

Sustainable Development: A Gandhian Perspective



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Abstract

In the Present time, Sustainable Development has become the Motto of the today's world in every gaits reaching from commerce, politics, policies and framing of law. Sustainable development as a tactic to environment inferences the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their needs. In present time, whatsoever is not sustainable or does not sustain the other aspects of the sphere like humanism, ecology, morals etc. is shunned and not accepted. Gandhi's talked about all circles sustainable development which is applicable in each and every aspect be it environment, personal physical, mental and spiritual health, economics, politics and law and justice. Gandhi's viewpoint of life delivers a sustainable development model which is interdependent with nature and ecosystem. In Gandhian edge of orientation economy, ecology and spirituality are interrelated. This paper sought to analyse the sustainable development and give impetus to understand the Gandhian perspective of sustainable development and also to understand the philosophy of Gandhi and its relevance in the context of sustainable development.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Environment, Gandhi's Philosophy.

Introduction

The concept of development refers to the kind of society one is pointing to build. Development policies which concentrate on relieving 'absolute poverty' or on meeting 'basic needs' can properly be adopted as a matter of first priority. However, they should not be seen as policy goals in themselves. Moreover, the satisfaction of the basic human needs would be permanently achievable only with structural changes at local, national and international level that would enable those concerned to identify their own needs, mobilize their own resources and shape their future in their own terms.

Review of Literature

Ginkel, Brendan, Julius and Velasquez (2003)¹ examined key issues related to the themes of human development, environmental conservation, peace, governance, and security at the global level. Four parallel working groups (on governance, security, human development and the environment) took stock of key international trends and considered their implications for the global community in the future. The group discussions were a focused and interdisciplinary exercise with expert presentations outlining major trends, policy implications, and recommendations. This volume reflects upon and begins to conceptualize the relationship between human development and the environment. It is composed of two main parts drawn from the outcomes of deliberations in the human development and environment working groups.

Jain (2005)² traces the ways in which women have enriched the work of the United Nations from the time of its founding in 1945. Synthesizing insights from the extensive literature on women and Development and from her own broad experience, she reviews the evolution of the UN's programs aimed at benefiting the women of developing nations and the impact of women's ideas about rights, equality, and social justice on UN thinking and practice regarding development. She presents this history from the perspective of the southern hemisphere, which recognizes that development issues often look different from the standpoint of countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Knight (2005)³ encompass three principal themes: the interaction of human and natural systems; cooperation and conflict; and the enactment of values in his volume which contains sixteen essays on the various aspect of UN in the Post Modern Era. The series as a whole places and emphasis on the examination of complex systems and casual relations in

political decision-making; problems of knowledge; authority, control and accountability in issues of scale; and the reconciliation of conflicting values and competing claims. Throughout the study the concentration is on an integration of existing disciplines towards the clarification of political possibility as well as impending crises.

Karns, Margaret; Mingest and Karen (2005)⁴ trace the evolving roles both of IGOs, NGOs, states, and non-states actors and norms, rules, and other pieces of global governance. While they give extensive attention to the UN system, the full range of original and sub-regional organizations is also thoroughly covered, as are the activities and influences of a variety of non-state actors. Each of four issues -based chapters-on peace and security, economic development, human right, and the environment- presents a contemporary case study and then examines the issues and the pieces of global and regional governance that are involved. Throughout the authors highlight questions of the legitimacy, accountability, and effectiveness of global governance.

Gangrade (2005)⁵ in his volume tried to trace the relationship between Gandhian approach to development and social work. Explaining Gandhi's concept of social work and development, it addresses various issues concerning social work education in India, environment, security, bhoodan and gramdan revolution, community development, people's participation, dalit empowerment and value system. He is of the opinion that the concept of Gandhian social work or constructive programmes is far wider than we understand it. It is not only philosophical and theoretical but also experimental in life. Gandhi's dream of building a society with the active participation of people still remains a distant goal. The concept of development has been looked at from a different angle than merely as the gross national product to improve the economic condition of the people. Development should not lead to tensions and inequalities. People have been disenchanted with the development workers who have changed from innovative missionary workers to workers for the maintenance of the status quo and creators of institutions as designed by aid-giving agencies. The professional social workers have also not given a good account of themselves in enlisting and encouraging people's participation in the planned development of the country.

Thakur, Cooper, and English (2006)⁶ explored the power of Ideas, as transmitted via mind of global governance, through the focused lens of international or independent commissions. An awareness of silence of commissions on a selective or one- off basis has long existed among both global policy makers and attentive publics. Indeed the names of these commissions on global governance, and the International commissions on intervention and state sovereignty (ICISS), to list just the best known ones- have taken on an enormous recognition factor around the world.

Kennedy (2006)⁷ traces the evolution of the united nations during that length of time, assesses

what it has done well and where it has failed, and considers its prospects in the years to come. It rests upon the reasonable assumption that whether we approve of the organizations past record or not, the change taking place in world society will make us turn to it again and again. It is study of changing visions of international structures and how they were used to achieve common human purposes in fields where individual nations could not satisfactorily act alone. It is less concerned with formal institutions and proceeding press and much more with the way in which the organization worked, how it was altered to carry out a new activity, and, specially, why that new activity came to be seen as a further, proper role for the world body. It is a study of evolution, metamorphosis, and experiment, of failure and success.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the connection between Gandhian approach and sustainable development.
2. To find out the relevant points developed by Gandhi that is universally applicable for Sustainable development.

India is a nation rich in traditional inheritance and considerably rich in resources but populated essentially by the poor, where benefits of development have not infiltrated to the lowest socio-economic level on account of an 'impervious' layer somewhere in between. Being mainly an agricultural country, there is a need for bio-industrial, rather than purely industrial, development. To be precise, the pattern of development has to be eco-development. In Gandhi's viewpoint, such development is economic development based on ecological values like environmental harmony, economic efficiency, resource conservation, local self-reliance, and equity with social justice. Equity has an ethical content because once brought into dominions of reality, equity would involve *expense* on the part of haves in favor of *have-nots*⁸.

In present time, while we should not be isolated and become curiosities in 'the international arena, one of our major problems is the tiptoeing dominance of Western cultural overview. Speaking environmentally, many industrial countries will, in time to come, prove to be ecological security risks, because they will noteasily give up their present-day unsustainable lifestyles.⁹

There is nowadays need for a major rethinking on social, economic, environmental, and cultural fronts, so as to translate sustainable development into reality. Alteration of individuals is very necessary as Gandhi had envisaged. This means escorting in a well-meaning programmed of environmental education with repute to long-term ecological security.¹⁰

Usual ecosystems, agro-ecosystems and industrial economic systems have to be both preserved and used in a sustainable manner. Inadditional words, there has to be a well mixture of environmental, social, developmental, and economic imperatives. The sustainable world has faith in science and technology as, a tool of environment-friendly social and economic change. Furthermore,

economic development must not be at the outlay of ecological assets. The sustainable society has to aim at working in partnership with nature and marmalade non-renewable resources and energy, reduce waste, and avoid degradation of renewable resources. It must produce goods that are easy to recycle, reuse, and repair after use; such a society must recycle and reuse cast-off matter. The sustainable economy purposes at maintenance, at a continuous and sustainable level, of both the number of people and livestock, and quantity of goods. These should be within the resonant capacity of the anxious systems-natural ecosystems, agro-ecosystems or industrial-economic systems. The methods of growing food and raising livestock have to be based on soil and water conservation, bio-fertilizers, biological control of pests, and minimal use of non-renewable energy. There has to be widespread use of biotechnology in a sustainable society. The basic needs of the people are to be met without any grave disadvantage to the environment¹¹.

Underneath this track of development, the earth's resources have to be endangered and sustained not only for humankind, but also for other species; and not only for this generation, but also for generations to follow. To manage and sustain the earth's resources, the method must not be centered on any one species like the human being, but should include the entire life-support system. Thus, people will have to work with nature, and purpose at not wasting resources unnecessarily, nor nosy with other species.¹²

The sustainable development and economy is based on the secure certainty that earth has a limited area, both for drives of settlement of species and use of resources. Furthermore, cumulative population growth, production and consumption put the natural processes underneath stress. These processes, in essence, renew and maintain the life-support system (air, water, soil, forests, and biodiversity). It is essential that overloading the system with environmental degradation and depletion of resources is prevented by working with nature. The purpose is to reduce unnecessary use and waste of resources and not cause permanent extermination of other species. Therefore, for short-term gains, long-term environmental and economic expenses must be avoided.¹³

The sustainable culture would largely be a solar/ photosynthetic/biomass society, where solar energy and solar hydrogen, together with a whole range of environment-friendly technologies based mainly on renewable resources, would be used. It would purpose at not wasting resources unnecessarily, and would not inhibit with other species. The guiding code of economics has to be the meeting of needs, and not greed. There is need to apply environmental economics rather than classical economics.¹⁴

The bottomless ecology and the preservation of mother earth have become the watchwords for environmentalists all over the world. It is interesting to note that Arne Naess, who coined the term 'deep ecology', has acknowledged his indebtedness to

Gandhi in the creation of this term. Many environmentalists acknowledge their debt to Gandhi in understanding the problem from a all-inclusive perspective. In Gandhi's life time, ecological and environmental issues were not matters of serious discussion as now. But Gandhi was extremely anxious about the damages done by modern industrial civilization to the environment which he depicted in his influential work *Hind Swaraj*.¹⁵

Gandhi has not built up any theory of environmental philosophy or system which strictly falls within the scheme of present environmental science. Gandhi was extremely anxious with all problems challenged by humanity, and it was quite natural that he expressed his anxiety on matters relating to ecology and environment. One who inspects Gandhi's speeches and writings will be astonished by the deep eco awareness rooted in his philosophy of life.¹⁶

After the previous account, it is clear that in order to improve sustain ability, we need apposite environmental policies, and a whole range of environment-friendly technologies. These would not only save the consumers' money, but also reduce resource consumption. Such technologies would develop popular. In the course of time, this would lead to a shift in designs of ingesting to those which are much better than preceding ones. Another idea relevant to the situation was put forward by Gandhi: 'The rich have a extra store of things which they do not need and which are, therefore, deserted and wasted; while millions starve and are frozen to death for want of them. If each reserved properties only of what he needed, none would be in want and all would live in contentment.' In the final analysis, the acid test of environment and development lies in the fact that it should help the poor men and women.

This is also an important part of advice for rich countries and individuals to sharing resources with less privileged and poor countries and individuals. If such eco-ethics are shadowed in letter and spirit, it would be a major step towards sustainability, of which social justice and equity are integral parts. Today's environmental crises, leading to deterioration in environment, are actually the result of a profound crisis in the mind and spirit of people in the rich countries. Their chastely materialist technique of life has led them into a blind alley. In fact, Gandhi's principle for Sustainable development and better quality of life is simple: 'Material economic growth, together with population control, for the poorer sections of any society and for poor nations, and on the other hand, there is need for non-material growth and continued population control for the prosperous sections of any society and rich nations.' Acceptance of this principle would also be a major step towards inter-generational and international equity in resource distribution and consumption.¹⁷

Gandhi was equally betrothed in identifying the keys to a public health system that could be reachable to all and he linked health issues with his overall project of non-violence. For him, the diet, the practice of celibacy, the exercise of the body through breathing and simple yoga, and the self-control needed in *satyagraha* were closely related.

Gandhianself-reliance, reproduced in his concept of swadeshi, has major implications for the creation of a non-exploitative society. John Galtungwrites, 'Self-reliance eventually means that the society is organized in such a way that the masses arrive at self-fulfilment through self-reliance-in participation with others in the same situation. Evidently this points directly to a decentralized society.¹⁸

Conclusion

The submission of Gandhian philosophies will allow human beings to satisfy their basic needs without harming interests of fellow beings. Gandhi stated that "the earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not for every man's greed." This famous statement of Gandhi repeats us that man cannot markedly exploit nature to satisfy his limitless wants.

Gandhian viewpoint, the today's environmental mess, reaching from deforestation, soil 'and biodiversity loss, to contamination and climate change, is not an ailment but only a symptom. A great doctor treats the ailment and not the symptom. The ailment is the notion and designs of growth and development that are being shadowed everywhere. In conclusion, we can say that Gandhi's environmentalism tailored in with his general vision for India and the world that sought to excerpt from nature what is absolutely essential for human sustenance. His philosophies on environment are closely linked with all his concepts connecting to the polity, economy, health and development. His austerity and simple living, a rural-centered development based on village self-sufficiency and self- reliance, handicrafts and craft- focused education, stress on manual labour and absence of exploitative relationships are pervaded through elements of an ecological vision. Even his method to gender did not effort to break the linking with nature, but to man-euverinside it and provide some space for women to uplift themselves. It is therefore no wonder that Gandhi is a main stimulus for numerous environmental movements worldwide, particularly for those who link their movement with larger concerns for human nourishment and development. He would not be an inspiration for environmental extremists whose tactic to environment lets little space for human nourishment and livelihood issues. While he was not anthropocentric in his approach, he was not ready to let the question of human survival to beshelved in discussions on environment. In its place he showed how a total sustainable mode of organizing human activities could be changed that left a brighter human footmark on this earth, and showed how man could live in congruence with nature.

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