

# Gandhi's Philosophy for The Sustainable Development of The Future Generation

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## Abstract

Gandhism is an eternal living thought to handle all aspects of human life like social, economic and political issues of the contemporary society. It is becoming more and more relevant by the virtue of the usage of moral principles in every walk of life. It is a fact that the present generation has hardly very less scope to know about Gandhi and his principles. There has been a plethora of literature about Gandhi, but the new generation has hardly touched it. To safe guard the existing and future generations, revitalization of Gandhian principles are necessary. As per the dialectical method, each and every moment, situations have been changing. So the principles or philosophies have to be updated and modified according to the changing demands of the contemporary society. They have to be re-interpreted in terms of new challenges and crisis. The real task before us is to uphold and restore the human values to the future generation. In the context of reconstruction, Gandhism is very much necessary. The modern world is encountering the major challenges of economic disparities, inflation, over population, unemployment, terrorism, pollution, mal-nutrition, hunger and illiteracy. In addition to this the present generation is very much influenced and addicted towards intoxication, misuse of technology and easy ways of earning. There is a clear cut witness of conspicuous moral and cultural degradation and also barbarious outlook of the present humanity. Gandhi strongly criticized the emerging trends of consumer culture in all spheres of life. He emphasized austerity and conscious moral development as the essential principles for the future generation. He aspired for new social order which is based on truth, non-violence, non-exploitation, disarmament and sustainable peace. In addition to this, there is a need to interpret Gandhi in terms of ecological changes, imperatives of globalization, privatization and liberalization in economy, growing terrorism, consumerism and gender discrimination.

**Keywords:** Gandhian Philosophy, Sustainable development, Consumerism

## Introduction

Gandhi visualized better world for the future generation. He had pragmatic approach towards the public life. He visualized many principles with regard to the enrichment of the world. During his period there was colonial rule, women deprivation, caste conflicts, diversities, religious controversy, regional feelings, ill treatment of individuals, misuse of the natural resources and other evil customs in India. After prolonged experimentation, he suggested the principles of self-rule of the individual, village and the nation, women's education and their empowerment, uplift of the Harijans and Adivasis, religious harmony and nationhood, protection of the environment and prohibition from the intoxication. In his view it is our responsibility that ensures better future by balancing the present day life in a moral way. It is a fact that we can assume tomorrow by assessing today's situation. This paper deals with various

challenges encountering and drawing possible remedies to the future generation that are adaptable. The influence of today will have a persistent role on future. There by it is the pre-condition to preserve today. In our day today life we are encountering with many issues related to social, political, economical, environment, health and other spheres. Now the world became more scientific and technological along with the past social evils of male domination, practice of dowry, caste disparities. Still they are not totally eradicated. Economically in our society there is a big gap between haves and have nots, rich and poor. Politically few people have more power in their hands. Against to this most of the peoples representatives don't have minimum powers in taking decision. In the ecological sphere there are various types of deprivations like climate change, pollution and resource deficiency. In addition to these, presently there is lack of morality in human behavior and culture. These are some of lacuna in the present day world. There is a need to think and seek the solution in this regard for the future generation. It is an unavoidable condition to reconcile the implications of today, because today is the seed for tomorrow.

The centre of Gandhian thought is man. He aimed at the enrichment and elevation of human life rather than high standards. The technological development in modern times led to the decline in the quality of physical, mental and moral life of man. In addition to this, the western technological growth models led to consumerism, urbanization, centralization, exploitation, de-humanization, erosion of moral and spiritual values. It created the islands of affluence amidst vast areas of poverty and deprivation. He gave deserving place to India in the annals of history after a gap of few centuries. Culture includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, customs and habits acquired by man as a member of society. It is a natural phenomenon that culture is the study of perfection. It reflects on the perfection of the individual. Culture implies autonomy and creativeness of man's intimate nature. Culture has the consistency of its own. It works as a catalyst for a social change. It is an expression of man's personality. It has the autonomy of its own. It implies spontaneous expression of values. According to Kant "culture consists in the social worthiness of man." (Kant's Political Writings, Ed Hans Press. Tr. H.H. Nisbet Cambridge, 1970, P. 44.) The term Sadachar or Sanskriti conveys good qualities that enrich human life. In the evolutionary process, the scientific technological advancements do not permit us to act in accordance with the traditional and moral values. So it is conditioned by the contemporary society to review and redefine the forgotten values and find the alternatives to the existing systems. In this regard there is a need to uphold the moral values continuously. Due to the neglect of these values, the present youth is prone to various unfair activities and sufferings. Either the social scientist or the social reformer or the individuals must examine the values and interpret them in light of existing conditions and introduce new moral values that upholds the future generations. In the contemporary world there is lacking of values in each area of human life that is within the family, within the economics and growth, political and social aspects also. There is a conspicuous hollowiness in all these fields like the fear of insecurity and violence in national as well as in international politics, the exploitation and dehumanizing economic relations lead to the widening gulf among the people. Gandhi viewed the life of youth with a new vision. He formulated many ideas and concepts for the future generations. He convinced that Indian culture represents the ideal of true civilization. In Gandhian way, the well being of future generation depends upon the whole activities of human beings. In this context he said that "human life can't be divided into water tight compartment." To safeguard the future generation, we should take steps over the present existing socio-economic, political and ecological issues.

**Sociological perspective:**

For the betterment of future generation we have to construct the balanced and moralized social structure. In this society everyone should be treated equally in respect of rights and duties. The structure of society must be ever inclusive and never exclusive. In this regard there is a need to uphold the Gandhian principles of social justice, equality, empowerment of women and marginalized and also the constructive programs. The Hindu concept of varnashrama dharma is considered as the most important aspect in Gandhian philosophy. The original idea of that is the classification of the Hindu society into four varnas. It is a division of work based on birth, which helps in proper functioning of the society. Gandhi believed that there should be always an agreement in the society that every member does his share of work for the betterment of whole society. It can be considered as the dharma or duty that is assigned to the particular class. There is a contradiction in Gandhism that leads to review and reconstruct with regard to his views on Varnashrama Dharma as well as the equality, fraternity, justice and empowerment of Harijans and women. Because the social divides based on the Varna Dharma may be noticed as good for the society and its harmony in Hindu text. But in practice it has been creating conflicts in the society. Above all the distinction should not be based on the social status but on one's capacity. There are numerous evidences in the world for the social divides. Particularly in India it is evidenced from the violation of the human rights of the SC and ST and women harassments. The prolonged practice of the social divide encourages the complexes which leads to the mental illness, inferiority complex and finally ends with brutality. There is a need to eradicate this social divide to save the future generation. Since human beings are the products of the society, they play vital role in building the character and attitudes of the future generation. It is an unavoidable condition to bring the common and equitable social structure for the well being of future generation.

**Economic Perspective:**

The economic factor is the crucial one that decides well being of mankind. There are numerous economic systems; policies and planning that are in practice all over the world. There are two kinds of economic problems. The first one is due to the deficiency of economy and the second is due to the excess of economy. Excess of economy includes the economy of the individual or family holdings more than their needs. In the present phenomena both of them are very dangerous because, the deficiency of economy leads to the poverty and deprivation. At the same time the excess economic power in the hands of few over others leads to domination and exploitation not only in the field of economics but also in political and social aspects. In addition to this, it encourages the luxuries life style and materialistic outlook. The present youth is more inclined towards westernized culture and easy way of earning money, fast life style and also they are prone towards hedonistic attitude. At this juncture, Gandhian Economic ideals are more relevant, because all his frame work reflects on need base and he proposed the balanced economic system. The principles of trusteeship, Khadi, bread labour and self-reliance are framed basing on the morality and they stressed more on economic power distribution in the equal manner. Gandhi emphasized the economic power must be gathered or utilized based on the needs of the people and not on greed. This need based system of economy will promote the healthy and egalitarian society.

**Political Perspective:**

Politics is nothing but the regulation of our activities; it is either about social or national. Power is collective in its outlook but in utilization, it is experienced or utilized by few or one in the present

phenomena. It is peril for the future generation for their political enrichment. Because concentrating more power at a particular point leads to coercion and it will promote domination and exploitation. In addition to this, it will lead to favoritism, nepotism and corruption. So it is necessary to distribute the political power among the individuals by the public participation. He said that “the best, quickest and most efficient way is to build up from the bottom. Every village has to become a self-sufficient republic. This does not require brave resolutions. It requires brave, corporate, intelligent work. (M. K. Gandhi, 18-01-1922) In this regard Gandhian political ideology is the best alternative to the present system of politics. He thought that the self-rule of individual as well as nation upholds the liberty and autonomy.

### **Educational Perspective:**

Education is one of the techniques of gaining knowledge and maturity in all angles to attain development in every field of life. The aim of education is to instill the child with determination not only in earning but also to lead a good life. Education should uphold human values and the teacher must act as a role model. He should transform himself through the living. Thereby it helps in the transformation of the child. The teacher must bring out the inherent divinity or goodness that already exists within the child. Through education the child should inculcate values and impeccable character. Above all the essence of education is service to the fellowmen. There is no greater occupation in the society than service. In this way our present system of education is not liable to practice human values, morality and spirituality. In the recent period it became an industry and there is no scope for human touch and morality. Gandhi thought that education should be dynamic in its nature. It must fulfill man's biological, sociological and psychological needs. In addition to this, he said that education should bring all round development of the individual. Education system has to give scope for the physical, intellectual, spiritual and moral development in its academic curriculum. Then only there is a scope for creativity the future generation and development in all spheres of human life. In this context Gandhi said that “By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy itself is no education. Therefore the child's education should cover the useful handicrafts and enable to produce from the moment it begins its training. Thus, every school can be made self-supporting, the condition being that the state take over the manufacture of those schools.” (Gandhi, 31-07-1937, Harijan.) It reveals that, curriculum plays the major responsibility in shaping the character of the future generation.

In addition to this, culture reflects as the mirror of the actual situation and time. It reveals how the people were in certain period and it leaves more influence in respect of culture to the future generation. Dialectically it will lead to the next stage so there is an urgent need to mould the character and maintain present activities on the basis of good moral ground. Because, the western technological culture leads to number of problems that lead to the mental illness. The present youth is addicting to that culture by using websites (video games, chat, pornography etc), slavery attitudes among the young IT employees, pubs and night clubs, and unnecessary utilization of technological innovations. The modern culture abolishes our traditional cultural heritage and values. In this regard there is an urgent need to revitalize the value oriented culture and it is the obvious condition to uphold the Gandhian principles.

**Environmental Perspective:**

It is the natural source that influences the human life, human being has to ever depend upon the environmental resources. In this regard there is a need to preserve the ecological environment. To safe guard the environment, initially one must the control on the usage. It should be need based. Using the resources affluently more than our needs is the root cause of the environmental degradation which leads to various imbalances like climate change, ozone depletion, conservation, water, air and land pollution. In addition to this there are othersources of artificial technologies like motor vehicles, industries and home appliances. They became the factors that control or curbing the human life. We have been experiencing the result of excessive usage. Due to the deforestation, thereis no proper rainfall which results in drought and many farmers who have been depending for their livelihood are committing suicides nationwide. If the situation is continued like this, the future generation has to face many consequences. So it is our duty and moral responsibility to preserve the natural vegetation, habitat and environment for the future generation. The abnormal increase of population is the main reason for ecological imbalance. Because of over population, it is becoming very difficult to meet the needs of the people to various purposes. In addition tothis, the technological advancement is contributing to the environmental pollution. In this regard, there is need to uphold and enrich Gandhian thoughts in fulfilling theduties and responsibilities of the present generation in respect of safeguarding and preserving the environment. Further they have to be enlightened about Gandhian thought so that it will be inherited to the future generation for peaceful and ecologically balanced life. Because there is huge amount of thought and approachesin Gandhism about nature and its usage.

**Conclusion:**

It is a fact that problems in life are quite natural. They have to be resolved with suitable alternatives. The unresolved issues and problems will generate more challenges to the future generation. For the sake of healthy future generation and its well being' it is our urgent to resolve the problems of present. In this way re-reading and revitalizing Gandhian Philosophy is the first and foremost duty. As a philosopher he thought about the human life in an integrated manner. He said that human life can't be divided into watertight compartments. Each aspect is inter-related to the other. His political principles like decentralization of power, self-rule, democracy specifically the democracy within democracy in the form of Panchayat Raj are having more relevance in the present day globalizing trend. His moralized economic principles like trusteeship, small scale industries and economicdecentralization will be the best alternative to the capitalistic economic outlook. Gandhi's sociological thoughts and cultural principles will be useful in reducing the socio-cultural evils like imported western culture and other influences. He was very keen in safeguarding the family structure also. Any great civilization or culturecan't be built without ethical, human and spiritual values. They are the prime thingsto be carried out to the future generation. With the increased velocity of modern changes, we do not predict how the world will be in coming hundred years. We can't anticipate the future currents of thought and feeling. But the great principlesof *satya* and *ahimsa* are there to guide us. They will be vigilant in the turbulent world. It is our pride that one of the greatest figures of the history lived in our country and taught the civilized way of living. For the healthy and sustainable future generation there is need for strong moral foundation. One has to self-examineunbiased. He must be oriented towards spiritual transformation instead of material aggrandizement. I am concluding with one observation that contentment is the best riches. Because, today the cause for various kinds of unrest is: possessiveness and greediness. They are the main factors for

various problems and deprivations. Gandhian Philosophy is the best alternative for the enrichment and enlightenment and also there is a need to revitalize the Gandhian philosophy in accordance with the time and the existing needs and demands.

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