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## ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVES OF GANDHIJI FOR A GREEN GLOBE

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**Abstract:** The economy is geared mainly towards improving human welfare, primarily through increases in the consumption of goods and services. The environmental domain focuses on protection of the integrity and resilience of ecological systems. The social domain emphasizes the enrichment of human relationships and achievement of individual and group aspirations. Gandhiji was represented as a sage by the Indian Congress in its political campaigns, policy wise and his accessories esp. the loin cloth, his stick and very nominal life style were modes that themselves spoke for the Mahatma and helped in establishing him as a saintly preacher and a sincere freedom worker. This worked havoc in the Indian minds especially in the village folk, who were basically religion bound and not at all conscious about the then political and economic domination of the country. The environmental concern as we understand today was not there at the time of Gandhi, but his ideas on development, technology, self sufficiency, village Swaraj etc. disclose his environmental concern. Different streams of environmental philosophy have paid their indebtedness to Gandhi. The present paper is an attempt to understand the theoretical aspects behind Gandhian environmentalism. The Philosophical elements of Gandhi such as truth and non violence, the idea of science and technology, economic concepts, conflict resolution techniques etc. are discussed to analyze their implications for environment. The paper distinguishes Gandhian economics from conventional economics to underscore its links with sustainability questions. The paper argues that the final outcome of Gandhian economics is a green future.

**Keywords:** Non-Violence, Environment, Ecology, Global Development.

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**I. Introduction:** Gandhi considered the earth a living organism. His ideas were expressed in terms of two fundamental laws: Cosmic law and the Law of Species. Cosmic Law views the entire universe as a single entity. Nothing could malfunction outside the threshold limits built into the grand system that includes both living and non-living phenomena. He believed that "the universe was structured and informed by the cosmic spirit, that all men, all life and indeed all creation were one". He was an adventist who believed in the essential unity of man and nature. He wrote: "I believe in the advaita (non-duality), I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter, of all that lives. Therefore, I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the world gains with him and if one man fails, the whole world fails to that extent." Regarding the law of species Gandhi believed that without the cooperation and sacrifice of both human and non-human beings evolution is not possible. Being rational human beings, we are the custodians of the rest of creation and should respect their rights and cherish the diversity. It is for this reason that taking more than the required resources is seen as theft. Gandhi evolved these principles from his vast readings and understandings from religious traditions of Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity and Islam. His social, economic and political ideas were framed on the understanding of interdependence of the whole universe. Gandhi was not an environmentalist in the modern sense. Although he did not create a green philosophy or write nature poems, he is often described as an "apostle of applied human ecology." It is a fact that environmental concerns were minimal in Gandhi's time; but eminent environmental writers like Ramachandra Guha consider him an early Environmentalist. His views on nature are scattered throughout his writings. His ideas relating to Satyagraha based on truth and non-violence, simple life style, and development reveal how sustainable development is possible without doing any harm to nature and our fellow beings. His idea that "nature has enough to satisfy every one's needs, but not to satisfy anybody's greed" became one line ethic to modern environmentalism.

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**II. Objectives of the Study:**

1. To convey the Gandhian thought of ecology
2. To establish peaceful movement of Gandhiji in green future.
3. To study the role of Gandhian thought of economics in present contest

**III. Methodology:** Data has been collected from Gandhiji writings as primary source and the writings on Gandhian Ideology and his thoughts on socio economic perspective writings from different writers and journals websites and magazines; Inductive method that is inductive reasoning has been adopted to analyse the topic in the light of Gandhian thought.

**IV. Need for the Study:** The burning issue of the Globe is ecological imbalance and toughness of human existence on earth with which the countries, politicians, economists, scientists are battling to deal the problem. In this contest it is our responsibility to look the problem through the philosophical ideology of founder of the weapon non-violence, and satyagraha our father of nation Mahathma Gandhi. In this scenario this study deals with the economic ideology of Mahathma form the ecological and environmental perspectives of our Indian leader and thinker 'father of nation'.

**V. Ecological Economics of Gandhi:** Modern economy is "propelled by a frenzy of greed and indulges in an orgy of envy." It makes man more materialistic at the risk of majority and the environment. Schumacher argued that, "Wisdom demands a new orientation of science and technology towards the organic, the gentle, the non-violent, the elegant and beautiful." He identified Gandhian economic ideas as having the power to reach that goal. Gandhi asserted that "true economics stands for social justice; it promotes the good of all equally, including the weakest and is indispensable for decent life". Dr. J C Kumarappa, known as the Green Gandhian, systematized Gandhian economic and development thoughts and integrated his economic thinking with scientific knowledge to "entail macro-ecological problems of pollution as well as depletion." He summed up Gandhian economic ideas as a constituting a philosophy that sought to create an "economy of permanence". He observed that self-interest and preservation demand complete non-violence, co-operation and submission to the ways of nature if we are to maintain permanency by non-interference with and by not short-circuiting the cycle of life. In another way, "all nature is dovetailed together in a common cause". Kumarappa argued that "when this interconnection works out harmoniously and violence does not break the chain, we have an economy of permanence". He identified different types of economies and realized that the highest form of economy is the economy of service which Gandhi suggests. Gandhian economic Concepts like swadeshi, trusteeship, bread labour etc received attention and acceptance from the whole world. Gandhi defined Swadeshi as "the spirit in us which requires us to serve our immediate neighbors before others and to use things produced in our neighborhood in preference to those more remote. So doing we serve humanity to the best of our capacity". The swadeshi spirit encourages us to consume commodities made from our own villages, thus promoting small scale industries which help ordinary farmers and weavers to live happily. Limitation of wants is another important aspect in Gandhian economics. Gandhi urged us to minimize our wants to minimize the consumption and thus reduce the burden on nature by avoiding hazardous wastes. Our civilization, culture and swaraj depend on the restriction of wants. Gandhi realized that the modern civilization and the market economics have a tendency to multiply the wants and needs of common people.

**Vi. Gandhi's Concept of Development and Environmental Sustainability:** In Mahatma Gandhi's opinion, in any scheme of development, man should be at the centre. A long term view of development has to be taken, for we owe our debt to prosperity as well. Man has to make a judicious use of natural resources. The ecological balance should not be disturbed. The objective should not be to build the islands of prosperity in the ocean of poverty; but to raise the level of standard of life and to combat poverty. Gandhi's ideas are also reflected in the total value shift in production, consumption, habits and political systems. It places more emphasis on moral responsibility of the individual at the personal, social, national and universal level. Gandhi believed in Sarvodaya and therefore the welfare of all was the basis of his thinking; hence his community centred approach towards sustainability emphasized on 'betterment of human life' and 'ensuring fulfilment of basic needs of all human needs'. Welfare of the

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human beings being the ultimate goal by avoiding all sorts of exploitations, Gandhi felt that human dignity needs to be established.

Gandhi was an economist of masses and an environmentalist without any structured model. Although he did not give structured model of environmental conservation and sustainable development, interlinking all his thoughts together, we get his logically built up environmentally sustainable development model. Gandhi pleaded for decentralization of power in society. He visualized 'Swaraj' at the individual level, 'Gram Samaj' at Local level and 'Sarvodaya' at global level. He believed that power resided in the people. A mutually interdependent cooperative working at the world level helps in making noble environment.

His trusteeship concept is for Sarvodaya. Every member of the society is the trustee of the wealth generated out of the collective efforts of all. Thus, it denies individual pursuit and collection of wealth and converts it into the wealth of all for a better society. He expected that the trusteeship will result into non-violent and non-exploitative socio-economic relations and development models based on production systems centered around the preservation of nature.

His sustainable development is based on a holistic paradigm which lays stress on all round development of individual and society in relation with nature. This entire thinking was based upon the ethical vision in which the individual is at a central position. If inward change is achieved, outward change takes care of itself. A judicial shift from the consumer society to the Conserver Society seems to be the demand of modern age.

In Hind Swaraj 1909, he talked about the dangers of unplanned and reckless industrialization; the growth oriented theory must be replaced by theories of sustainable development that will not damage but will guarantee harmonious co-existence of man and the ecosystem. Sustainable development is an ideology, drawn at the global level, showing human beings are interrelated with the ecosphere. It is a movement as it suggests a way of life. It involves the active participation of all the members of society. Self-help, self-reliance, decentralization of industries and labour intensive technology; these are the qualitative goals of satisfying meaningful life.

Gandhi wrote in the first decade of 20th century in 'Hind Swaraj' that a relentless quest for material goods and services and civilization driven by endless multiplication of wants is 'Satanic' and defined civilization in terms of the preferences of duties; 'adherence to moralities and exercise of restraint', thus limiting greed. Hind Swaraj became the manifesto of sustainable development after the first 'Satyagraha'. For eight years (1906-1914) it became a movement against the exploitations of the modern western civilization. In a much broader sense, it had the challenging and compassionate vision of saving the planet earth.

Harmonious existence of mankind and nature presupposes an approach based on equity and justice and coexistence of all cultures and civilisation. In 1911, Gandhi used the phrase, 'Economy of Nature' which brings out the sensitivity and deeper understanding of human actions vis-a-vis ecology. In 1928, he wrote, "God forbid that India should even take to industrialization after the manner of the west. If the entire nation of 300 million took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts." This statement appears contemporary for a world struggling to survive against the unprecedented global warming and climate change.

Dandi Yatra of 1930: Gandhi followed an unprecedented method of asserting right of common man over natural resources, of which, salt is most basic and primary one. If we look at Dandi Yatra from the independence struggle point of view, its broader objective was of freeing the world from the monstrous greed of materialism. This action along with his famous statement, 'Earth has enough resources for everybody's needs but not for anybody's greed' has eternal lasting impact on the minds of the world.

Energy crisis: Gandhi was well aware about all such problems sixty years back. During the independence struggle at Kathiawar region in Gujarat, drought was experienced. Knowing that a forestation on a large scale can be an effective step to face water crisis, Gandhi asked for plantation of trees. At a prayer meeting in Delhi in 1947, he suggested that water harvesting has to be practiced for irrigational purposes to avoid famines and food shortages. Surprisingly the same was suggested by the M. S. Swaminathan committee in 2006. This means that Gandhi was much ahead of his time. The initiative taken in Germany to establish the Green party and pursue policies consistent with nature conservation clearly explains the relevance of Gandhi to the environmental sustainability movement. One of the founders of the party, Mrs. Patra Kelly admirably summed up the impact of the Mahatma. She said that 'in particular area of our work we have been greatly inspired by our Mahatma Gandhi, in our belief that lifestyle and method of production, which relies on endless supply of raw material and which use those raw material lavishly also provide motive force for violent appropriation of raw materials from other parties. In contrast, responsible consumption of raw material as a part of ecologically oriented life style and economy reduces the risk that policies of violence will pursue'. This makes a case for pursuing policies consistent nature preservation.

**Vii. Action Points to Save Environment:** In globalization, everybody is after wealth creation and accumulation. But we need to change our approach towards wealth creation. We need a new economic order based on Gandhi's concept of containment of wants. Greed can lead to only destruction of the mother earth. We need to change our outlook and approach. Our attitude needs to be changed to accommodating everyone for making this earth a living place for all. We need to change the methods of creation of wealth through fairer means. Such means will not endanger nature. Let us remember that the ends do not justify the means. Economic Philosophy based on human consideration can ensure a better world order. Gandhi emphasized that creation of wealth through fairer means and without endangering sustainable development has to be the basis of economic policy. Simple living and high thinking should be our philosophy of life. Gandhian ideas are spiritually orientated and have a holistic approach. It is inclusive in nature. The universal acceptance of market reforms based on demand and supply which primarily focus on 'Survival of the fittest' is contrary to Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of making everyone fit to survive. Commercial considerations driven by technological advancements can trigger off a wedge between the 'haves and have-nots' leading to divided world based on their economic strengths.

**VIII. Conclusion:** Gandhiji observed that the Indian situation demanded a new vision on economics which is centered on agriculture and village industries. He conceptualized a new economic order based on ecological balance. The village romanticism of Gandhi has been considered as central to his environmental philosophy. As Gandhiji said let us start with ourselves so that future generations do not blame us. Gandhi once said, "I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you. Apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man, whom you have seen and ask yourself If the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he be able to gain anything by it? Will it restore to him control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melt away". We need to recollect these words of the Mahatma every moment. Going back to the thoughts of Gandhi is essential to build up a green future, where there is no place for human greed.

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