The Movement towards Sustainable Development in Tamil Nadu, India

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The Tamil Nadu state has established significant policies and programmes to carry out the objectives outlined in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which emphasises the significance of raising the standard of living for the most vulnerable groups. The study aims to find out the socio-economic, education, and health status as well as the various development policies and programmes that were implemented by the Tamil Nadu state during 2011–2015. The research finding shows that the Tamil Nadu state made significant efforts to reduce poverty, violence, infant mortality, maternal mortality, access to safe drinking water, energy, communication technology, and increase human capability, education, and women's workforce through the implementation of numerous effective policies and programmes. As a result, Tamil Nadu has emerged as one of India's model state. The research concludes that the state has made notable achievements in the MDGs and is making great progress towards achieving the SDGs.

Keywords: poverty, dignity, education, employment, equality & sustainability.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Global countries have approached a milestone for development by 2015 (MDGs). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the cornerstone of a development agenda that prioritises the needs of people, although they are set to finish in December 2015. As a result, world leaders adopted a new set of transformative and universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the post-2015 development agenda during the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015. The Sustainable Development agenda seeks to ensure that the momentum generated by the MDGs is carried forward beyond 2015 to achieve not just substantial reductions in poverty, hunger, and other deprivations but finally end them to provide a life of dignity to everyone (UNDP, 2015).

As a signatory to the historic Millennium Declaration adopted at the United Nations, India has remained committed to eliminating poverty and other scarcities. Achieving the MDGs is a core development challenge for India. The Indian government has reinforced this priority through the principle of Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas (everyone's support, everyone's development, with everyone's trust) (Govt. of India & UN, 2018). It has urged Indians to work together towards triumph over poverty, illiteracy, environmental degradation, lack of sanitation, and gender inequality, which are all fundamental MDG tasks.

According to India's former United Nations Resident Coordinator, Mr. Yuri Afanasiev, India has one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. It is in a strong position to deliver on its national development priorities as well as on the globally agreed-upon 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. India has also provided leadership in shaping the SDGs, particularly in ensuring that the voices of developing countries find prominence in the global discourse. It is no surprise that several of India's development priorities are mirrored in the SDGs. It is projected to be the most populous and youngest country in the world by 2024. India's contributions will be indispensable to the achievement of the SDGs globally. India is embarking on a long-term

visioning exercise aligned with the SDGs. The government is committed to inclusive growth and has launched many national programmes to achieve, within a short period, ambitious goals such as rural electrification, sanitation, housing for all, clean and renewable energy expansion, universal elementary school education, smart cities and skills development, to name just a few. These will determine the success of SDGs both in national and international contexts (Govt. of India & UN, 2018).

The Indian state of Tamil Nadu is committed to enhancing the lives of those in disadvantaged groups. Hence, special preference has been given to the vulnerable sections of society to improve their standard of living. Accordingly, the government provided mid-day meals for school-going children; free electricity for farmers; dairy animals for women; and free grinders, fans, and food processors. The government of Tamil Nadu implemented different development policies and programmes during 2011–2015 with the ideas of eminent personalities. The policies and programmes were implemented by the state, which is perfectly in tune with the SDGs.

II.   RESEARCH METHOD AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this study is to assess socioeconomic, educational, and health conditions as well as analyse the various development policies and programmes that were implemented by the Tamil Nadu state during 2011–2015. The study was conducted with the available secondary sources. This research paper covers the different policies and programmes the Tamil Nadu state has put in place to meet the basic requirements and aspirations of its residents and demonstrates how well they have been carried out during 2011–2015. Throughout this time, there has been an extraordinary convergence of vision in the priorities of Tamil Nadu state's planned Sustainable Development Goals. The Tamil Nadu state policies and programmes are designed to make development economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable while eradicating poverty and deprivation in all of its manifestations.

III.   ERADICATION OF EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER

According to estimates from the 2018 global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, India has made momentous progress in reducing multidimensional poverty. The incidence of multidimensional poverty has almost halved between 2005–06 and 2015–16, climbing down to 27.5% from 54.7%. As per the report, within ten years, the number of multidimensional poor people in India fell by more than 271 million, from 635 million to 364 million (UNDP, 2019).

In the case of Tamil Nadu state, fair-priced shops are running in almost all areas. The fair-priced shops provide the necessities, including rice, sugar, wheat, cooking oil, kerosene, dhal, tea powder, salt, and soap, at extremely low costs. Apart from these shops, the state has also opened Amma Unavagam (the state opened in the name of a mother's canteen). These canteens offer affordable, hygienic, and nutritious cuisine from morning till night. The canteen provides advantages to a variety of population segments (Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme, 2015). The MDG-1, namely the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, is achieved directly through this. In addition, these canteens are managed by the women of the Self-Help Group who belong to this zone. By providing employment opportunities for women in Amma Unavagam, is a way to indirectly deliver on MDG-3, which promotes gender equality and women's empowerment. A healthy and hygienic diet helps people stay healthy, and the quality of the food supply is regularly monitored by the state. These canteens help people a lot to avoid platform hotels, where food is prepared in an unhealthy manner and in an unhealthy environment. By avoiding the food of this small hotel by the road, people will protect themselves from cholera, jaundice and other viral and communicable diseases. As a result, it has met MDG 6.

The poor school-going children, for whom having a good breakfast remains a very big dream, can have breakfast at a low cost of ₹5 in these canteens. Healthy food increases the concentration power of the students, leading to higher education and employment status, which automatically raises the economic status of the state. People in general think that these canteens represent a financial burden for the government. The study reveals that this is not an expenditure or a burden on the government, but simply an investment. It provides complete, healthy, and hygienic food for the working class and poor students, thereby reducing the expenses for health services and interns and reducing the hunger rate in society. The southern states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh have seen the most success in poverty reduction and are also among the Indian states with the highest rates of health coverage, which is critical for poverty avoidance.

IV. ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

Education is crucial for the development of a country or state. To improve the resources, peace, and happiness in society, it is a must that the literacy level of the state is high. Immediately after independence, the government of India made various efforts to enrol all children in school, but that remained a failure. India aims to provide all primary and secondary students with a quality education and to date, only the Southern and Western States have come closest to this goal (Agrawala, R. 2014). Lower perceived value of education results in higher dropout rates. India is working to reduce its average annual dropout rate to 10%, which some states have already accomplished, including Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, and Punjab. Tamil Nadu is the most populous state, with a net primary and secondary enrollment ratio of 93%, the same as Delhi. India has made considerable gains in promoting literacy and education and expanding the network of educational institutions. Adult literacy increased from 61% in 2001 to 71% in 2014 (National Sample Survey 71st round).

The Tamil Nadu state has implemented effective schemes to improve the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), quality, and access to education. The state provides free books, uniforms, bicycles, laptops, bus passes, special cash incentives and lunches for children attending school (Figure 1). To assist the underprivileged children in the village to receive a healthy education, the state has provided these fundamental necessities for government and government aid schools.
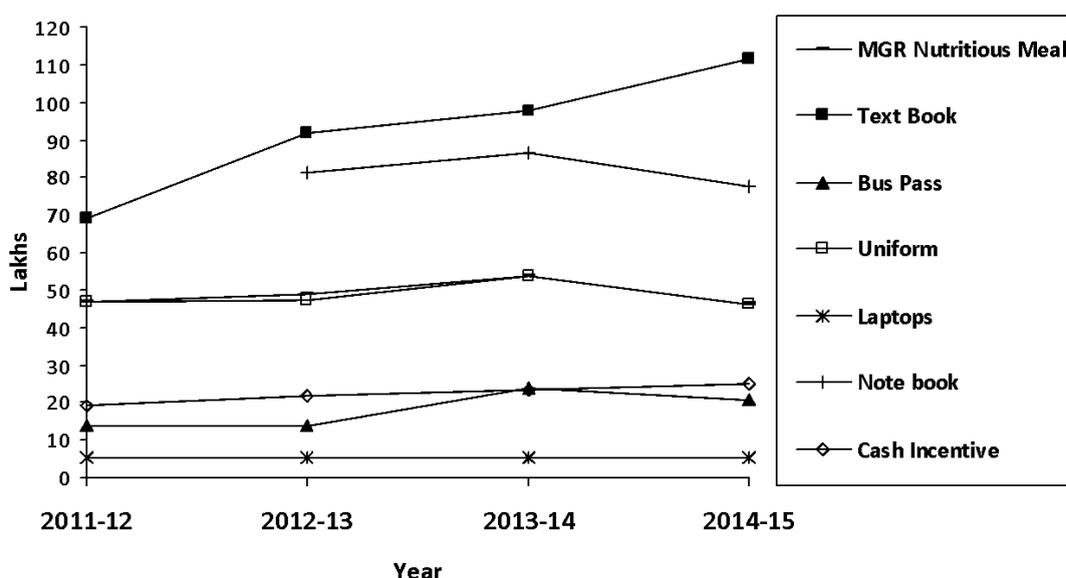
Source: School Education Department (2015): Policy Note 2015-16, Tamil Nadu: Government Press.

Figure 1: Number of School Children Benefited by the Government Schemes during 2011-15

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4.1 *Noon Meal:* Free Noon Meals under the Puratchi Thalaivar MGR Nutritious Meal Programme are provided to the students in 1st to 10th standards. Under this scheme, 46.88 lakhs students benefited in the academic year 2011–2012; 48.63 lakhs, and 53.40 lakhs students benefited in the academic years 2012–2013 and 2013-2014 respectively. During 2014–15, 46.29 lakhs students benefited.

4.2 *Textbook:* Textbooks were distributed to 69.25 lakh students in 1st to 12th standards in 2011–2012. In the year 2012–2013, after the introduction of continuous and comprehensive evaluation and trimester, textbooks were provided to 92 lakh students studying in 1st to 12th standards. In the year 2013–2014, 97.70 lakh students benefited, and in the year 2014–2015, 111.29 lakh students benefited.

4.3 *Bus Pass:* Free bus passes are provided to students from 1st to 12th standard in all government and aided schools to enable them to have access to school. Under this scheme, in the year 2011–2012, 14.02 lakh students; in 2012-2013, 14.02 lakh students; in 2013–2014, 23.73 lakh students; and in 2014–2015, 20.57 lakh students have enjoyed the benefit.

4.4 *Uniform:* The number of free uniforms for school students has been increased from one set to two sets in 2011–2012 and four sets for the academic year 2012–2013. In the years 2011–2012, 46.88 lakh, 2012–2013, 47.07 lakh, 2013–2014, 53.54 lakh, and in the year 2014–2015, four sets of uniforms were distributed to 46.29 lakh students. The first sets of uniforms were issued on the day of the reopening of schools.

4.5 *Laptop:* In the academic year 2011–2012, laptops were provided to 5.31 lakh students; to 5.35 lakh students in 2012–2013; in 2013–2014, laptops were provided to 5.50 lakh students; and in 2014–15, 5.40 lakh laptops were provided to students.

4.6 *Notebook:* For the first time, notebooks were supplied to students from the year 2012–2013. Notebooks were distributed to 81.02 lakh students in 1st to 10th standards. A total of 86.71 lakh students benefited in the academic years 2013–2014 and 77.66 lakh students benefited in 2014-2015.

4.7 *Special Cash Incentive:* A special cash incentive scheme has been introduced in the academic year 2011–2012. Through this incentive scheme, an amount ₹1500 of students studying in the 10th and 11th standards, and ₹2000 provided to students studying in the 12th standard. In the year 2011–2012, 19.10 lakh students; in 2012–2013, 21.52 lakh students; in 2013–2014, 23.21 lakh students; and in the year 2014–2015, 24.76 lakh students benefited.

Table 1: Children Out of School and Dropout Rate during 2011-2015

Year	No. of Children out from School	Achievement	Dropout Rate	
			Primary	Upper Primary
2011-2012	63178	55758	0.95	1.74
2012-2013	53832	47684	0.93	1.70
2013-2014	51447	46737	0.95	1.65
2014-2015	43024	42245	0.94	1.58

Source: UDISE and Monthly Reports, 2016

The Tamil Nadu state has made efforts to reduce the dropout rate (Table-1) at the upper primary level from 1.74% in 2011–12 to 1.58% during 2014–15. According to the Ministry of Human Resource Development's report 2014–15, Tamil Nadu had the lowest percentage of children out of

school at the elementary level. It is only 0.66% among the large states like Karnataka (1.49%), Kerala (0.82%) and Andhra Pradesh (0.91%). In Tamil Nadu, out-of-school children are much lower than all India's percentages, which is 2.97%. The interventions detailed above have played a crucial role in the state's efforts to reduce children's absence from school. To increase the enrolment ratio, the government provided special scholarships; four sets of uniforms; foot wares; books; coloured pencils; atlases; geometry boxes; mid-day meals; bicycles; and bus passes for government and government school-going children. The state is very concerned about adolescent girls who attend school and are not familiar with menstrual hygiene practices. As a result, the government provides free sanitary napkins to help them feel comfortable during menstruation. It helps the girls focus on their studies and also maintain their hygiene.

At the same time, the state is focused on higher education too. The state of Tamil Nadu is the first in India to take steps towards bringing eminent personalities from foreign universities to frame the curriculum to meet the world's standard education. Children aspire and dream of getting an education abroad. But for economically weak students, though meritorious, it remains a hard nut to crack. Keeping in mind the lives of these economically backward and studious students, the state has set up a "study abroad" program to make their dreams come true. Initially, 50 students from various government colleges have been selected for this program, and they are in different universities and colleges in the United Kingdom for six months (one semester), along with ten teachers. This scheme has given them the opportunity to expose themselves to the outside world and it also helps them to get knowledge about the western education system. The state has also set up a video conference facility at all universities in Tamil Nadu. To develop that connection, effective communication is needed. Thus, language labs are established in all universities to develop the language skills of students in various languages. It tries to train students on an equal footing with world-class quality.

Today, technology has become a part of our life. It is extremely useful in communicating our ideas to others. Hence, the government has decided to provide free laptops for school students. Through this scheme, 21.72 lakh students benefited from 2011–15 (School Education Department, 2015). Above all, to inculcate an innovative quality among younger students, the state has introduced Entrepreneurship Cells in all universities. These cells aid in the development of student confidence while also providing the necessary platform for creativity and innovation to achieve their goals. Considering the fact that higher learning institutions are responsible for converting human beings into human resources, it is essential to concentrate not only on the growth of physical infrastructure but also on psychological growth for an effective contribution.

Education is used as an instrument to create a healthy society. If an individual is educated, it is a hypothesis that their thinking will be productive and rational towards the country. Hence, to provide quality higher education to children in rural areas, the Tamil Nadu state has started 14 arts and science colleges, 24 university colleges, 11 polytechnic colleges, four engineering colleges, and one Indian Institute of Information Technology. Government colleges have been started in rural areas to enable the rural poor to enrol themselves without much expense in the nearby colleges. Moreover, to encourage students, the state provides free education to first-generation graduates. Through all the above schemes, the state's (Figure 2) Gross Enrollment Ratio increased to 45.2%, while compared to India, it was only 24.3% in the year 2014–15.
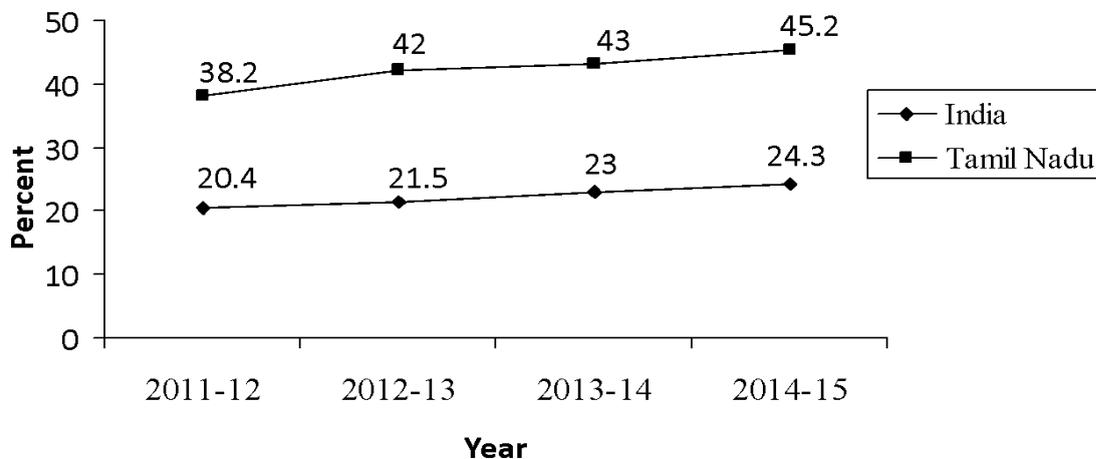
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Figure 2: Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education during 2011-15

V. PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN

India's society is patriarchal, in which women are treated as secondary citizens. Women represent 49.5 per cent of the Indian population, but no society in the world recognizes their work, their contributions and potential. Instead, they are ignored and discriminated against by the social system for being women. The worst circumstance in India is that most women are unaware of their basic rights in the workplace and at home (Sivakumar, I., & Manimekalai, K., 2021).

Education helps women to empower themselves and to achieve gender equality (Sivakumar, I., & Usha, V.T., 2012 & 2013). Nevertheless, according to the 2011 census, 65.46% of women are educated, but in the political, civil, economic, law, and police departments, only a few women hold high-order positions. Unfortunately, the girls' parents strongly believe that spending money to raise a girl is ineffective. To break this attitude and to promote education among girls, the Tamil Nadu state provides ₹25000, also, four-gram gold for girls who have completed their school education and ₹50000, in addition, four-gram gold for girls who have completed their under graduation. That money and gold will be provided at the time the girl gets married. Through the implementation of this scheme, girls' enrolment has tremendously increased in schools and colleges and child marriages have significantly reduced.

Furthermore, family counselling centres intervene and provide moral and psychological guidance to those who have an imbalanced family, as well as serve as a forum for resolving family disputes. These centres provide counseling, referral, and rehabilitative services, especially to women and children, who are victims of atrocities and family maladjustments. It helps women to redress their grievances relating to dowry harassment, cases of alcoholism, and AIDS by giving suitable and appropriate guidance. Also, the state has implemented a social security scheme to protect the vulnerable sections of the society, i.e., aged people, widows, differently abled, agricultural laborers, destitute and unmarried women of 50 years of age and above. On the eve of International Women's Day (March 8), the "Avvaiyar Award" is given to eminent women who have rendered excellent service in the fields of

social reform, women's development, communal harmony, service to language, press, administration, etc. In this scheme, the state provided an eight-gram gold medal and ₹1 lakh was given.

Above all, for the development of transgender, the Tamil Nadu state has introduced a scheme to start an income-generating activity through Self Help Group. The state provided ₹15 lakh with a 25% subsidy for deserving transgender. This has helped transgender to improve their quality of life.

VI. REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY, IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH AND COMBAT HIV/AIDS, MALARIA, AND OTHER DISEASES

India has made major health gains in reducing both communicable and non-communicable diseases. Life expectancy at birth in India has increased from 63 years in 2000 to 68 years in 2015, the same as in many developed countries (WHO, 2016). High rates of maternal and infant mortality constitute a major obstacle to life expectancy. The five major southern states, Punjab, and West Bengal have built the most robust public health infrastructures as reflected by maternal and early childhood mortality, disease incidence rates, and health staff per capita. Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Maharashtra have each achieved the explicit SDG target of reducing maternal mortality to below 70/100,000, an achievement no other states can yet match, although Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra are within striking distance. The integrated Emergency Maternity Service Scheme (24 hours) was also introduced by the state to reduce the MMR and IMR. The Infant Mortality Rate of the state is 21 per thousand (Sample Registration System, 2013) and the state has already achieved a Maternal Mortality Ratio of 79 per lakh live births as per the Sample Registration System, 2012–2014. Now it has been further brought down to 68 as per the state data. The Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR), which was 97 as per the Sample Registration System (SRS) in 2009–11, was reduced to 90 in the period of 2010–12. As per SRS data (2013), the Infant

Mortality Rate (IMR), which was 24 in 2010, is reduced to 21 per 1000 live births against the national IMR of 40. To protect maternal health, 64 integrated child centres are run by government hospitals (Health and Family Department, 2015).

It is natural that, immediately after childbirth, the family provides care for the newborn and not for the woman who gave birth to the newborn. Hence, the Tamil Nadu state has provided financial assistance to pregnant women under the Dr. Muthulakshmi Maternity Benefit Scheme, and it has been enhanced to ₹18000. Through this scheme till 2015, 29.27 lakh pregnant women have benefited to the tune of ₹2720.91 crores. Further, new infant care centers and Amma Nalla Pettagam (medical kit box) are also introduced. The medical kit box contains 16 fundamental things for the newborn baby and the mother.

The Tamil Nadu Health System Projects (TNHSP) have launched free ambulance service. Any person in need of medical attention in an emergency can call the 108 emergency ambulance, which is a 24-hour service system. It is a great help to the poor people and those who meet with accidents on the roadside. Also, Amma Pharmacy (Mother Pharmacy) has opened, where medicines are given at a "fair price". The cost would be 10 to 15% less than that of private medical shops. This low-cost initiative is well received by large sections of the population.

The Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme as rolled out is providing treatment for 1,016 procedures, 23 important diagnostic procedures, and 113 follow-up procedures, providing an insurance cover of ₹1 lakh per year. Smart cards (for medical purposes) have been issued to ₹1.57 crores families. Up to August 2015, 11.35 lakh people benefited under this scheme with an approved amount of ₹2265.22 crores. 783 hospitals, including all the Government Medical College Hospitals and the District Headquarter Hospitals, are empaneled to provide treatment (Anaivarukum Nalavazhu, 2015).

Tamil Nadu is a model state in addressing the diverse challenges in the health sector. The state

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has made considerable achievements in health indicators like life expectancy at birth, infant mortality rate, and maternal rate, and it is marching towards achieving the goals set by the developed nations. The state is also at the forefront in addressing the threat of communicable and non-communicable diseases. Progress in health outcomes has become possible due to the strengthening of public health institutions and the provision of adequate healthy human resources in the state. As a result, Tamil Nadu is ranked "fourth-highest" among the major states in life expectancy at birth; "second-lowest" for newborn and birth rates; "third-lowest" for maternal mortality rates; and "tenth lowest" for death rates.

VII. ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Tamil Nadu state prioritises industrial development at a rate that is faster than the national average. The vision of the Tamil Nadu 2023 manifesto emphasises the state's necessity to protect the environment. The vision 2023 document's eighth theme emphasises the need for environmental protection to cover all aspects of human activity's ecological footprint (Environment and Forest Department, 2015). Also the state implemented the Plastic Waste (Management & Handling) Rules 2011, effectively in all the districts, a drive was carried out in September 2014, under the leadership of the District Collector, to ensure that the traders do not sell the banned plastic carry bags and impose fines on defaulters. Every year, the state provides a total of ₹10 lakhs, which is distributed as first, second, and third prizes of ₹5 lakhs, ₹3 lakhs, and ₹2 lakhs, respectively, to the best three plastic-free villages; the best three self-help groups that play a significant role in collecting the most plastic waste in their area; and the best three plastic-free, green, and clean schools.

The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board has identified and listed out 3,427 units generating hazardous waste under the Hazardous Waste Management, Handling, and Tran's Boundary Movement Rules, 2008 as of December 31st, 2014. About 6.18 lakh tonnes of hazardous waste are annually generated, of which 2.65 lakh tonnes of land is fillable, 3.16 lakh tonnes of recyclable material, and 0.37 lakh tonnes are incinerated. The Board is taking effective steps in handling hazardous waste, its treatment, and disposal in an environmentally safe manner. The Board has advised all District Collectors, all Municipal Corporation Commissioners, the Director of Municipal Administration, and the Director of Town Panchayat to instruct the local bodies in their respective jurisdictions to prohibit/ban the stocking, selling, and use of any carry bag less than 40-micron thickness and has authorised local bodies to impose a fine of ₹1 lakh on those who have stocked or sold such carry bags; the material stocked or sold shall be confiscated. The Board has sanctioned and released a sum of ₹50000 every year to each District Collector of Tamil Nadu to conduct, an awareness programme among school-going children and the general public on the avoidance of throwaway plastic. Also, the government decided to use the plastic waste collected by the local bodies for the reusing of roads. Accordingly, from 2011–2012 to 2014–2015, an amount of ₹218.67 crores has been utilised for relaying plastic roads to a total length of 1596 km. The cash prize schemes and awareness activities were introduced to make Tamil Nadu a plastic free state.

VIII. DEVELOP A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

India mutually receives and provides development assistance. While Official Development Assistance received by India has been important, it is small in proportion to its GDP, and evaluations, recommend that there is scope for improving its effectiveness. India has helped developing countries through technical assistance, capacity-building support, economic assistance, and market access to least developed countries as a part of its development partnership activities that have benefited over 160 countries. India's development assistance, at ₹140 crores a year in nominal terms and ₹530 crores in Purchasing Power Parity terms, is significant for its level of development and can usefully complement the

conventional Official Development Assistance from developed countries (NITI Aayog, 2018).

Tamil Nadu's younger generation is interested in establishing industrial facilities of any size. In September 2015, the Tamil Nadu state hosted the Global Investors Meet to build Tamil Nadu's brand equity globally, to provide a platform for networking on investment and growth opportunities, and to highlight the state's potential as the leading and preferred investment destination worldwide. At the meeting, 98 Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) were signed, for a sum of ₹2,42,160 crores. For this project, South Tamil Nadu was given a sum of 97,181 crores (Labour and Employment Department, 2015).
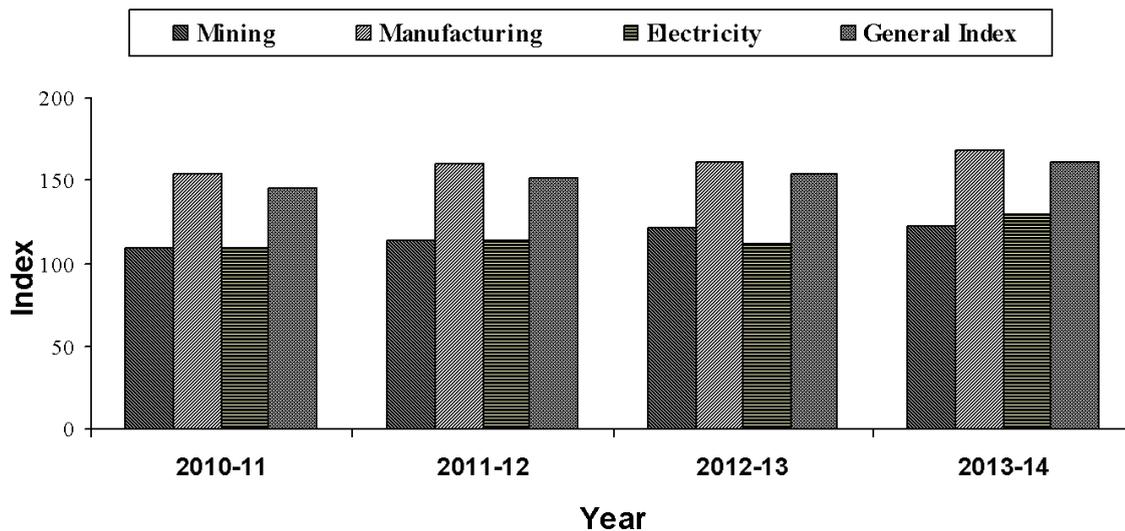
Source: Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Tamil Nadu
& Central Statistical Organization, Government of India, New Delhi, 2015

Figure 3: Index on Industrial Production in Tamil Nadu during 2010-14

Figure 3 explains, undoubtedly, that Tamil Nadu is marching towards development in industrial production. The main objectives of all these schemes are to reduce unemployment and eliminate poverty.

IX. SUMMARY

Overall, the Sustainable Development Solution Network (SDSN) ranks India's SDG attainment at 115th out of 162 surveyed countries, placing it somewhat below the East and South Asia regional average (UN, 2015). According to former RBI Governor Mr. Raghuram Rajan, Tamil Nadu is a state in India that has advanced in many areas, including the sixth place it holds in the Human Development Index, the second-largest economy, the second place it holds for total employment, and one of the top seven developed states in India.

The study found that Tamil Nadu, the state in India, has been moving in the right direction during the period of 2011–2015. The state performed well on measures of governance and economic sustainability, such as poverty reduction, public health, quality education, and reduction of inequalities. The state fulfilled the fundamental needs of the people and moved them towards sustainable practices.

X. CONCLUSIONS

The Tamil Nadu state has made all efforts to provide good health, education, employment, skills, and to save the environment. The present Tamil Nadu government has also made significant efforts to improve the vulnerable section's standard of living, i.e., free bus service for women and girls on government local bus transport. The research concludes that Tamil Nadu is claimed to

be the state that has witnessed the most progress in all aspects, and it stands very close to achieving sustainable development goals.

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