

Gandhian view on Sustainable Development- Its relevance in today's world

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Abstract-Sustainable development implies the nurturing and development of a society with available resources without endangering the environment and natural systems. This results in maintaining a balance between all ecosystem and impacting the way we humans live and thus creates a model for qualitative life for our future generations.

This paper seeks to understand the relevance of sustainable development from the point of view of one of the greatest leaders India has produced, Mahatma Gandhi. 'Babuji' as he is fondly remembered was not an environmentalist in the modern sense, but his way of life and simple living enabled him to maintain a balance with nature and thus promote sustainable development.

The social political and economic ideas practiced by this amazing man developed an effective framework and model of sustainability. "Earth provides enough for every man's need, but not for every man's greed" quoted by him elucidates his views but this insight is being put to test as we see the world hitting global limits in its use of resources.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, M.K.Gandhi

I. INTRODUCTION

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Around the world this concept is interpreted in many ways. Normally we perceive development as being driven by man's need and this has had disastrous implications to the current and future requirements of mankind. The term "development" in the world we live in today refers to achieving higher standards of living, accelerated economic growth and state of the art infrastructure. Needless to say, that these cannot be compromised but the question lies if whether we can pursue development in a sustainable manner.

Understanding Sustainable Development

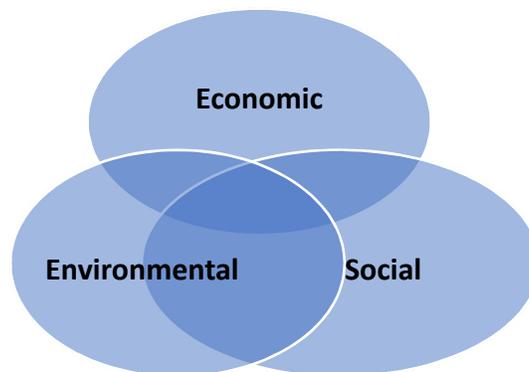
Sustainable Development is a burning issue today and is often the most talked about issue in academia and other circles. Sustainable development is a concept which made headlines for the first time in 1987 in the Brundtland Report, (Schaefer & Crane, 2005). which exposed and warned readers about the negative consequences of globalization coupled with economic growth. It attempted to sensitize all about the issues and problems of excessive industrialization and boom in population growth.

With the world rapidly adopting new technology and moving into an era of commercialization sustainable development is required and therefore a clear understanding on this term is required. (Gray, 2010; Mensah & Enu-Kwesi, 2018). Basiago, (1999) states that sustainability means a capacity to maintain some entity, outcome or process over time.

Thomas (2005) shares his views on sustainability that it helps to bring into focus human activities and their ability to satisfy human needs and wants without depleting or exhausting the productive resources at their disposal. On a similar vein, researchers like Carlson & Hölcher, (2019) also agree on the same.

The views of Stoddart (2011) who defines sustainability as the efficient and equitable distribution of resources intragenerational and inter-generationally with the operation of socio-economic activities within the confines of a finite ecosystem contrasts that of Ben-Eli (2015), who views sustainability as a dynamic equilibrium in the process of interaction between the population and the carrying capacity of its environment such that the population develops to express its full potential without producing irreversible adverse effects on the carrying capacity of the environment upon which it depends. On the lines of sustainability and the environment, Hák, Janoušková, and Moldan (2016) have argued that transforming global society, environment and economy to a sustainable one is one of the most uphill tasks confronting man today since it is to be done within the context of the planet's carrying capacity. According to Browning & Rigolon, (2019), who view sustainability development as an approach to use resources in a way which will enable others to exist. Often the terms sustainability and sustainable are used interchangeably and are treated as synonyms. Diesendorf (2000) points that the term sustainability is the goal or endpoint of a process called sustainable development and Gray (2010) reinforces the same that sustainability refers to a state, SD refers to the process for achieving this state.

Therefore, from the above the three guiding principles to achieve sustainable development is the interlink between the economic, social and environmental factors which help to create and maintain a balance and ensure when depletion occurs it is also replenished simultaneously.



(Prepared by the researchers)

- Economic Sustainable system discusses the ability of countries to ensure a balanced economic growth. The country seeks to ensure that in its process to produce goods and services in an ongoing process, the country maintains its debt levels effectively, The sovereign debt must be manageable and all sectors contributing to the GDP are maintained.
- Environmental sustainable system should ensure that natural and depleted resources like oil, water and gas must not be exploited and must maintain a stable resource base, avoiding over-exploitation of non-renewable resource systems and using substitutes to ensure that wastage and overdependency on such resources are minimized.
- Social sustainability calls for political participation and accountability, ensuring all sections of the society are provided for. Equity must prevail through all social classes and issues like education, health etc. must be given importance and attention.

Gandhi and Sustainable Development

India throughout the ages has contributed to the world in the form of religion, spiritualism, philosophy and leaders like the Father of the Nation ‘Mahatma Gandhi’ For Gandhi, sustainable development was not something he excessively contributed to, but it was his way of life. His simple lifestyle which was part of his simple living and high thinking mantra was a message to mankind that simple living could help preserve and sustain the resources on the planet and thereby result in an all-inclusive growth of society. His focus on a decentralized rural development is still valid today. A concept that was visualized almost a 100 years back seems so valid. Sustainability of villages lead to better growth of the country and preserve the handicrafts and other dying arts of the country. “.....Creation of wealth and employment should take place in rural areas. I believe this is possible when agriculture provides both energy and food security for India in an economically viable manner. It is land that provides the wealth of the country”—is a message that Gandhiji always gave regarding rural development and sustainability.

Gandhi’s model of sustainability stems from spirituality. His religion was an amalgamation of different religious creeds and faiths and this affected the life he led. He led a frugal life, eating just to survive and fasted many a time. His life of minimum comforts showed the world that the humans with the least comforts and simple life could produce the greatest thoughts and this is undoubtedly a great contribution to sustainable development.

Gandhi apart from being a visionary also was a conservator of energy. He lived in ashrams with his disciples without any modern amenities and electricity and frowned upon those who lived lives of extravaganza. He was a dedicated practitioner of frugality, of recycling and reuse, and a critic of various aspects of modernity. He viewed this aspect as he felt extreme modernization and use of machinery and gadgets may affect the livelihood of the society at large and may reduce the number of people employed. "The mantra of development should be spirituality with high technology. Both allow us to reduce our greed for resources and live in harmony with nature - something that Gandhiji preached intuitively..."

Therefore, his movements of satyagraha and khadi stemmed from the need of sustainability. By spinning the yarn and making Khadi, Gandhi proved to the world that people did not have to depend on the colonists to survive and clothe themselves and it would also affect the earnings these colonists were sending back home.

Gandhi and our Future

Gandhi’s contribution to his model of sustainability holds immense relevance in current scenario. The main question that he raised was “How much should a person consume?”. He set an example on the importance of preserving our resources and not misusing it. Whether it was his idea of promotion of renewable energy, or campaigns against industrialization, khadi or satyagraha, he sure has put India in focus for many centuries to come. To carry his vision of a sustainable world, our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurate the solar park at the UN Headquarters and the ‘Gandhi Peace Garden’ during on September 24 commemorating Gandhi’s 150th birth anniversary and will release a special UN Postage on Gandhi’s 150 year. His life was gentle: and the elements so mixed in him, that Nature might stand up and say to the world, THIS WAS THE MAN. We salute you ‘Bapuji’ and you live in our hearts-----Happy Birthday!

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