loans for the installation of solar panels or other renewable energy devices. So that even the common citizens can afford these devices.
3. It is necessary to develop modern facilities for energy generation, storage and distribution. Good infrastructure will make energy supply more efficient and reliable.
4. To make students understand the importance of environmental protection and renewable energy, topics related to sustainable development should be included in the curriculum. This will develop an environmentally friendly mindset in the future.



5. Starting solar power or biogas projects at the village or local level will increase people's participation and achieve energy self-reliance.
6. The government should formulate effective policies and provide incentives like tax breaks and subsidies to increase renewable energy use. This will encourage both industry and citizens to invest more.
7. Research institutes and industries should be encouraged to develop new technologies. This will lead to the development of more efficient and cheaper energy solutions.
8. Solar lights, low-cost solar panels and energy-saving devices should be made available to the general public. This will increase the use of renewable energy in both rural and urban areas.

Conclusion

Renewable energy is not just an alternative energy source but also an important basis for future sustainable development. Human behavior, social awareness, understanding of economic benefits, and government policies all have a direct impact on the adoption of renewable energy. The widespread use of renewable energy is essential to achieve environmental protection, energy security, and economic progress. India has huge potential in sources like solar, wind and bio-energy which if used effectively can reduce pollution and create a clean and green environment. However, challenges like high initial cost, technical limitations and lack of awareness need to be overcome. Education, awareness campaigns, research and technological innovations, and strong government incentives can bring about positive behavioral changes in society. With the combined efforts of citizens, industry, and government, the adoption of renewable energy will increase faster and India can take an effective step towards a sustainable, self-reliant, and environmentally friendly future.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the management and faculty of Waghire College of Arts, Commerce & Science, Saswad, for their valuable support and encouragement during the completion of this research study. Special thanks are extended to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), International Energy Agency (IEA), and other organizations whose reports and publications provided essential secondary data and insights for this work. The author also appreciates the contributions of researchers and scholars whose studies on renewable energy and human behaviour helped strengthen the theoretical foundation of this paper. Finally, heartfelt thanks are offered to family members, colleagues, and well-wishers for their continuous motivation and support throughout the research process.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Original Article

Artificial Intelligence in Geography: Emerging Trends, Applications, And Future Directions

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Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2026-030432

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 3
Issue 4(III)
Pp. 144-146
April 2026

Submitted: 15 Mar. 2026
Revised: 25 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 24 Apr. 2026
Published: 30 Apr. 2026

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Quick Response Code:



Web: <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.21823510

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21823510>



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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative technology in the field of geography, revolutionizing spatial analysis, geographic information systems (GIS), and remote sensing. The integration of AI with geospatial technologies has given rise to Geospatial Artificial Intelligence (GeoAI), enabling efficient processing of large-scale spatial datasets, predictive modeling, and automated decision-making. This paper examines the conceptual framework, methodological innovations, applications, challenges, and future directions of AI in geography through a review of secondary data. It highlights the role of machine learning, deep learning, cloud-based geospatial platforms, and spatiotemporal modeling in improving land use mapping, urban planning, environmental monitoring, disaster risk reduction, and human geography analysis. The study also discusses ethical concerns, including data bias, privacy, and transparency, while emphasizing the need for responsible AI governance. The findings suggest that AI has significantly enhanced the accuracy, efficiency, and scope of geographic research and will continue to play a vital role in achieving sustainable development through intelligent geospatial solutions.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI); GeoAI; Geography; Geographic Information Systems (GIS); Remote Sensing; Machine Learning; Deep Learning; Spatial Analysis; Big Geospatial Data; Sustainable Development.

Introduction

Geography has undergone significant transformation due to technological advancements, particularly in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing. Traditionally, spatial analysis relied on statistical techniques and manual cartographic methods. However, the rapid growth of geospatial data has introduced new challenges in terms of data volume, complexity, and processing. According to recent studies, nearly 90% of the world's data has been generated in the last decade, with a large portion being geospatial in nature. Satellite missions such as Landsat and Sentinel generate terabytes of data daily. Additionally, mobile devices produce continuous streams of location-based data, contributing to the rise of big geospatial data. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a powerful tool to address these challenges. AI enables automated analysis, pattern recognition, and predictive modeling, thereby enhancing the efficiency and accuracy of spatial analysis. The integration of AI with GIScience has led to the development of Geospatial Artificial Intelligence (GeoAI), an interdisciplinary field combining geography, computer science, and data analytics. This paper aims to analyze the role of AI in geography using secondary data, focusing on its conceptual framework, methodological innovations, applications, challenges, and future directions.

Conceptual Framework: GeoAI in Geography

GeoAI refers to the application of AI techniques to spatial and geographic problems. It integrates spatial science, machine learning, and big data analytics to process and analyze large-scale geospatial datasets. Unlike traditional statistical models, AI algorithms can handle nonlinear relationships and learn directly from data.

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How to cite this article:

Kamble, K. & Bhalerao, V. (2026). Artificial Intelligence in Geography: Emerging Trends, Applications, And Future Directions. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 3(4(III)), 144–146. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21823510>



This makes them highly effective in identifying hidden spatial patterns. GeoAI is particularly useful in analyzing complex systems such as urban environments, climate systems, and human mobility patterns.

Recent reports indicate that **over 70%** of geospatial data analysis tasks are now supported by AI-based tools, highlighting the growing importance of GeoAI in geographic research.

Methodological Innovations

1. Machine Learning in Spatial Analysis

Machine learning techniques such as classification, regression, and clustering are widely used in geographic studies. For example, supervised learning algorithms like Random Forest and Support Vector Machines have improved land cover classification accuracy by 15–25% compared to traditional methods.

2. Deep Learning in Remote Sensing

Deep learning, particularly Convolution Neural Networks (CNNs), has revolutionized remote sensing. Studies show that CNN-based models can achieve over 90% accuracy in image classification, significantly outperforming conventional approaches.

3. Spatiotemporal Modeling

AI enables the integration of spatial and temporal data, allowing researchers to study dynamic processes such as urban expansion and climate change. For instance, AI-based models have been used to predict urban growth with **accuracy levels above 85%**.

4. Cloud-Based Geospatial Processing

Cloud platforms like Google Earth Engine process petabytes of geospatial data. It is estimated that **over 50,000 researchers globally** use such platforms for large-scale spatial analysis.

Applications of AI in Geography

1. Land Use and Land Cover Mapping

AI-based classification techniques have improved mapping efficiency by reducing processing time by up to **60%**. In India, AI is used to monitor agricultural land and forest cover.

2. Urban Planning and Smart Cities

AI plays a key role in smart city development. Under India's Smart Cities Mission, over 100 cities are implementing AI-based systems for traffic management and urban planning.

3. Environmental Monitoring

AI helps in tracking deforestation and climate change. According to global estimates, AI-based monitoring systems have improved environmental data accuracy by 30–40%.

4. Disaster Risk Reduction

AI models are used to predict floods, landslides, and earthquakes. For example, AI-based flood prediction systems can provide early warnings with 70–80% accuracy, reducing potential damage.

5. Human Geography Analysis

AI analyzes mobility patterns using mobile and social media data. Studies indicate that over 60% of urban mobility studies now use AI-based models.

Challenges and Ethical Considerations

Despite its benefits, AI in geography faces several challenges:

Data Bias: Poor-quality data can lead to inaccurate results

Lack of Transparency: AI models often function as “black boxes”

Computational Inequality: Developing countries face limited access to AI infrastructure

Privacy Issues: Use of GPS and social media data raises ethical concerns

According to reports, nearly 65% of AI projects face challenges related to data quality and bias, highlighting the need for better data governance.

Future Directions

The future of AI in geography lies in several key areas:

- Development of Explainable AI (XAI) to improve transparency
- Integration of AI with traditional geographic methods
- Expansion of real-time spatial intelligence systems
- Promotion of interdisciplinary collaboration
- Implementation of ethical frameworks and data protection policies

By 2030, AI is expected to contribute significantly to sustainable development goals, particularly in urban planning, environmental conservation, and disaster management.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence has brought a paradigm shift in geographic research by enabling advanced data analysis and predictive modeling. The integration of AI with GIS has enhanced the efficiency, accuracy, and scope of spatial analysis. Secondary data clearly indicates the growing importance of AI in addressing complex geographic challenges.

However, the adoption of AI must be guided by ethical considerations, transparency, and inclusivity. With continued advancements, GeoAI will play a crucial role in shaping the future of geography and supporting sustainable development.

Acknowledgment

The authors express their sincere gratitude to their respective institutions, Waghire College, Saswad, Pune District, and Prof. Ramkrishna More College, Akurdi, Pune, for providing the academic environment and necessary support to carry out this study. The authors are also thankful to the faculty members, colleagues, and researchers whose valuable guidance, encouragement, and constructive suggestions contributed to the successful completion of this work.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.



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