

Mahatma Gandhi, Ecology and Green Politics

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Abstract

one of the major concerns of human society is environmental problem. Now a days, we are aware more or less about environmental pollution, degradation that leads to crisis, threatened the life of living being. In the modern age, the culture of material consumerism has aggrandizement this environmental crisis. To resolve this problem, Gandhi's vision on environment is more significant and applicable. His vision is that to maintain a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. He emphasized on resource conservation, minimal consumption and respect for all living creatures. Gandhi was relied on a sustainable way of life that prioritized the needs of the many over the greed of the few. He always advocating the principles of 'simple living and high thinking' for the development of the society. He believed on swadeshi, self-sufficiency and opposed the modern machinery-based industries. He always promotes the village Khadi and cottage industries which was environment-friendly initiatives. To addressed the importance of environment and resolve these issues he emphasis on environmental consciousness and spiritual growth of man. In this connection, Gandhi's philosophy like Non-Violence, Satyagraha, Sarvodaya, Trusteeship etc. are very crucial for the environmental concerns. This article is an attempt to address the various issues of ecology and the relevance of Gandhi's philosophy in contemporary India.

Introduction

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) was a multi-faceted personality in the history of Indian freedom struggle. His contribution was divergent like philosophy, economics, politics, education, science and technology, psychology, values and morality, trade and business, world peace, harmony and sustainability of the environment. Gandhi's ideas and views served as a source of inspiration of the society. All of these ideas and thoughts were arrived by him through the lifelong experimentation with truth, which makes Gandhian philosophy more essential in the present day. During his time, the intensity of environment problems like pollution and degradation of natural resources was not as severe as it is today. His concentration was not to achieve just political Independence from colonial rule but also resolve the chronic issue of poverty, illiteracy, food security and the problems of environmental degradation.

The term ecology comes from the Greek word Oikos (house) and, significantly, has the same Greek root as the word economics from aikonomous (household) manager. Earnest Hackel, the German biologist who coined the word ecology in 1868 viewed ecology as a body of knowledge concerning the economy of nature, highlighting its roots in economics and evolutionary theory. According to him ecology as a study of all those complex interrelations referred to by Darwin as the condition of the struggle for existence. Ecologists like to look at the environment as an ecosystem of interlocking the web of life. For

the social scientists, ecology means the harmonious interrelationship of all kind of living beings and non-living matters and the disequilibrium of one particular factor resulted in its negative consequential impact upon other, and thus lead to instability, crisis and disorder. For the sociologists, the most important ecological concepts are diversity and dominance, competition and cooperation, succession and adaptation, evolution and expansion and carrying capacity and the balance of nature. Taking into the contemporary crisis, human ecology is the most fundamental factor of ecology.

Ecology and environment are closely related disciplines and familiarity with the principles of one is essential to fully understanding the other. The main difference between the two is that the latter is a more overarching field that incorporates many elements of earth and life sciences to understand various natural processes. Ecology on the other hand is usually more focused on how organisms interact with each other and with their immediate surroundings. Both sciences provide very important information about and what people can do to protect the planet and conserve resources.

Ecology is the study of relationships and interactions of living organisms with other living organisms and its surrounding environment thus it's the study of house of an organism.

There are three things that we study in ecology:

1. Living organisms,
2. Relationship and interactions with other organisms, and
3. Relationship and interactions with surrounding environment.

Environment refers to the surroundings. It has two components biotic and abiotic. Biotic includes surrounding plant and animal communities and micro-organisms and Abiotic includes Soil, sunlight, topography, water, atmosphere, nutrients etc.

Ecology + environment = Ecosystem.

Currently expressed in popular terms by corporate media and others green politics has a much broader deeper meaning one significant example of the growth of green politics in the 20th century occurred as environment, women, nuclear and other like-minded groups joined together under the banner of green politics.

For greens, applying the lessons of ecology to individual and social responsibility issues within the context of holistic thinking and action creates and obvious need for participatory democracy. Politics, in this sense becomes a daily activity, series of choices, and continuing social and life sciences education. Moreover, Individual and social responsibility within an ecological context require this bottom-up approach to decision-making. The four pillars of green politics: ecology, non-violence, social justice and grassroots democracy which is related to Gandhi's philosophy.

We live in a world in which science, technology and development play important roles in changing destiny. However, over-exploitation of natural resources for the purpose of development leads to serious environmental hazards. In fact, the idea of development is itself controversial in the present situation as in the name of development, we are unethically plundering natural resources. It is true that a science that does not respect nature's needs and a development which does not respect people's needs threatens human survival. The green thoughts of M. K. Gandhi give us a new vision to harmonies nature with the needs of people.

The environmental concern was minimal at the time of Gandhi, but his ideas on village swaraj, decentralization, swadeshi, sarvodaya etc. made him as advocate of environmentalism. He is often

considered as a man with deep ecological view. The ideas of Gandhi have been widely used by different streams of environmental philosophy like green, deep ecology etc. and different environmental movements across the globe. An eminent environmental thinker Ramchandra Guha identified three distinct strands in Indian environmentalism, the crusading Gandhians, Appropriate technologists and ecological Marxists. He observed that, unlike the third one, the first two strands rely heavily on Gandhi. This paper is highlighting the Gandhi's concept of deep ecology and its relevance in contemporary India.

Background of the Study

Much before the environmental consciousness began to expand in modern times, Gandhi had brought out a manifesto of counter culture in his Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule in 1909. Today environmental hazards pose a greater threat to our survival than even the nuclear stockpile. The growth of population good agricultural land, severe degradation of earth's soil, the destruction of tropical forests, dramatic rise in transport having extensive environmental impact, pressure on human labor on agricultural land, non-availability of clean water and waste disposal system, growing under nourishment and malnutrition in developing countries, increasing magnitude of flood, accumulation of explosive, nuclear testing, damaging ozone layer etc. have indeed posed the worst threat to the existence of all living beings. No technology, however brilliant, no socio-economic system, however profound, will be able to save us from this catastrophe, for living natural resources and reduced below sustainable levels and the environmental elements are degrading to the point of dysfunction.

Environmental crisis resulting from rapid economic growth and deepening consumerist culture on the one hand and rapid growth of population on the other has now put an enormous stress on the survival and development of human beings. Human beings live in two worlds: the natural world, which is given, and the social world which is the creation of man through time. These two worlds are not separated from each other. They are interdependent and interactive. The disjunction between economy and ecology has created environmental crisis which man now find difficult to overcome. The earth has become a dangerous place.

The Environment, Concrete Landscape, Silent Spring, Our Ecology, Population Explosion, Damaged Ecosystem, Poverty, Consumerist Culture, Environmental Justice, Universal Ethical Principles, values, rights and obligations, Mother earth the terms such as these have turned into anchor points for social critics, moral philosophers' policy experts over the past decades. Environmental crisis resulting from rapid economic development with modern technological devices and attendant consumerist culture on one hand, and equally rapid increase in world population on the other, has now become part an enormous stress on the very survival and development of human history. The technological power that men has acquired to transform nature is unparalleled in the annals of human history. Man can use his power to create a heaven on earth; he can also use to dig his own grave. The most important fact is to know oneself. Self-realization will lead to basics or to the roots of human civilization. We have to rethink of the ecology by exploring the totality of all interrelations between human societies with everything in its environment. The ecological philosophy reviews the organization and operation of earth first. Mahatma Gandhi realized the importance of living close to earth as part of ecosystem. The philosophy of life and his own experience or our culture and social system.

Realizing the seriousness of the ecology problem, we have to rethink ecology by exploring the totality of all human machine, human animal and human plant interrelations for sustainable development of the society. We have to create alternative forms of environments built by us, high technologies and

economic communities, by reconstituting the nature economy equation. This is the only possible if we are sensitive enough for ongoing ecological destruction, asking questions from one self, realizing the path of our activities of material wants. Gandhiji never had an intention to evolve a philosophy of life; it emerged as he looked deeper into the root cause of the problem facing the world.

There is a connection between our worldview and our attitude towards the earth. Self-realization is the ultimate objective of Deep ecology. In keeping with the spiritual traditions of our culture, the deep ecology norm of self-realization goes beyond the Western 'self' which is defined as an isolated ego striving for a narrow sense of individual salvation. Deep ecology 'self' requires an identification which goes beyond humanity to include the nonhuman world. There are certain principles of deep ecology, like

1. Inherent Value,
2. Diversity,
3. Vital Needs,
4. Population,
5. Human Interference,
6. Policy Change,
7. Quality of Life,
8. Obligation of Action,

We must see beyond our narrow cotemporary cultural assumptions and values and the conventional wisdom of our time and place are best achieved by the meditative deep questioning process. Gandhiji developed some concept to achieve the ultimate goal, i.e. Moksha, Ahimsha, Advaita, etc. Our need will be satisfied if we have less and less of greed. Greed can never be satisfied even if millions go without food and shelter. The potentials of Gandhian holistic view of world and his principles of Deep Ecology can be used as guiding principles, for finding solutions for a new eco-friendly world order.

Very recent time In New York Paris Summit was organized by UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) dealing with greenhouse gas emissions mitigation adaption and finance starting in the year 2020. An agreement on the language of the treaty was negotiated by representatives of 195 countries at the 21st Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC in Paris. It was opened for signature on 22nd April 2016 (Earth Day) in a ceremony in New York City. It is anthropocentric in nature. Our Prime Minister also joined into the summit. To make the 'Clean India' central and state government also take some necessary steps into the governmental policies.

Review of Literature

The study on Gandhi, ecology and Green politics in India has far reaching importance and relevance. Popular scholars with their books and scholarly articles like Gunanidhi Parida's book, Ecology and Development in Conflict: A Gandhian Approach, P. P. Karan's article, Environmental Movement in India, Ramchandra Guha's book, Environmentalism: The Global History, Sulagna Chattopadhaya's book, Environment in India, R. Rajagopalan's book, Environmental Studies: From Crisis to Cure, Illustrated Environment, Jairam Ramesh's book, Green Signals, Mahesh Rangrajan's book, Environmental Issues in India: A Reader, S. M. Aryabhata's book, Rural India and Environment, Ramchandra Guha's book, India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy, Majid Husian's book, Environment and Ecology: Biodiversity, Climate Change and Disaster Management, S. N. Pawar's book, Environmental Movement in India: Strategies and Practices, Padam Nepal's book, Environmental Movement in India, Ashok K. Lahiri's article, Green Politics and Indian Middle Class,

Poonam Kumaria's article, Nature and Man: Gandhian Concept of Deep Ecology, Economics and Political Weekly, the monthly journal etc. all have made considerable research on various aspects of environment in India, but no comprehensive study being made in the context of Gandhian concept of deep ecology and its relevance in contemporary India. The present research is an attempt to have a comprehensive study for these research gap.

Objectives of Study

The central aim of the present study is to understand and analyze as to what degree the political philosophy of Gandhi, which is based on Indian culture, tradition and ethics, could contribute to resolve the contemporary issues including problems of ecology, development and the conflict between the two and other conflicts relating to the two. Gandhian concept of deep-ecology and its relevance today could also be analyzed and the problems of harmony, peace and progress in Indian society. In this context, Gandhian political philosophy has to be analyzed in terms of green politics.

Research Questions

The present study reveals around the following questions and has tried to answer it. The central questions are as follows:

- a) What is green politics?
- b) What is deep-ecology?
- c) What are the purposes of the deep-ecologists?
- d) What is the idea of Gandhi in relation to deep-ecology?
- e) What are the differences between Gandhi and Deep-ecologists about our environment?

Hypothesis

- Gandhian political philosophy which is a product of Indian tradition, history, philosophy and culture has its relevance in contemporary society, in terms of solving the problems of ecology and development.
- Gandhian concept of decentralized, labor intensive, useful based development than exchange and capital oriented large scale western model of development is the fundamental factor to maintain harmony between man with man and man with nature.
- Gandhian concept of sustainable development could be a solution to the disproportional capitalistic model of development, which is directly related with problems of ecology.
- Gandhian concept of 'biocentric' approach than anthropocentric approach which is reflected in his concept of 'transpersonal self' is carried out by many environmentalists under eco-feminists, eco-human rights activists, animal right activists and green ecologists' movement to protect the environment and maintain a well-ordered society based on Gandhian principles.

Methodology

This study will emphasis on content analysis of Gandhi's life and the main trends of green politics in India. The proposal could also be studied through the use of analytical and descriptive method of research to justify the degree authenticity of Gandhian political philosophy and its level of solving the problem.

In order to test the aforesaid research hypothesis, the researcher has depended on both the primary and the secondary resources. Book, journals, articles etc. are used as secondary source. Above all, supporting information will be gathered from online and offline journals.

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