

Gandhian Model of Sustainable Development: A Review

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Abstract: *The entire world is today facing the reaction of nature for our reckless, careless and irresponsible actions. Rampant industrialization, urbanization, deforestation, chemicals dependent agriculture, consumerist life styles and mountains of non-biodegradable and e-waste are taking their toll in form recurrent natural disasters, calamities, storms, earthquakes, pandemics, drought and famine etc. As the world today realises that sustainable development and sustainable lifestyle are the only possible ways through which mankind can get through this global mess and ensure a better and healthy future for its coming generations.*

Keywords: Mahatma Gandhi, Sustainable development, sustainable life style

1. Introduction

Sustainable development has been defined in several ways. The most appropriate definition is from our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report: "Sustainable development is development that meets the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (Jarvie, M. E., 2016). It is also defined in short as "development that lasts".

Sustainable living describes a lifestyle that attempts to reduce an individual's or society's use of the earth's natural resources, and one's personal resources.

The review article is an attempts to study the relevance and scope of Gandhian thought and principles in achieving the global targets of sustainable development and sustainable life styles based on the writings of Mahatma Gandhi, various other authors, Human Development report (2007-08) and 2030 Agenda.

2. Observations

In the English weekly "Harijan" founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1933, he once wrote "Anyone who fouls the air by spitting about carelessly, throwing refuse and rubbish or otherwise dirtying the ground sins against man and nature".

He had noted, "God forbid that India should ever take to industrialization after the manner of the west".

In "Young India", a weekly paper started by Gandhiji, he once wrote in 1920, "we want to organise our national power not by adopting the best methods of production only, but by the best methods of both the production and distribution".

The Human Development Report (2007-08) on the theme "Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World" has also critically looked at the modern development. The report shows that climate change is not just a future scenario. Increased exposure to droughts and floods and storms is already destroying opportunity and reinforcing inequality. Meanwhile, there is now

overwhelming scientific evidences that the world is moving towards the point at which a irreversible ecological catastrophe becomes unavoidable. Business-as-usual, climate change points in a clear direction: unprecedented reversal in human development in our life time and acute risks for our children and their grandchildren. This report also mentions that climate change calls into question the enlightenment principle that human progress will make the future look better than the past.

Praveen Sheth, an eminent author on Gandhi, in his article (The Eco-Gandhi and Ecological Movements) has written "Judicious blending of the Greens in the west and Gandhi in the east at the level of thought and action can help to usher us in a post-modern age and post – industrial eco cultured society.

According to Ram Krishna Sinha (2020) in his blog, "Sustainability is a profound goal which would ideally ensure that nobody is left behind in our planet. Indeed it was in 1992 that more than 170 countries came together at the Rio Earth summit and agreed to pursue sustainable development, protect biological diversity, and prevent interference with climate systems and conserve forest. But three decades later, the natural system on which humanity relies continue to be degraded. Be it ecological footprints, biodiversity index, greenhouse gas emissions, loss of tropical and subtropical forests, we have slipped on all key indicators".

In 2015, the Global leaders assembled in New York to sign up for the 2030 agenda for sustainable development which espouses 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs). The seventeen SDGs are:

- 1) No poverty
- 2) Zero hunger
- 3) Good health and well-being
- 4) Quality education
- 5) Gender equality
- 6) Clean water and sanitation
- 7) Affordable and clean energy
- 8) Decent work and economic growth
- 9) Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- 10) Reducing inequality

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- 11) Sustainable cities and communities
- 12) Responsible consumption and production
- 13) Climate action
- 14) Life below water
- 15) Life on land
- 16) Peace, justice and strong Institutions
- 17) Partnerships for the goal.

It is a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. The SDGs were set up in 2015 by United Nations General Assembly (UN-GA) and are intended to be achieved by the year 2030. They are included in the UN-GA resolution called the 2030 AGENDA. The 2030 agenda epitomizes a new consensus about a vision of mankind for the next 15 years.

Anil Rajvanshi (2004) in his article writes, "Gandhiji's message of nonviolence and sustainable living is a continuation of that long tradition which was started by Gautam Buddha and Mahavir.

3. Conclusion and Discussion

Gandhiji never proclaimed himself to be an environmentalist. Neither was there any need to do so. The reason being, there were no environmental issues in those times. Industrialisation was in its nascent stage. Conveyance was largely non-motorized. Natural resources were being used at minimal level and the main reason was that world didn't have such a burgeoning population.

As we know, Gandhiji was more a social reformer than a freedom fighter. Had there been any environmental problem, Gandhiji would have certainly addressed to it. But the scenario has completely changed since Gandhi. Today our main concerns are environmental challenges faced by the global society. After more than half a century past the Gandhian era we are fighting for our survival on this planet. Ambient air quality is very poor. Suspended particulate matter (SPM) present in air are at dangerously high level. Global warming and ozone depletion are part of layman's vocabulary. The Human Development report (2007-08) rightly says that the world is moving towards the point at which irreversible ecological catastrophe becomes unavoidable.

The present day relevance of Gandhian views has for long been a topic of discussions and debates. But the big question being asked today is that can Gandhian philosophy about human society, nature and development provide a remedy for our existing environmental problems? And certainly if one goes deep into Gandhian worldview, the answer to this question will be in affirmative. The lifestyle which Gandhiji emphasised upon, was definitely what we call today a sustainable lifestyle. Gandhiji was a barrister at law. He had never studied the principles of ecology and ecosystem. But in spite of this fact, Gandhian principles have an essence of environmental ethics. Take for instance, Gandhiji's idea of nonviolence. According to him, one should practice non-violence not only in action but also in thought and speech. Violence according to Gandhi, is bad for entire human mankind. Gandhi considered nature a living organism and professed that one should not harm nature (Sasikala, 2012).

Human beings, because of their superior mental, emotional and philosophical capabilities should act as a custodian of the rest of nature. It is their duty to respect the rights of fellow creature. One should cherish diversity among living organisms. In the English weekly "Harijan" founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1933, he once wrote "Anyone who fouls the air by spitting about carelessly, throwing refuse and rubbish or otherwise dirtying the ground sins against man and nature".

Today, the world has moved full circle. Since the advent of Green revolution, we have been pumping all sorts of chemical pesticides and synthetic fertilizers in agriculture, realising today that it has done immense harm to Mother Nature. Organic farming which advocates agriculture without chemical pesticides and fertilizer is very close to Gandhian view of non-violence towards nature.

Gandhiji was a firm believer of vegetarian diet being good for human beings as well as nature. Looking into ecological concept of food chain, we find that herbivores conserve more energy in the food chain than carnivore. Carnivory increases the length of food chain and thus more loss of energy is incurred. Herbivory reduces the length of food chain and thus helps in energy conservation in the ecosystem.

Gandhiji was heavily against reckless industrial development because he believed that this pace of industrialization breeds disparity and discrimination. Then, heavy industries require extensive exploitation of natural resources. This was again according to Gandhi, violence against nature. Modern economy according to Gandhiji is based on human vices of greed and possessiveness. Materialistic society cannot live in harmony with nature. He therefore advocated use of Swadeshi and establishment of small scale industries. Gandhiji views expressed in "Young India" regarding focus on methods of production and distribution provide a roadmap for future development. Ram Krishna Sinha in his article (2020) has very emphatically advocated the Gandhian principle of peace, sustainability and empathy to be foundation of all future development projects.

Gandhiji vision of new India included one more concept Gram Swaraj. His vision of Indian village was as a self-dependent unit, both economically and administratively. Economics self-dependence means that the village should produce all that is required by its people itself and should not depend on outside world. This was possible when agriculture and cottage industries, go hand-in-hand. This vision of village self-dependence is nature-centric and advocates sustainable lifestyle. Had this concept of gramswaraj been implemented in words and spirit, we would not have been facing problems of urban decay today.

The seventeen SDGs of 2030 AGENDA, are very close to Gandhian view of development and wellbeing.

Despite having no formal education of ecology, Gandhian philosophy and his vision of new India were undoubtedly eco-centric. T. N. Khoshoo has correctly call Mahatma "an apostle of applied human Ecology". The globally popular

quote of Mahatma Gandhi “The world has enough for man's need but not enough for man's greed” explains in few words the very concept of sustainable development.

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