

# The Gandhi Way: Sustainability in the ERA of Globalisation

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## ABSTRACT

Globalization has made its mark in nearly every aspect of life-social, economic, geographical and cultural. The ideas of Gandhi and the idea of Globalization are regarded as contradictory sometimes. However, Gandhi was a globalization product himself. The Gandhian thoughts are spiritual and holistic. The negative impact of globalisation on global environment and eco-system is primarily due to its very nature of encouraging unrestricted consumerism particularly among the elite and the middle classes. Therefore, the Gandhian concept of sustainable development takes the pride of place not only in India but also in the whole world in the age of globalization. His concept of sustainable development is founded on a holistic paradigm that emphasizes on the overall development of individual and society in connection with nature. It is a lifestyle in itself, inclusive in nature. The ultimate outcome of all his thoughts will be a move away of the consumer society to the conservator society. This paper looks at the perceptions of Gandhi on sustainable development-concepts and practices and how sustainable development is required in the conservation of our geographical features in the age of globalisation, which would otherwise result in environmental hazards and destructions.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Sustainable Development

## INTRODUCTION

Globalisation refers to a growing interdependence of national economies by exchanging goods and services, more liberal corporate investments and other financial flows between nations. It entails increased international division of labour where multi-national or trans-national corporations are at the forefront. Globalization has left its marks in every aspect of life-social, economic, geographical and cultural. The aim of this paper is not to argue against globalisation or economic growth in general, but to stress that we have to be considerate of the future generation. This is the core of Gandhian approach.

The ideas of Gandhi and Globalization are viewed as conflicting at times. However, Gandhi was a globalization product himself. He felt that inter-mingling of cultures in India would not pose a threat to the customs and culture of India. India had trade relations with other foreign countries since time immemorial. All the nations that traded with India shared their cultures and even mixed up as the Indian nation. Nevertheless, he was able to point out that the creation of a global society would lead to some threats particularly to ecosystems. We observe a lot of these issues in our lives today and therefore the relationship of Gandhi with globalisation is completely significant and his thoughts are relevant even now. No one has stressed, the necessity of improving the economic status of the Indian poor as much as Gandhi did.

### **Sustainable Development- Gandhi Perceptions**

According to the definition of the 1987 Brundtland Report, sustainability is defined as: "Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." In the contemporary world where the individual and the world are worried about sustainable development, the vision of Gandhiji takes a central position. Globalisation is harmful to the global environment and the eco-system because it tends to encourage unlimited consumerism. Therefore, in the globalization epoch Gandhian concept of sustainable development holds a prominent position not only in India but also in the whole world.

Gandhiji was talking of all round sustainable development which is applicable in every aspect, whether it is politics, environment, personal, physical, mental and spiritual health, economics and law and justice. Gandhi stressed on the concept of sustainable development in microcosm to macrocosm, individual to the society as a whole without referring to the terminology. By their frugality, their selfless attitude, individuals can be able to think positively in the interest of him and of society. His thoughts apply to a person i.e. how a person can attain self-morality, intellectually, spiritually and have a healthy body. In the society, he emphasized the concept of cooperation and trusteeship. Sustainability also is a stepping stone to the idea of trusteeship by Gandhiji, which was later established as corporate social responsibility. In

his books such as, Hind swaraj, My Experiments with Truth, Law and Lawyer he elaborates the different points of sustainable development to the individual, to the nation and to the mankind as a whole.

The focus of Gandhi on local economies and self-sufficiency can be used to minimize inequalities in income through local economic development and wealth retention. According to Gandhi, the aim of all human activities should be the welfare of all which is not only the welfare of men but also the welfare of animals and even the natural world. Here the common good is pictured. In Hind Swaraj he discussed the hazards of irresponsible industrialisation and the necessity to live with nature.

Gandhian thoughts are spiritual and comprehensive. His concept of sustainable development is founded on a holistic paradigm and this paradigm emphasizes on all round development of individual and society in association with nature. It is a lifestyle, inclusive in itself. The final outcome of his thoughts will be the transformation of consumer society to the conserver society.

To Gandhi, sustainable development was not something that he over contributed to but it was his lifestyle. His simple living and high thinking mantra was a message to the mankind that simple living could conserve and maintain the resources on the planet and thus lead to an all inclusive development of the society. He demonstrated on the need to take care of our resources and not to waste it. Be it his concept of renewable energy promotion, or anti-industrialization, khadi or satyagraha, he has certainly made India come into the limelight in many centuries to come.

His concept of a decentralized rural development holds good even today. An idea that was imagined nearly a 100 years ago appears to be so true. Village sustainability will result in more growth of the country and save the handicrafts and other dying arts of the country.

Gandhiji was a spiritual person and his pattern of sustainability can be traced to his spirituality. His religion was a mixture of various religious beliefs and faiths and this influenced the entire life he led. His life was very simple, he ate to stay alive and he fasted numerous times. His life of bare necessities demonstrated to the world the concept that the humans who had the least comforts and simple life could give birth to some of the best ideas and this is definitely a great contribution in sustainable development.

Gandhi besides being a visionary was also an energy saver. Reducing the desires will be a good concept of saving the energy. The idea of local economies and self-sufficiency by Gandhi can be used to minimize the use of fossil fuels and to encourage the use of renewable energy. Gandhiji demonstrated simple life in life style. He used to live in Ashrams with his disciples without any modern facilities. He was a fervent believer in frugality, in recycling and reuse, and a denouncer of many elements of modernity. Even his Dandi March was a form of claiming the right of common man over natural resources of which salt was the most important one. His dream was that excessive modernization and use of machinery and gadgets can impact the livelihood of the society as a whole and that can decrease the number of people working. The principles of simple living and emphasis on local production by Gandhi can help lower consumption and wastage, which will lead to environmental conservation.

His every significant action such as Swadesi and Satyagraha was the result of the necessity of sustainability. Gandhi demonstrated to the world that Indians do not have to rely on the British and can cut down the revenue of the colonialists by spinning the yarn and producing Khadi. The idea of Swadeshi proposed by Gandhi stresses the fact that it is necessary to support local industries and businesses. The strategy will keep money in the local communities and limit the adverse effects of globalization.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, man must be the centre of any development scheme. Gandhi was a believer of Sarvodaya (the uplift of all) and thus the well being of all was the foundation of his thought; thus his community based approach to sustainability in brief focused on betterment of human life and ensuring that all the basic needs of human beings are fulfilled. Exploitation, discrimination, inequality and violence have no place in Sarvodaya society. It aims at the achievement of a self-sufficient social order which would eliminate economic and political dependence". The Sarvodaya concept of Gandhi puts more emphasis on the welfare of human beings and the earth. This principle is critical to sustainable development because it focuses on the relationship between human and environmental welfare.

### **Challenges**

The principles of sustainable development as put forward by Gandhi are challenged by many aspects in the age of globalization. Economically, the balancing of local economies and globalization, income inequality, and sustainable management of natural resources are important issues. The climate change, loss of biodiversity and water management are urgent environmental concerns. Socially, cultural homogenization, human rights, and community involvement should be addressed. Internationally, there is need to enhance global governance, policy structures and international cooperation. Philosophically, it is necessary to reconcile growth and sustainability, reconsider the consumption patterns, and redesign development. These issues are essential to be addressed to facilitate sustainable development and make the world more equal and environmentally friendly.

## CONCLUSION

More violations of human rights and environmental degradation are experienced in the era of globalisation when the world is becoming so interconnected and geo political boundaries are fading away. The only way out of this is to live with the sustainable development approach, an approach to both the present and future generation. Gandhi was a crusader and pioneer of sustainable development decades ago when the world was not in this much trouble as far as sustainability is concerned. He supported the concept through his own way of life, philosophies, books etc without employing the nomenclature. Globalisation and the national, international policies contributed to the enhancement of the significant environmental harms that we are witnessing today. The answer to this is the practise of sustainable development. Your future is based on what you do today. And it is time to alter our way of thinking and consider the global responsibility and practice the concept of sustainable living a life mantra to us and even to the future generations.

The philosophy and practices of Gandhi have profound lessons to sustainable development in the age of globalization. His ideas of simplicity, self-sufficiency, and local economies can be used to reduce inequality, environmental conservation, and cultural diversity. Although the implementation of the ideas of Gandhi is fraught with a lot of difficulties, they provide a different way of looking at sustainable development, which can be used to develop modern solutions to global problems.

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