

## **CHAPTER-I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nature and its laws works in its own way, it does not act irregularly or capriciously. It contains within its activity the act of preservation, purification, and cleaning system. But as a matter of fact, this system of preservation, purification and cleaning system of nature has a certain boundary ahead of that it cannot work. The systems of nature appear to be seriously affected in recent past because of the diversified human activities which has resulted in the environmental problems of today. Earlier environment was fresh, pure, healthy and unpolluted; but now it is contaminated, impure, unhealthy and polluted.

Today the entire world is facing the problem of pollution and degradation of environment. The degradation of environment as well as pollution is the outcome of increased industrialization, urbanization, transportation and to some extent modern agricultural activities. Population explosion is also putting pressure on the earth natural resources which indirectly posing threat on earth natural environment. Besides, greedy and extreme consumerism of the affluent society also paves the way to pollution and degradation of environment. It can be mentioned here that the growth of science and technology at the same time made our environment unhealthy though it has provided us with numerous advantages. Air pollution, water pollution, noise pollution, traffic congestion, contamination due to chemicals, nuclear radiation and various other sources of pollution are putting intense pressure on earth natural environment.<sup>1</sup>

The tremendous technological achievements of the past century have brought many benefits to our life on the one hand but on the other hand it has given birth to many environmental problems in the world. Amongst these, inventions like automobile engine which produces chemical pollution that degrades the atmosphere causes cancer and is responsible for global warming, it simultaneously results in green house effect. The use of chlorofluro carbons (CFCS) in refrigerators and air conditioners rise into the stratosphere and deplete the thin ozone layer that protects us from harmful ultraviolet radiation. The results are an increased skin cancer. Nuclear power could provide inexpensive energy to the world but instead it poses a threat of global holocaust. Nuclear waste piles up with no solution in sight. As our activities of modern life requires lots of energy and accordingly we burn fossil fuels like coal which is more dangerous than nuclear energy, causing more cancer, polluting the air with sulfur dioxide and producing acid rain that causes killing of trees, pollution of rivers, lakes and other water reservoirs. The construction of roads, dams and cutting of forests imprudently for development purpose is also posing threat to our environment. Moreover, the cutting and burning of tropical rainforests ultimately results in global climate change and also creating the problem of wild-life destruction, soil-erosion etc.

Environmental pollution and resource depletion are the two remarkable aspects of world environmental problems which again are tagged with modern agricultural practices, large scale industrialization, urbanization, population and poverty.<sup>2</sup> Particularly this century witnessed maximum explosion of population and is expected that it will further increase to an unlimited extent in coming years. It is generally believed that poverty rears population. Both rural as well as urban areas

in the world live millions of people who are below poverty line and are denied of basic necessities like food, cloth and shelter which is directly posing threat to environment. Massive urbanization is also a threat to our environment as millions of people in search of employment and better quality of life rushes to the cities. It may be noted here that according to an estimate about half of the world population now live in cities. Moreover, flourishing of industries indiscriminately, hybridization, spraying of pesticides, use of fertilizers for more production is also a major source of pollution and environmental degradation as the discharges of numerous industries and agricultural wastes containing pesticides and toxic acids ultimately fell into the rivers, lakes, oceans and other water sources which not only pollutes water and destroys aquatic animals but also dangerous to other living organisms. The UN Conference on Human Environment of 1972 which was held from 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> June at Stockholm mentions environment and the various issues of pollution, destruction of ecological balance and depletion of resources as matters of overwhelming concern of the world as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

We, the human being, are primarily the creators of environmental degradation and pollution as we want more and more at the cost of nature. Today in the present environmental perspective ecological security appears more relevant than economic security. It seems that we are constantly plundering nature in the name of need and wants but what is most noteworthy is greed. Presently, the whole of humanity as well as civilization is at crossroads; because the present state of ecological degradation and pollution is the result of greed on the part of the affluent society, and careless application of technology.<sup>4</sup>

Gandhi's consideration of the understanding of science, technology and civilization rests mainly on inherent simplicity. The simplicity that he inculcates is probably marked by his own style of living. And it is here the philosophy of Gandhi can be termed as having an inherent vision that is the vision of ecological prudence. If we proceed with most of the principles that Gandhi framed we can easily discern that the problem of pollution and environmental degradation is within the human being and not outside him. Gandhi's 'Hind Swaraj' is a monumental book where he warns human race about the ills of modern civilization, the achievements of science and technology, urbanization and industrialization as 'nine days wonder'. And this understanding regarding civilization as a whole as 'nine days wonder' can be mentioned as Gandhi's farsightedness. Thus, visualizing the multifarious environmental problems though not accurately coined the term like carbon emission, ozone layer depletion, global climate change and various forms of pollution. Moreover, Gandhi foresaw that massive industrialization will pamper mass production and this again will lead to consumerism. Today consumerism of the affluent society is one of the most vital enemies of environmental degradation and pollution.

Mahatma Gandhi did not articulately mention his views on environment and its ills separately and in a systemic manner. Still his view on this topic is sprinkled throughout his works and writings. The present study, however, is on some specific aspects of Gandhian philosophy. Many scholars worked on different aspects of Gandhian philosophy but no specific work has been done on this particular environmental aspect of Gandhian philosophy. The present Research

Work is an attempt to explore the environmental aspects of Gandhian philosophy and to find out the possible solution in tune with Gandhian philosophy.

### **1.1 OBJECTIVES**

The present study aims to analyse the following objectives:-

- I) To identify and analyse environmental problems in the light of Gandhian philosophy.
- ii) To show that Gandhian philosophy of village self-rule and self-sufficiency as a tool to overcome the environmental problems.
- iii) To explore the elements of Gandhian philosophy and to show that these elements can be used as a tool for mitigating environmental problems.
- iv) To show that Gandhian philosophy of “simple living and high thinking” aims at minimization of wants or the philosophy of non-consumerism and can be used as a tool to solve environmental problems.

### **1.2 HYPOTHESIS**

The Research Scheme consists of the following hypothesis:-

- i) In the proposed study it is hypothesized that the existing social set up is to most extent is responsible for the environmental degradation and pollution.
- ii) It is speculated that large-scale industrialization, urbanization, transportation, poverty and consumerism paves the way to massive environmental catastrophe.

- iii) This study supposes that a change in social set up as well as individual reformation can usher towards a more vibrant ecological order of the world.
- iv) Moreover, it is believed that the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi contain few elements of individual and social reformation which appears to be helpful in resolving environmental problems.

### **1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study concerns with the theoretical as well as practical aspects of environmental problems. In the present study efforts are directed towards the analysis of different existing environmental problems that the whole world is confronting today and an attempt is also made to find out solutions in tune with Gandhian philosophy.. This study deals at length how the diversified human activity has resulted in the problem of environmental degradation and pollution today. The work is theoretical in nature and thus mostly based on observational method. Therefore, the methodology of the work is analytical and interpretative types and the data required for the study have been collected from both secondary and primary sources.

### **1.4 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

Some general limitations of the study may be noted as:

- i) The present study however has certain limitation as the environmental problems surfaced throughout the whole world. But the way it has been considered and analyzed in the present research work appears to be mostly theoretical in nature and thus limited to that extent.

- ii) The investigation does have another limitation that environmental problems are as mentioned earlier are surfaced in the whole world, so finding solution primarily basing on Gandhian philosophy without any legislation is another limitation of the study.

## **1.5 ORGANISATION OF MATERIALS**

The Research materials have been organized in the following manner:-

- i) Introduction
- ii) Environmental problems:
  - a) Local problems
  - b) Regional problems
  - c) Global problems
- iii) Possible remedial steps suggested by Western thinkers and noted environmental activists
- iv) Environmental aspects of Gandhian philosophy
- v) Gandhian solution to the problems
- vi) Conclusion

**References:**

1. Kumar, S.B. (2010). *Environmental Problems & Gandhian Solutions The Only Ray of Hope To The Present Ailing World*. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd. p 18.
2. Ibid., p 9.
3. Ibid., p 8.
4. Khoshoo, T.N. (2006). *Mahatma Gandhi An Apostle of Applied Human Ecology*. New Delhi: The Energy Resources Institute. p 6.