

CHAPTER- V

GANDHIAN SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS

5.1 Gandhian solution to the problems

The environmental problems the whole world is experiencing today did not assume the alarming proportion when Mahatma Gandhi was alive. But one thing certainly goes to the credit of Gandhi that he foresaw the evils of industrialism and modern life style from his experience in England, South Africa and even in his own country. That is why, he tried to frame such a philosophy of life where human being can live with nature and have equal respect for nature, but he never tried to advocate or say go back to nature. It is a fact that many earlier civilizations of the world were ruined when they subsided or neglected nature. The life style and form of social set up that Gandhi visualizes is simply rudiment in our ancient tradition which our forefathers had led.

The lifestyle our forefathers led in no way put a hindrance to the flourishing of nature and natural resources. It is perhaps because of their basic understanding of the fact that all life is inherently one or that there is an essential unity in all that lives. It is this unity of life which helps our forefathers to live in consonance with nature. Gandhi being influenced by Indian religious and cultural tradition as well as the tradition of the other great religions and cultures of the world tried to mould a path which is permanent in both mind and spirit or in theory and practice. A.L. Basham in an article writes,

“We suggest that several of Gandhi’s concepts are fully in keeping with Indian tradition, and were probably developed from ideas which he absorbed in his childhood and youth, fertilized and brought to fruition by his contact with the West.”¹

Though Mahatma Gandhi did not advocate any solution to environmental problems but the ideas and thoughts that he inculcates through his various teachings shows how the whole world can make its path to the economics of eternalness where maximum effort is on minimization of needs keeping in mind the resources of the world. And it is this minimization of needs which will ensure a world free from environmental catastrophe. The interconnectedness of the thoughts of Gandhi shows that his critique of modern civilization lays the foundation to that direction.

Gandhi’s critique of modern civilization is a path finder to the panacea of many problems that the humanity is confronting in the 21st century. His critique of modern civilization is mainly due to dehumanization of man and at the same time the inequality that is prevailing all over the world. The motto behind his philosophy is not merely juxtaposition of various ideas but a well thought framework where the interests of each sentient creature are looked upon. This is very much reflected in his thought. His various ideas such as charka and khadi, decentralization of both economic and political power, swarāj, Satyāgraha, non-violence, trusteeship, sarvodaya and even his ethical ideals are to most extent is ushering towards a social setup where everyone can lead a simple life keeping in mind the limitation of nature and natural resources. Thus the thoughts and ideas of Gandhi seem to proclaim a life pattern where maximum effort is on overall individual socio-economic, political and moral development based on need rather than consumerist approach of the modern day. It is often believed that the

alteration in the system can mechanically bring a change in the motives and attitudes of the people. Again it is similarly thought that alteration in the personal life style is very important and as an upshot unwarranted social conditions and structure will automatically die away. Gandhi put equal importance to bring changes in both system as well as individual. His emphasis on socio-economic and political aspects shows his effort to bring radical changes in the systems. Further his stress on aspiration, motivation and value patterns shows that he put similar emphasis on the radical changes of the individual and the society.² Thus the thoughts as framed by Gandhi mentioned above if followed in mind and spirit will help to resolve the environmental problems that the human race is confronting in the 21st century.

To start with Gandhi's one of the most important ideas such as simple living, appears to be mostly reflected in his urges to set up village small scale and cottage industries. He believes that life can best lead in simple manner in villages. That is why he put much emphasis on the setting up of village small scale and cottage industries. In his constructive program charka occupies a pivotal place. For Gandhi charka is the central sun and village small scale and cottage industries are its planet. It is through the setting up of charka or spinning wheel in every home and village Gandhi tried to bring equality in economic and political field. Gandhi believes that the charka possesses an element of self-rule and self-reliance or self-sufficiency in both economic and political spheres. The spinning of cotton thread helps the individual to earn his livelihood. Spinning can be taken in smaller as well as larger scale. In smaller scale it means spinning thread at each home and even in each community or society. In larger scale it means spinning thread for cottage and

small scale industries in the locality. It is through spinning of cotton thread every person of the house can get employment at home and in various small scale and cottage industries and can use their leisure time to earn for their family when crop season is off. Charka as well as small scale cottage industries can act as means of regeneration of individual, family, society and nation. It can be pointed out here that the charka and small scale cottage industries even if used in large scale can hardly pollute our environment. Because charka and other cottage and small scale industries for example compared to modern textile and cloth mills, and other heavy industries have minimum chance of polluting environment. We can say more precisely that charka and cottage industries are more eco-friendly than the modern textile and cloth mills and various other heavy industries. Say for instance the modern textile and cloth mills uses various types of chemicals for manufacturing and dyeing clothes which pollutes air, water and soil etc. Thus the essence of charka and other small scale and cottage industries seems to enhance a more vibrant ecology where as the modern textile and cloth mills and other various heavy industries in essence provoke a hostile ecology. Being a believer of small-scale development, Schumacher remarks,

“Small-scale operations, no matter how numerous, are always less likely to be harmful to the natural environment than large-scale ones, simply because their individual force is small in relation to the recuperative forces of nature.”³

In 1945 Gandhi wrote a letter to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru where his concern over charka and the simplicity of village life seems to appear clearly. He writes,

“I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom and through India the world also sooner or later, the fact has to be recognized that the people have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts not in palaces. Crores of people will never be able to live in peace with each other in cities and palaces. They will have no recourse but to resort to both violence and untruth. I hold that without truth and non-violence, there can be nothing but destruction of humanity. We can realize truth and non-violence only in the simplicity of the village life and the simplicity can be best found in the charka and all that the charka cannot,--I must not fear if the world today is going the wrong way. It may be that India too will go that way and like the proverbial moth burn itself eventually in the flame round which it dances more and more fiercely. But it is my bounden duty up to my last breath to try and protect India and through India, the entire world from such a doom. The essence of what I have said is that man should rest content with what are his real needs and become self-sufficient. If he does not have this control, he cannot save himself.”⁴

Such was the importance, Gandhi assigned to simplicity of village life which center round charka and other village small scale and cottage industries. Thus depending upon his farsighted and innate knowledge of the ground realities he advocated an all together different scheme of development which suits not only village life but also city dwellers in order that environmental problems may have minimum effect. It can be mentioned here that in recent past economist like E.F.Schumacher being influenced by Gandhian ideas of a different model of development and an intermediate technology in his famous book ‘Small is Beautiful’ he criticized western developmentalism and pointed towards the need for an ethical economics grounded on ecological awareness.⁵

Further Schumacher pointed out,

“As Gandhi said, the poor of the world cannot be helped by mass production, only by production by masses. The system of mass production, based on sophisticated, highly capital-intensive, high-energy-input dependent, and human labour-saving technology, presupposes that you are already rich, for a great deal of capital investment is needed to establish one single workplace . The system of production by the masses mobilizes the priceless resources that are possessed by all human beings, their clever brains and skillful hands, and support them with first class tools. The technology of mass production is inherently violent, ecologically damaging, self-defeating in terms of non-renewable resources, and stultifying for the human person. The technology of production by the masses, making the use of the best modern knowledge and experience, is conducive to decentralization, compatible with the laws of ecology, gentle in its use of scarce resources, and designed to serve the human person instead of making him the servant of machines. I have named it intermediate technology to signify that it is vastly superior to the primitive technology of bygone ages but at the same time much simpler, cheaper, and freer than the super-technology of the rich.”⁶

It may be mentioned here that through charka and khadi culture Gandhi tries to bring an end to few central problem of human race such as exploitation, poverty and unequal distribution of wealth and power which has more or less added the fuel to fire in today’s environmental catastrophe. His concept of economic and political decentralization of power and wealth is basically well framed criterion of thought directed towards equal treatment of every individual in every respect. The charka for example has both economic and political implication.

Its economic implication is that it provides every individual an opportunity of employment and to become self-sufficient (equal) in economic spheres. Thus the economic self-sufficiency of every individual in turn helps in eradicating poverty of the masses in great deal and once poverty become elevated people would become politically conscious. Gandhi believes that centralization of economic and political power in the form of industry will increase poverty and exploitation. Therefore, he confers economic self-sufficiency with a motto to bestow political awareness amongst people. Hence both economic and political self-sufficiency prepares the way for society building, grounded on ecological path. Thus the decentralized economic and political society of Gandhi's vision usher towards a world order devoid of exploitation of man by man or nature by man. It further guarantees a society founded on equality of every living being and non-living things. A British economist J.D.H.Kaul pointed out that,

“Gandhi's preference of khadi industry can't be taken as an emotional appeal rather it is a rationally thought out plan. Labour-intensive decentralized industries create higher employment opportunity as compared to heavy industries. Though rural industries will provide comparatively less profit but they are very helpful in fulfilling our dream of equal distribution of income.”⁷

Thus it can be observed that the justification at the back of his idea of economic and political decentralization is to maintain a socio-economic and political balance of power and wealth of the local resources so that environment can be protected and preserved in long run. Above all his initiation of various ideas such as Ashram life, village small scale and cottage industries, khadi and hand-spinning, health & hygiene, cleanliness of village water tank etc. prove that

he urges for a eco-friendly life pattern and was much concerned of the protection and preservation of environment.

Gandhi's dream of social setup is thus ushering towards swarāj (self-rule) of every individual dispense to equal treatment. His advocacy of charka, khadi and various other small scale and cottage industries attempts to meet the basic necessities of life locally and at the same time it points to a pattern of life which is in essence eco-friendly. The swarāj of Gandhi's vision was in the true sense all-comprehensive and all encompassing. Because here swarāj does not simply mean political and economic swarāj but it also means spiritual swarāj (self-sufficiency) which Gandhi often speaks so firmly and eloquently. By swarāj Gandhi did not simply mean to get rid of the British rule, rather he wanted a swarāj where individual freedom in every sphere should get manifested. Swarāj for him did not even mean absolute freedom but freedom with certain restraint. The restraint here is guided by the basic necessities of life.

“Consequently, he envisaged a village or local community based economic democracy. Villages should not be mere producers of raw material and be at the receiving end of a price system and exploitative economy. He insisted on village self-reliance as essential to swarāj.”⁸

It follows that the sprout or the inherent meaning that the concept of swarāj germinates is not mere material self-sufficiency but a self-sufficiency which is all encompassing in the sense that it is through this realization of swarāj by every human being that he should rest content with whatever is needed to spend his life rather than with the greedy and luxuries of life. Moreover the perfect realization of the inner meaning of swarāj will help us to lead a simple life, being stirred by need

rather than by greed. Thus an inoculation of simplicity which is mostly backed by Gandhian thought will help us to overcome the environmental crisis that we are confronting today. The problem of environmental degradation, climate change, and even carbon emission are mostly caused by consumerism and overflowing materialism which breeds out of industrialism. Gandhi through his writings warned us that “the earth provides enough for every man’s need but not for every man’s greed.”⁹ Thus we have to live a need based life so that the posterior generation can enjoy their share on the earth. Besides these, there is a blame leveled against the first world countries by the third world countries that their luxurious life style is responsible for the present global environmental crisis. Similarly, the first world countries put blame to the third world countries for poor technology and poverty that breeds environmental crisis of today. Here Gandhi’s concept such as charka and spinning wheel, small scale and cottage industries and swarāj etc. seems to fit appropriate for both the rich as well as the poor may it be individual, society and country because his teaching points to a path which is more eco-friendly from the viewpoint of preservation and protection of environment. Gandhi’s philosophy thus put both the have and haven’t on the same techno-ecological-economic vessel based on need where the chance of environmental degradation is minimum.

Thus Gandhi’s concepts so far discussed such as charka or spinning wheel, khadi, economic and political decentralization of power and wealth, swarāj etc. as system reformation are to most extent supplementary or even complementary to other various concepts such as satyāgraha, non-violence, sarvodaya and trusteeship as individual/social reformation which appears to have foundational bearing in the context of environmental crisis resolve. T. N. Khoshoo observes that,

“Equally important for Gandhi was the role of an individual, which he regarded as of utmost importance because he felt a society or a government is only an extension of individuals. Hence, environmental perceptions of an individual are of critical importance.”¹⁰

It may be mentioned here that it is neither system alone nor individual alone can bring a drastic reformation rather a mixed blessing of both system as well as individual will help to ride out of the present environmental crisis. Mahatma Gandhi seems to bring a reformation in both system and individual by encouraging local capability and local self-reliance and local self-governance (swarāj) at the level of villages, basically the welfare of the weakest (antodayā) and finally welfare of all (sarvodaya). He used the notion of non-violence and adhering to truth (satyāgraha) as his chief weapon to bring a reformation in individual .¹¹

Now let us consider the concept of satyāgraha as Gandhi framed it. The word satyāgraha is a combination of two words satya and āgraha. Satya means truth and āgraha means firmness. The concept of satyāgraha is an offshoot of the concept of non-violence and truth. The exact meaning of satyāgraha is perseverance to truth, and the strength derivable from such perseverance, in order to alleviate malevolence. Thus, satyāgraha can be said to be the way to adherence to truth, and the behavior that based on truth is unfeasible devoid of love, and therefore, satyāgraha is the ‘Truth-force or Love-force’. “Gandhi thus concludes that satyāgraha is soul-force as opposed to armed weapon. Self-purification is another name for satyāgraha. Satyāgraha is the way of non-violence.”¹² Further, satyāgraha can also be affirmed as an stance of mind. A person who get hold of that state of mind “will remain ever victorious, at all times and places under all conditions irrespective of whether it is a government or a people that he opposes,

whether they be strangers, friends or relatives.”¹³ Satyāgraha can be termed as a brand of education in the exact sense of the term, and it can also use as a significant tool for the education and awakening of the people. “In brief, the sign of satyāgraha consists in the quest for a principle of life.”¹⁴

Satyāgraha in principle involves the technique of non-violence. If we reflect on Gandhi’s concept of non-violence it means non-injury to any being, living or non-living. Gandhi further extends his definition of non-violence that one should be non-violent in his speech, thought and action or deed. The concept of non-violence has a universal application as Gandhi himself showed in various movements as well as the life he led. His life is mostly a pronouncement of tapasyā, non-violence and satyāgraha. Just as satyāgraha and non-violence are interconnected so also non-violence and truth. Gandhi holds that truth as that “Which determines the spirit in which one lives or the religious and ethical criteria which governs the way in which he thinks and acts.”¹⁵ He opines that one can realize truth only through non-violence. For Gandhi truth appears to be the utmost law and non-violence is the utmost duty. That is why he believes that truth is the synonym for God. To follow non-violence is to follow truth and to follow truth is to follow non-violence. The ideal of satyāgraha offers an useful explanation to the spiritual and moral ideals of truth and non-violence. In order to attain utmost truth, tapasyā or self-sacrifice is essential. Tapasyā means autonomy from anxiety and an eagerness to die. Gandhi holds that satyāgraha is tapasyā or self-sacrifice to realize the truth. The pain that one should bear in satyāgraha is nothing but tapasyā in its complete form. Thus Gandhi puts forward his concept of non-violence in the following words:

1. Non-violence is the law of the human race and is infinitely greater than and superior to brute force.
2. Non-violence affords the fullest protection to one's self-respect and sense of honour;
3. Individuals and nations who follow non-violence should get ready to give up everything for the welfare of the universe.
4. Non-violence is a power which can be equally wielded by all-- children, young men and woman and grown-up people, provided they have a living faith in the God of Love and have therefore equal love for all mankind. When non-violence is accepted as the law of life, it must pervade the whole being and not be applied in isolated acts.
5. It is a profound error to suppose that, while the law is good enough for individuals, it is not for masses of mankind.¹⁶

The above analysis of non-violence reveals the fact that Gandhi believes that in order to have a better social order the society must move on the path of non-violence. It is through non-violence a tolerant, egalitarian and more humane society can be established which pay equal respect to all things and beings of nature. Non-violence seems to have a fascinating force to make use of the mind of man and it plea to the heart. The environmental extent of non-violence is beyond any limit. Gandhi's faith in non-violence and vegetarianism made him a votary of conservation of all diversity including all forms of life, societies, cultures, religions and traditions. Again Gandhi believed that there cannot be only ecological

movement designed to prevent violence against nature, unless the principle of non-violence becomes central to the ethos of human culture.¹⁷

The concept of satyāgraha in the context of environmental crisis resolve may appear to be dynamic in its application as it has been used successfully in many environmental movements. Environmental issues can also be approached from Gandhi's concept of satyāgraha in order to bring social transformation. It can also be mentioned here that almost all parts of the world have witnessed the quarrel that takes place between the policy framers and environmental protester. The various environmental movements, may it be river movements like Narmada Movement and Silent Valley Movement etc. or forest movements like Chipko Movement are mainly prompted by Gandhi's non-violent method of satyāgraha. Sometimes we also find that in different corners of the world there is a debate on nuclear disarmament and this even can be resolved in a non-violent way that is through the method of satyāgraha persuasion. Thus in the above mentioned movements Gandhi's concept of satyāgraha play a pivotal role as it is mainly non-violent in nature and perhaps the fuel to these movements is mostly propelled by his satyāgraha (non-violent) technique. Satyāgraha is not simply a moral plea and oral urging but it demands a deliberate act by the oppressed to bring forth a radical transformation in the outlook of oppressor and to make a whole paralysis and annihilation of scheme of exploitation. So far it has been noticed in the matter of different environmental movement people use satyāgraha (non-violence) as principle to fight against injustice and exploitation. Besides, it has been also noticed that Satyāgraha also worked as a tool to regenerate awakening amongst people in the environmental perspective. Timothy Doyle maintains that,

“These Gandhian methods of non-cooperation and resistance would be the mainstay of all environmental movement activity in India, including anti-dam movements, until the present day. The experience of non-violence also meandered beyond India, impacting on peace and environmental movements across the globe in alternate ways.”¹⁸

Further it can be easily discern that non-violence the age-old ethical doctrine is an important foundation of Gandhi’s environmentalism that India has given to the world--non-violence is the highest dharma (ahimsā parmo dharma).¹⁹ Again satyāgraha as its technique involves non-violence and in the background of environmental issue resolve it shows concern for the welfare of all men, and consequently it can be said that satyāgraha whenever it is implemented involves sarvodaya.²⁰

The concept of sarvodaya is an important ideal that Gandhi framed for an all round progress of society to be geared on moral foundation. The word sarvodaya is a combination of two word sarva (all) and udaya (upliftment or awakening). Thus sarvodaya literally means upliftment of all or betterment of all or awakening of all. It is through the awakening of an individual a local community can be awakened and again a local community to a state or a nation and ultimately the whole world. The reformation and reconstruction that Gandhi wanted to bring in social setup is through the ideal of sarvodaya. In the ideal social setup he takes the concept of sarvodaya as a foundational step towards a non-violent society to be based on equality, freedom and justice. Besides, it can be assumed that the very aim of sarvodaya is the steady approximation of some relish ideals such as ahimsā, fairness and liberty. “In a sarvodaya society there will be freedom for all and

utmost equality; there will be no class and castes; no exploitation nor injustice; and equal opportunity for each for fullest development.”²¹

Thus it appears from the foregoing statement that a better social order can be ushered through the ideal of sarvodaya. As Gandhi believes that the root cause behind all social ills is germinated in the system of distribution of income and wealth. So he through his concept of bread labour, charka, khadi, cottage and small scale industries, decentralization of power, swarāj and along with such other ideals tried to rebuild the social frame as well as the individual frame where everybody is tied up with everyone. It can be pointed out here that the gap between the have and haven't is posing serious threat to environment. Because the rich are consuming much while the poor are denied of basic necessities. Here one can mention that the philosophy behind Gandhi's all round development of individual and society is simple living and high thinking. Gandhi through his various concepts urges repeatedly to lead a life of austerity. The way he led his life is the most vibrant example. Gandhi believes that it is through the living of simple life that it is possible to have betterment of all or even welfare of all. But it is not possible to guarantee a luxurious life or assure a luxurious life for each and everybody as the resources are limited. Again the consumer oriented philosophy which is now sprouting rapidly in each and every corner of the globe will itself face a dooms day if every one of us lead a life of simplicity guided by basic necessity. Here we find that the ideal of sarvodaya has an all-comprehensive and clear implication which can very well be used in the perspective of resolving various environmental issues. Thus by betterment or upliftment or awakening Gandhi did not simply mean economic upliftment, but rather an all round upliftment such as social, economic,

political and more importantly moral or spiritual. Further the living of simple life can make surely betterment of all or welfare of all, where everyone is protected not simply the living but also non-living and not even the sentient creatures but also nature and its resources as Gandhi believes that there is an essential unity underlying everything. Man's relationship with the animal kingdom and natural world is entirely exaggerated by the same faith also. Thus any violence to animals and intentional exploitation of nature and natural resources is prohibited by the ideal of sarvodaya.²² As Gandhi repeatedly asserts that a common bond exists between everything that lives so the ideal of sarvodaya as it is for the betterment of all or welfare of all can be carried in any front may it be social, economic, political, cultural and ecological.

The ideal of sarvodaya in its practical application in certain cases seems to be a failure as has been noticed in the Bhoodan Movement initiated by Acharya Vinoba Bhave an active Gandhian but in the context of environmental issue resolve it shows tremendous applicability. It can be asserted that in the environmental movement perspective the ideal of sarvodaya has an universal application as the environmental movement basically aims at the welfare of the local community and through local community of the state or nation and ultimately of the whole world. Thus the ideal vision of sarvodaya to be realized each one according to his need (sustainability) of the world, for the welfare of all (sarvodaya) where the interest of the present and the future generation is protected and safeguarded. In environmental perspective the case of Chipko Movement for saving 2500 trees per year in Reni Forest in Uttharakhand is quite notable. The women by hugging the trees save them from dishonest contractors and government

lobbyists which is mainly prompted by the sarvodaya ideal, that is, the welfare of all. Thus the Chipko Movement which was initiated by Chandi Prasad, Vandana Shiva and others draws its inspiration from Gandhian ideal of sarvodaya (for the good or welfare of all) teachings and practices.²³

Another most important ideal that Gandhi framed is the concept of trusteeship for transformation of present form of society into an egalitarian one. In order to have a non-violent society, the society must be based on economic equality. Gandhi believes that the evils that are prevailing in the society in various forms such as political, social, cultural and even ecological cannot be controlled unless there is economic equality. Thus for a total solution of the problem Gandhi initiated the concept of trusteeship. Economic equality generally means the same income or same wealth. At a first glance it appears that it is practically impossible to have society based on economic equality, but Gandhi through his concept of trusteeship aims at a realization of the principle that, from each according to his ability and each according to his need. Thus by equality Gandhi affirms that everyone should be satisfied with his basic necessities.

From the above it appears that Gandhi through his concept of trusteeship tries to bring a major transformation of one of the serious problem of society i.e. economic problem by shifting it to a moral problem and urging to have a moral solution. Here he makes a distinction between ownership and selfishness. It may seem that a person may have various capabilities like physical ability, mental talent or intelligent or he may possess inner quality. So his intelligency is a sufficient condition for earning wealth, but Gandhi asserts that his intelligence is meaningless apart from the support of society. That is the reason behind his belief

that all wealth belongs to society. From this it follows that Gandhi is against private ownership of wealth or inborn legacy. Thus if an individual possess more than what is actually needed to lead his life, he must use his surplus wealth for the welfare of community and should perform as a trustee to the society. Thus by introducing the concept of trusteeship Gandhi attempts to make a shifting of present society of coercion to a non-violent one which is devoid of class struggle. Besides, it can be said that Gandhi through his concept of trusteeship put an appeal to the affluent class for voluntary submission of wealth and power and asked them to contribute their riches for the greater good of the society. If we go by the report of the WCED which states: Sustainable development requires that those who are the most affluent adopt life style within the Planet's ecological means.²⁴ Though Gandhi nowhere uses the term sustainable development but the report of WCED appears to have in conformity with the Gandhi's affirmation of the statement that 'the earth has enough to meet every one's needs but not every man's greed'.²⁵ Gandhi always considers affluence as an offense against human race and world's environmental stability. A better understanding of Gandhi's concept of trusteeship can even be carried into the development strategy of global development. It seems that Gandhi's doctrine of trusteeship puts less emphasis on the individual self-centeredness. Instead, it puts much emphasis on the development of society which is people's welfare centric. Thus, his concept of trusteeship promotes sustainability which is pro-ecological and helps to restore the environmental balance of the world.²⁶

Thus it can be observed without any doubt that what Gandhi aims at is a society well balanced in all spheres where peace and harmony prevails. Under the

present social set up many thinkers opine that it is not possible to follow the pros and cons of Gandhi's ideal as taught by him or even to undertake Gandhian strategy as a whole but, at the same time admit that the hidden mantra of environmental issues resolve lies in the philosophy of Gandhi. Ramachandra Guha an eminent Gandhi thinker remarks in the following words,

“And all of us without exception—without living in the city, the country or the wild—can try and simplify our lifestyles to the extent compatible with individual circumstances, taking our lead from a man who, in his own life, made remarkably few demands on the earth.”²⁷

It may also be mentioned here that many thinkers of the present day and even of his time dubbed Gandhi as an idealist but it is very interesting to note that the idealist of previous years has become more realist for the present generation, in the perspective of environmental issue resolve. As S.B. Kumar observes that,

“The solution ultimately lies in what Gandhi had suggested in changing life-styles and wasteful expenditure, small scale industries, and a technology that assists and helps the individual and not overpowers him, and that teaches us to live in harmony with nature.”²⁸

Finally, the different ideals so far discussed and as enunciated by Gandhi may be considered as the pillars of both individual as well as social reformation which ushers towards a more vibrant ecological world order. These pillars though appear to be utopian in Platonic sense, but if practiced with a view to bring reformation at both ends i.e. individual and social levels, it will certainly guide human race to solve environmental issues and problems to a great extent. It is simply because these pillars as Gandhi framed put much emphasis on an

egalitarian line keeping in view the interest of living as well as non-living, man as well as animal and above all nature. These pillars throw light on almost all aspects of individual and society which can be considered as necessary ingredients for environmental issue resolve. The various aspects which the pillars highlights can be summarized in accordance with the thoughts of Gandhi in the following ways so that the environmental issues can be best resolved and managed keeping in mind the needs of posterior generation.

Thus in the environmental perspective the teachings of Gandhi can be paraphrased in the following few lines which inherently provokes ecological sustainability. Firstly, Gandhi advocated science and technology in its lucid form in order that it may fit best to small scale and cottage industries instead of large scale industrialization which put much emphasis on mass production. But Gandhi emphasizes production by the masses so that the basic needs of everyone can be fulfilled easily. Secondly, the Philosophy of Gandhi warns us repeatedly to put control on our greed, so, that the basic needs of everyone can be met and the resources available in the world can be used for betterment of all keeping in mind the limits of resources and nature. Thirdly, Gandhi put much stress on decentralization of wealth and power in both economic and political spheres in order that the resources to be utilized locally not for profit but to meet the basic needs. Gandhi disfavours centralization and concentration of wealth and power as it results in exploitation of both man and nature. Finally, the thought that percolates in his philosophy is mostly backed by equal distribution of wealth. He prefers equal treatment for the weakest section of the society and even for animals and

plants. Hence, this approach of Gandhi fits best for environmental management as well as environmental issue resolve of the 21st century.

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