

# Ecological Perspective of Gandhian Principle

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**Abstract:** *Gandhian perspective on ecology has implications for modern environmentalism, advocating for sustainable practices, conservation, and a mindful approach to resource use. By incorporating Gandhian principles into contemporary environmental ethics, individuals and societies can strive for a balanced and ecologically sustainable approach of life. This paper is an attempt to come across the views which personify Mahatma Gandhi as an ecologist in true sense. The paper describes the different parts of Gandhian philosophy related to ecology and influence of Gandhian principle on non - violence in Indian environmental movements. The Gandhian perspective encourages a holistic understanding of well - being, encompassing social, economic and environmental dimensions.*

**Keywords:** Ecology, Gandhi, Environmental Movements, Gandhian Principle

## 1. Introduction

India has the world's second largest population. Problems of poverty, unemployment, inequality and the fulfilment of basic needs are common facts of the today's life and all are continue to exploit our natural resources, to meet with our requirements.

Mahatma Gandhiji was a world leader and even in today's time of turbulence and violence, his thoughts, his teaching and his principle are felt more relevant. A famous statement of his, "**The earth has enough for everyone's need, but not for anyone's greed.**" has become a most important slogan for environmental movements (Jones 2000). Gandhi's environmentalism integral in with his vision to extract from nature what is extremely necessary for human nature (Moolakkattu 2010). Gandhian principle has great concern about environmental sustainability (Upadhyay 2018). Gandhi has understanding of man nature relationship, his life is his message (Jha ShreeKrishna)

Mahatma Gandhi, a prominent leader in the Indian independence movement, had a distinctive perspective on various aspects of life, including ecology. While Gandhi's primary focus was on political and social issues, his principle also encompassed environmental concerns, reflecting a holistic approach to life. Gandhian writing shows his concern for protection and preservation of environment (Pathak 2004). Basically ecology is the science that covers the relationships between living organisms and their environment. Gandhian principle in regard of ecology explores how social change could be brought about through the least harm to living - being as well as to the nature. Harmony between living being and nature is the similar component of both.

## 2. Material and Methods

A review method was used as the research method for this study. Google scholar search engine was used to search for articles. The following keywords used in the search: "Gandhian principle", "Gandhi and ecology", Gandhi on Indian environmental movements", "Gandhian view on role of women in ecological concern". After studying various

papers and articles 10 papers selected for this review and found relevant with this topic.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Gandhian perspective with reference to ecology includes different aspects. Here are some key aspects of ecology in the Gandhian perspective:

### 1) Self-Reliance

An important part of Gandhian principle is self - reliance. It allows communities to sustain networks of society that intimate each other. He emphasised cloth spinning with charkha, agricultural tools repairing, various arts and crafts that made rural community free from machine dependence and industrial goods produced at mass level (Parajuli 2002). As now it is becoming evident in India, Gandhiji did not want the village cobbler to be replaced by the branded shoe factory. Here his thinking was for pollution free environment and employment to all sectors of society. We may take yet one more example of "smokeless chullha" for the rural community which is also an additional idea for maintaining a better ecological environment.

### 2) Self - Sufficiency and Localism

Gandhian principle was more concerned in the phase of science that was more attainable to serve livelihood issues in the villages. In recent age, the introduction of modern biotechnologies has challenged to alter Indian Agriculture system, which has led to the loss of control over seeds by Indian farmers (Khoshoo and Moolakkattu 2009).

Gandhi was a proponent of self - sufficiency at the local level. He advocated for decentralized economies, where communities would meet their needs through local resources and craftsmanship. This approach reduces the ecological footprint associated with large - scale industrialization and promotes a more sustainable correlation with the environment.

Gandhi was a strong advocate of the "Swadeshi movement", which aimed at promoting local industries and goods. This had economic implications as well as but also ecological ones, as it discouraged the excessive exploitation of

resources for mass production and global trade. For sustainable expansion Gandhian vision offers a timeless blueprint (Verma *et al.*2023).

### 3) Co - Existence: Non - Violence (Ahimsa) towards Nature

Gandhiji believed that nature should be followed its own path. Even he prohibited individuals to stock medicines against venomous bites and talked about the prospects of co - existence with the non - human world (Weber 1999). In fact Gandhian ashram life was based upon as a part of ecological life. The gandhian principle of non - violence (ahimsa), is central to Gandhian philosophy. This extends not only to human relations but also to the treatment of nature. Gandhi believed in non - exploitative and non - destructive practices, emphasizing the need to live in harmony and having holistic approach with the environment without causing harm to any living being.

### 4) Conservation: Simple Living and Sustainability -

Conservation was a fundamental aspect of Gandhiji's daily life. He used water most carefully. Same could be mentioned about money & other personal resources. He conveyed the significance of conserving natural resources for the future generations.

Gandhi advocated for a simple and sustainable approach of life. He believed in the principle of "simple living, high thinking, " emphasizing the importance of reducing materialistic desires and embracing a lifestyle that is in harmony and holistic approach with nature. This idea aligns with ecological principles of sustainability and responsible resource use.

### 5) Love to Sub - Human World: Respect for Nature -

Gandhian principle had a deep respect for nature and considered it a manifestation of the divine. He believed that human beings should live in synchronization with the whole world, recognizing the interconnectedness of all living beings. This perspective promotes an ecological ethos that values biodiversity and ecological balance. Gandhiji had a special love for the cow and it reflects his affection for sub - human world. In his words,

**“The cow to me means the entire sub - human world. Man through the cow, is enjoined to realise his identity with all that lives.”**

### 6) Appropriate Technology

Gandhiji is also called as the “father of appropriate technology”. As the modern technology causing the high rates of unemployment's, great income disparity and declining accesses to the basic needs. Gandhian principle advocated a technology that would not substitute human labour that is small, local & village-based technology. He was an environmentalist whose ecological concerns comes out from his focus on a basic requirements model of social order that would not exploit natural resources for short - term gains, in contrast to the modern development that supported only one - dimensional growth. While Gandhian principle did not witness the widespread use of modern technology, his emphasis on self - reliance extended to the use of appropriate and sustainable technologies. In today's

context, this could be understood as promoting renewable energy sources and environmentally friendly technologies.

### 7) Gandhian Principle on Non - Violence In Environmental Movements

Gandhiji said that an movement for ecological concern should be non - violent. He said,  
**“We cannot have ecological movement designed to prevent violence against nature, unless the principle of non - violence becomes central to the ethics of human culture.”**

Satyagraha, Gandhi's principle of nonviolent resistance, can also be useful to environmental causes. Activism and resistance against environmentally harmful practices can be carried out through peaceful means, raising awareness and promoting change without resorting to violence. In the Gandhian view, the concept of "Sarvodaya" or the welfare of one & all is central. This extends to all living beings and the environment.

His firmness to vegetarianism also represented an approach towards life that could be understood as non - violent. In my view Gandhi was an ecologist and the Gandhian principle was a key source of inspiration for the Indian environmental movements. Here few of them are highlighted:

Leaders of the Chipko Movement Chandi Prasad Bhatt & Sunder Lal Bahuguna, Medha Patkar & Baba Amte of Narmada Movement started their activities over the aspects relating to the livelihood concerns of the marginalised segment of society. Vandana Shiva, an environmental activist, acknowledges influence of gandhian principle on her work has initiated programmes like Seed Satyagraha to save biodiversity & seed and prevented it from becoming the dominance of only few corporations (Guha 2006).

### 8) Gandian View on Role of Women in Environmental Conservation

Gandhian principle, with its emphasis on simplicity, non - violence, and community well - being, offers a unique perspective on the role of women in environmental conservation.

Gandhian principle advocates engaging women in eco - friendly cottage industries, communities for the revitalization of village economies, they can foster economic sustainability while minimizing environmental impact. Gandhian principle values the transformative power of individuals. Empowering women to lead environmental efforts aligns with the belief that positive change begins at the grassroots level. Societies and government should recognize and empower women as change agents in their communities, encouraging them to take leadership roles in environmental initiatives.

Gandhian principle emphasizes a crucial role of women in water management within households and communities. Their involvement in water conservation initiatives aligns with Gandhian principles of community - based resource management is very important. As per Gandhian principles women can lead initiatives promoting reduced consumption,

recycling, and proper waste disposal practices within their communities.

Gandhian principle recognizes the interconnectedness women, as caretakers of households and communities can play a central role in tree - planting initiatives that contribute to environmental restoration and conservation. Gandhian principle encourages holistic well - being, and women, with their nurturing roles, can advocate for and implement practices that enhance community health and contribute to environmental sustainability. Gandhian principle promotes women's involvement in agriculture, particularly in adopting environmentally friendly methods, contributes to both economic empowerment and sustainable food production.

#### 9) Education and Awareness

Gandhian principle stresses the importance of education for personal and societal transformation. In the context of the environment, education can lead to a greater understanding of ecological interdependence and the need for responsible stewardship. It is need of hour to Promote environmental education and awareness campaigns rooted in Gandhian principles.

#### 10) Constructive Programmes

Gandhian constructive programs aim to build a better society through positive actions. In an ecological context, this could involve initiatives such as afforestation, waste reduction, and sustainable agricultural practices. Present scenario is demanding engagement of individuals in constructive programs that contribute positively to the environment.

### 4. Conclusion

All the views concluding that Gandhian principle on development, village autonomy, physical labour - intensive and employment having a central idea with in each of them, he supported idea of maintaining a better ecological environment, so Gandhiji is personify as a true ecologist. Gandhian principle advocated for a lifestyle that minimizes consumption and waste, promoting the idea that material wealth should not be the sole measure of success. This perspective aligns with ecological principles that emphasize the importance of living in balance with the environment. By incorporating Gandhian principle with regards to ecological perspective into contemporary environmental ethics, individuals and societies can strive for a balanced and ecologically sustainable approach of life. Gandhian principle and his principles offer a valuable ethical framework for approaching environmental issues with mindfulness, simplicity, and a commitment to harmonious coexistence with nature.

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