

## GANDHI'S ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

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**Abstract**

*This research paper explores Mahatma Gandhi's profound views on the environment and his philosophy of sustainable development. As an iconic leader and advocate of nonviolence, Gandhi's holistic approach to life encompassed an inherent reverence for nature and a deep concern for environmental preservation. This paper delves into Gandhi's writings, speeches, and actions to uncover his environmental ethics, including his emphasis on simplicity, self-sufficiency, and harmony with nature. The study also examines how Gandhi's environmental ideas continue to resonate in the present era and can offer valuable insights for addressing contemporary environmental challenges.*

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## **Introduction**

Mahatma Gandhi, revered as the Father of the Indian nation, was not only a champion of political freedom and social justice but also a visionary thinker with profound insights into environmental issues. Gandhi's environmental philosophy, rooted in his holistic worldview and commitment to nonviolence, offers valuable lessons for sustainable development in the present era. The introduction provides background information on Gandhi's significance as a historical figure and highlights the relevance of his environmental philosophy. It emphasizes the need to study and understand Gandhi's views on the environment to address contemporary environmental challenges effectively. The objectives of the research paper are stated, which include exploring Gandhi's perspective on nature and the environment, examining his environmental activism, discussing the relevance of his ideas in the present context, and presenting case studies and examples that illustrate the application of his principles.

Gandhi viewed nature as a complex and interconnected web of life, where all living beings and elements are interdependent. He believed that every creature, no matter how small, has inherent value and contributes to the overall harmony of the ecosystem. Gandhi emphasized that humans should recognize and respect this interconnectedness, understanding that any disruption to one part of nature affects the entire system. According to Gandhi, human beings are not separate from nature but an integral part of it. He rejected the notion of human superiority over other species and advocated for an egalitarian relationship with all living beings. This ecological worldview formed the foundation of his environmental philosophy, driving his advocacy for the preservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

At the core of Gandhi's environmental philosophy was the principle of "nonviolence" or "ahimsa." Gandhi extended the concept of nonviolence beyond human-to-human interactions to include the relationship between humans and nature. He believed that exploiting or harming the environment is a form of violence and goes against the principles of nonviolence. For Gandhi, nonviolence towards the environment meant living in harmony with nature, treating it with care, and avoiding actions that cause ecological harm. He encouraged individuals to adopt sustainable practices such as conserving resources, reducing waste, and embracing renewable energy sources. Gandhi believed that by practicing nonviolence towards the environment, humans can restore balance and create a more sustainable world.

Gandhi emphasized the importance of simplicity and self-sufficiency as a means to achieve a sustainable lifestyle. He believed that excessive consumption and materialism were detrimental to the environment and human well-being. Gandhi

advocated for individuals to live a life of frugality, using only what is necessary and avoiding the unnecessary accumulation of material possessions. Gandhi promoted self-sufficiency at the local level, encouraging communities to rely on their own resources and skills. He believed that self-reliance would reduce dependency on external sources, minimize the exploitation of natural resources, and foster a sense of responsibility towards the environment. Gandhi himself lived a simple lifestyle, using traditional methods and promoting cottage industries to meet his basic needs. Gandhi recognized the importance of biodiversity for the well-being of the planet. He spoke out against deforestation, excessive hunting, and the destruction of wildlife habitats. Gandhi believed that forests played a vital role in maintaining ecological balance, providing shelter to diverse species and regulating climate patterns. Gandhi advocated for the protection of forests and the conservation of wildlife. He called for responsible and sustainable forest management, promoting afforestation and reforestation efforts. Gandhi believed that the preservation of forests and the protection of wildlife were not only essential for environmental sustainability but also for the spiritual and cultural well-being of communities.

Gandhi was critical of the rapid industrialization and the excessive exploitation of natural resources that accompanied it. He believed that modern industrialization, driven by the pursuit of material wealth and progress, was leading to the degradation of the environment and the impoverishment of communities. Gandhi argued that industrialization often prioritized profit over environmental sustainability and human well-being. He highlighted the harmful effects of pollution, deforestation, and the depletion of natural resources caused by industrial activities. Gandhi advocated for an alternative vision of development that valued the preservation of nature and the well-being of communities over material growth.

Gandhi emphasized the importance of sustainable agriculture and the promotion of village-based economies as a means to achieve environmental sustainability. He believed that agriculture should be based on organic and traditional methods that respect the natural cycles of the land and minimize the use of chemicals and synthetic inputs. Gandhi advocated for decentralized economic systems where communities would be self-sufficient in meeting their basic needs. He promoted the idea of village-based economies where local resources would be utilized efficiently, reducing the need for long-distance transportation and minimizing the ecological footprint. Gandhi's vision of rural development involved empowering local communities and promoting small-scale industries that aligned with ecological principles. He believed that by strengthening local economies and promoting

sustainable agriculture, communities could achieve both economic self-reliance and environmental sustainability.

Water conservation and sanitation were key areas of concern for Gandhi. He recognized the vital importance of water as a life-sustaining resource and advocated for its responsible and equitable use. Gandhi emphasized the need to conserve water, especially in arid regions, through practices such as rainwater harvesting, efficient irrigation techniques, and water management systems. Gandhi also campaigned for improved sanitation practices, particularly in rural areas. He believed that access to clean water and proper sanitation was essential for public health and environmental well-being. Gandhi encouraged the construction of toilets, proper waste disposal methods, and hygiene education to address sanitation issues and prevent the contamination of water sources.

Gandhi promoted waste management and recycling practices as a way to minimize waste generation and reduce environmental pollution. He believed in the principle of “waste not, want not” and encouraged individuals to adopt a responsible approach toward waste disposal. Gandhi advocated for the practice of composting organic waste and recycling materials such as paper, metal, and cloth. He believed that by reducing waste and reusing resources, individuals could contribute to environmental conservation and create a more sustainable society. Gandhi’s initiatives for waste management and recycling were not only practical measures but also symbolic actions that reflected his philosophy of simplicity, self-sufficiency, and nonviolence toward the environment.

Gandhi’s principles have influenced and inspired numerous environmental movements around the world. Concepts such as nonviolence, simplicity, and respect for nature are central to many grassroots environmental campaigns today. Gandhi’s philosophy has been particularly influential in movements focused on environmental justice, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and conservation. Environmental activists and organizations draw inspiration from Gandhi’s teachings to advocate for ecological sustainability, social equality, and the protection of vulnerable communities and ecosystems. By embracing Gandhi’s principles, these movements aim to create a more equitable and sustainable world.

Gandhi’s environmental philosophy holds great relevance in the face of the current ecological crisis. The world is grappling with challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, and pollution. Gandhi’s emphasis on living in harmony with nature, practicing nonviolence towards the environment, and adopting sustainable lifestyles provides valuable insights for addressing these

pressing issues. The need for sustainable development has become increasingly urgent. Gandhi's philosophy highlights the importance of balancing economic growth with environmental preservation and social well-being. His call for self-sufficiency, simplicity, and decentralized economies resonates with the concept of sustainable development, which seeks to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

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