

Chapter 21

Ecological Vision of Mahatma Gandhi in Contemporary World

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ABSTRACT

Environmental degradation and concern for environmental protection and maintaining ecological balance in the last few decades has become the subject of serious political contention and public outcry. Human activity in the name of development has adversely affected the global biodiversity in an unprecedented manner. Eco-development demands structural and moral transformation of the current social, political, and value system. It presupposes a participatory political structure that allows maximum devolution of power to the local communities. And such a coordination and cooperation between development discourse and survival of nature can be found in the works and ideas of Mahatma Gandhi.

INTRODUCTION

Life has existed on earth for millions of years in a highly diverse form with millions of species. But roughly during the last couple of decades, 'life providing conditions' on our planet have changed in such a drastic way as to create a crisis of survival. It is the need of the hour to replace the modernist version of development agenda by a model that respects the real, basic needs of all human beings and all forms of life of this generation as well as the generations to come. It is feasible only if diversity and equality, human rights and love for life, respect and compassion for every form of life-existence are accepted as founding principles of public policy, social organizations and governmental initiative. The present-day development model is driven by competition and greed rather than self-restraint and need. The apathy of the modern economy towards the extent and manner of resource use has been criticized by the environmentalists. In the words of Edward O. Wilson, one of the world's leading experts on bio-diversity, biologists generally agree that "on the land at least and on a worldwide basis, species are vanishing 100 times faster than before the arrival of Homo sapiens" (Dogra, 2010, p.7).

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This chapter quite logically and pertinently resonates to the theme of the book by highlighting the detailed analysis of the current crisis human civilization is going through. The chapter in a vivid manner emphasizes the major political and economic implication of Green trading on basing the argument from an environment-friendly perspective with philosophical conjecture. Case studies related to particular environmental issues and movements can further substantiate the philosophical standpoint of the arguments the chapter has dealt with. The purpose of my paper is to examine the ways in which environmental issues affect human lives and other life forms and how the existing policies and programmes address this vital aspect of existence. The structure of the chapter will begin by elucidating the basic concepts of development, ecology and sustainable development and the relationship among them. Thereafter, the chapter will proceed to discuss in detail the Gandhian perspectives on environment and ecology corroborating it with Gandhian philosophy. The third section of the chapter will deal with the feasibility of implementation of Gandhian principles. It will highlight the environmental movement in India focusing on *Narmada Bachao Andolan* and *Chipko* movement which were living examples of Gandhian environmentalism that portrayed him as a 'man with deep ecological view of life'. The books referred to are sufficient to build an ideological base. However, upcoming research works on Green trading and environmental issues can definitely substantiate the present theme of the work. The following chapter is primarily based on philosophical insights rather than statistical or numerical data analysis. As environmental issues demand graver attention and prompt action coupled with immediate implementation of policies and programmes, philosophical or hypothetical re-questioning of the environmental crisis is generally regarded as redundant. That is the reason there happens to be literature void and adequate background information to the theme I dealt with in this chapter.

More *a priori* debate and value-oriented research of environmental issues needs to be inculcated by scholars and academicians. Case studies related to particular environmental issues and moments can substantiate the philosophical standpoint of the arguments the chapter has dealt with. The chapter has made an attempt to deal with the current issues of industrialism along with the modernization drive that dictate the present political establishment with its natural fall out on environmental balance. However, statistical analysis and field surveys are missing in this chapter which can, though be taken up by the researchers in future. Thus, the future scope to further the analytical framework related to this theme remains open.

Major weaknesses of the work are

- Lack of adequate historical analysis.
- Data and statistical frameworks have been totally ignored.
- References primarily dealt with value-oriented knowledge and less on policy research.

However, the major strength of this chapter lies in the fact that

- Serious issues that deal with particularly the 'vulnerable' and 'marginalized' section of the populace should make a starting point basing on value oriented research instead of relying on a value neutral one.
- Moreover, environmental issues are such that it touches the 'core' and the 'periphery', biotic and the abiotic existence, present and the future of a civilization. Therefore a superb agglomeration between philosophical insights and quantitative research is the need of the time, which has holistically been dealt with in the present paper.

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