

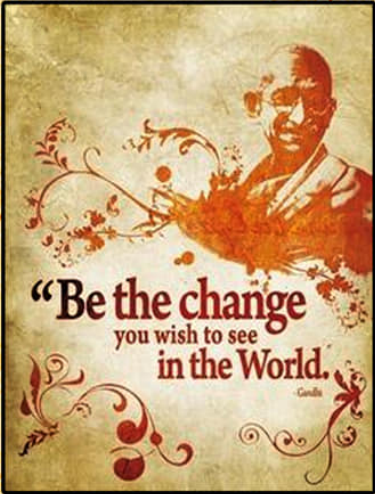
Virtual Exhibition on ‘Mahatma Gandhi’s Views on Nature & Environment’ to Celebrate the World Environment Day (05/06/2020)

The Sangrahalaya organized a Virtual Exhibition on ‘Mahatma Gandhi’s Views on Nature & Environment’ to celebrate the World Environment Day on June 5, 2020 through their social media page due to ongoing pandemic. The main objective of this virtual exhibition was to spread the message of the relevance of Gandhian Environmentalism and to aware the people about their responsibilities to protect our environment and nature.

Mahatma Gandhi's Views on Nature and Environment

Gandhi's views on environment consist of moral, spiritual and non-violent dimensions. To him, the hallmark of development of man consisted not in materialism or consumerism but in spiritual self-realisation, a character heavily loaded with morality and non-violence. The craving for materialistic wants was alien to him for it hindered the path to one's realisation. His simple living and high thinking reiterated his love for all living beings, which is the very manifestation of God's creation. His concept of non-violence thus encompassed all living beings and embodied the eternal values of life in his thought and actions. As Gandhiji said, *'My ethics not only permits me to claim but requires me to own kinship with no merely the ape but the horse and the sheep, the lion and the leopard, the snake and the scorpion...'*

He insisted on the eternal sacredness of life that included a tree, plant or a cow. Indeed his love towards all life constitutes his attempt to realize the Vaishnava ideal *'Vasudevam Sarvamidam'*.



"The Earth has enough resources for our need but not for our greed."

mk Gandhi

Spiritual Basis of Environmentalism

More than a century ago, Gandhiji had warned Indians as well as people around the World about the dire consequences of environmental exploitation and non-sustainable development in his book *'Hind Swaraj'*

Gandhiji's *'Hind Swaraj'* depicts his understanding of the chaos the modern civilisation would usher in. -

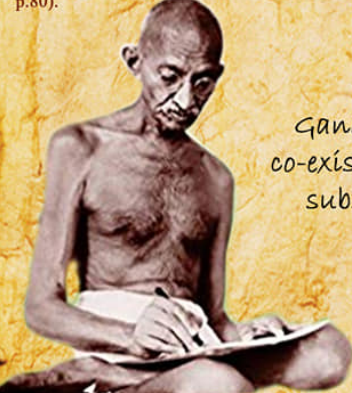
To him the modern civilisation, therefore, with its explicit or implicit stress on unabated exploitation of resources, multiplication of wants, production for the market and consumption is satanic. (Hind Swaraj, p.33)

The best practice, as Gandhiji suggested, was *'instead of welcoming machinery as a boon, we should look upon it as an evil, it would ultimately go'* (Hind Swaraj, p.84).

Gandhiji was concerned that *'this civilisation takes note neither of morality nor of religion. Immorality is often taught in the name of morality. Civilisation seeks to increase bodily comforts, and it fails miserably even in doing so'* (Hind Swaraj, pp.32-33).

Civilisation is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty; to observe morality to attain mastery over our mind and passions (Hind Swaraj, p.53).

'There will naturally be progress, retrogression, reforms and reactions but one effort is required and that is to drive out Western civilisation. All else will follow' (Hind Swaraj, p.80).

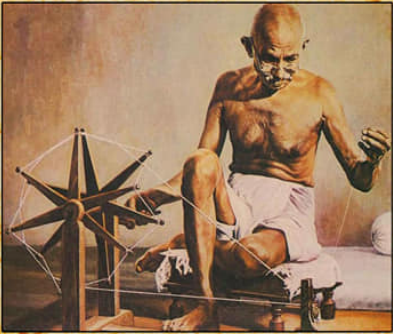


Gandhiji believed in universal co-existence among all species and subscribed to the principle of reverence for all life

MAN-NATURE RELATIONSHIP

According to Gandhiji, Nature, is a source and force of inspiration and not exploitation. In one of his correspondence letters he writes : *'Nature suffices for my inspiration. Have I not gazed and gazed at the marvellous mystery of the starry vault, hardly ever tiring of that great panorama? Beside God's handiwork, does not man's fade into insignificance?'*

Gandhiji believed in the universal co-existence and subscribed to the principle of reverence for all lives. His non-violence in this way is universal law of life and it manifests in love for all creatures. Gandhiji's vision thus has a clear and decisive moral and spiritual dimension in its approach to nature.




Gandhiji invoked Agriculture, Charkha and the Village as metaphors for sane and sustainable human living.

According to Gandhiji Agriculture carried within it an ageless quality, as it would serve life on our Planet for generations.


Gandhiji criticized people for polluting the rivers and other water bodies. He criticized mills and factories for polluting the air with smoke and noise.

Gandhiji implored people to *"live simply so that others may simply live"*.


He believed and preached that poverty can be eradicated only when everybody is taking their own share and not grabbing others' share by limiting their needs and sharing their resources.



Gandhiji was also a great advocate of vegetarianism and rejected any form of animal abuse



Gandhiji also believed that *"Man has no power to create life, therefore he has no right to kill any life also"*.



In his own words, *"The earth, air, the land and the water are not an inheritance from our forefathers but on loan from our children. So, we have to hand over them at least as it was handed over to us"*.

Five Elements of Nature

Gandhiji pointed out in Indian Opinion dated 1-2-1913, the irony of the situation that one has to pay a price even to get pure air:

"We have seen something of the structure of the body and have learnt that it requires three kinds of nourishment: air, water and food. Of these, air is the most essential. Consequently, Nature has provided it to such extent that we can have it at no cost. But modern civilization has put a price even on air. In these times, one has to go off to distant places to take the air, and this costs money. It is at Matheran that residents of Bombay can get fresh air and only then does their health improve. In Bombay itself, if one can live on Malabar Hill, the air is much better. But one must have money to do this. If Durbanites want fresh air, they have to go to live in Berea. That again means expense. It would not, therefore, be quite true to say in modern times that 'air is free'."

In a speech at Ahmedabad meeting on 1-1-1918, Gandhiji explained the importance of purity of air, water and food:

"Air, water and grains are the three chief kinds of food. Air is free to all, but, if it is polluted, it harms our health. Doctors say that bad air is more harmful than bad water. Inhalation of bad air is harmful by itself and this is the reason we [sometimes] need change of air. Next comes water. We are generally very careless about it. If we were to be sufficiently careful about air, water and food, the plague would never make its appearance among us."

Gandhiji emphasized the importance of pure air and pointed out the gifts bestowed by nature to mankind on 31-8-1942:

"We must see that the air that we breathe in is fresh. It is good to cultivate the habit of sleeping in the open under the stars."

In a speech at prayer meeting on 24-3-1946 at Uruli Kanchan, Gandhiji suggested to sleep in the open to get fresh air:

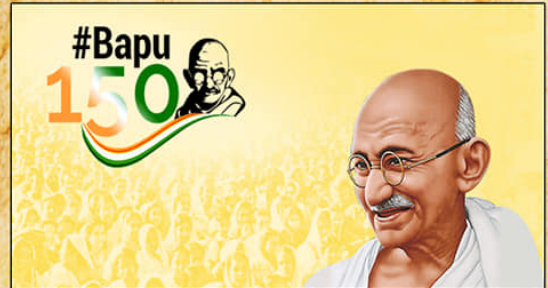
"Anyone who fouls the air by spitting about carelessly, throwing refuse and rubbish or otherwise dirtying the ground, sins against man and nature."

At a prayer meeting on 21-4-1946, Gandhiji told how "water is harmful to our health:

"Will any of you care to bathe or wash your clothes in gutter water? Yet many of the small tanks where people bathe and wash and even drink from are no cleaner than the gutter. Nature is lenient. It often does not punish us for our sins immediately. Thus we can go on breathing impure air and inking impure water over long periods without any dramatic ill effects. But there is not the slightest doubt that such a thing lowers the vitality and makes one fall an easy prey to disease."

Relevance of Gandhian Environmentalism

Gandhiji's statements came at a time when the world was war-torn and environment was no major concern. His Morals and Lifestyle are more relevant than ever, in today's trouble times.



A great way to celebrate Gandhiji's 150th Birth Anniversary would be by taking responsibility of our

ENVIRONMENT

