

# Gandhi as an environmentalist assignment

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The political career of Gandhi started in South Africa where he launched a Civil Disobedience Movement against the maltreatment meted out to Asian settlers. In 1916, he returned to India and took up the leadership of National Freedom Struggle. After the death of freedom fighter and congress leader Bal Gandhar Tidal on August, 1920, Gandhi became virtually the sole navigator of the ship of the congress. Gandhi had wholeheartedly supported the British during the 1st World War (1914-1919). The end of war, however, did not bring the promised freedom for India.

So Gandhi launched many movements to force the British to concede India its Independence. The well known being: Non Co-operation Movement (1920), Civil Disobedience Movement (1930) and Quit India Movement (1942). Gandhi defeated the mighty British empire not with swords or guns, but by means of strange and utterly new weapons of truth and Aims. He worked all through his life for Hindu- Muslim Unity and the abolition of intractability. Gandhi worked hard for the fulfillment of the Harijans, the name given by him to the untouchables.

Gandhi declared intractability a sin against God and Man. Sandhog's ultimate search was for righteous conduct. The means are more important than the end, he maintained; with the right means, desired ends will follow. In time, he was proven right- almost always. His struggles and actions were but external manifestations of his struggle to evolve his own value system. Mahatma Gandhi better known as the father of Nation because it was he who got freedom for us. He was the maker of Modern India. It is really plausible for such a benevolent man to have been an environmentalist.

But an environmentalist in an era when the environment was not such a major cause of concern? So was Mahatma Gandhi really an environmentalist? “ The earth, the air, the land and the water are not an inheritance from our fore fathers but on loan from our children. So we have to handover to them at least as it was handed over to us. Such were the beliefs of Mahatma Gandhi. The whole world knows that Gandhi was a political leader and a revolutionary of an extraordinary type. That he was a great thinker and a saintly figure is also well known all over the world.

It is also widely known that he was a humanist and pacifist Of international fame. But very few people know that he was an environmentalist too. This is primarily because the environmental problems have surfaced largely in the post-Gandhi era and as such, the concern for environment has assumed importance only in recent years. Nevertheless, there were people in the past too who could foresee the future ND visualize the dangers inherent in the kind of development the nations chose to go in for following the Industrial revolution in the west. Gandhi was one of such persons.

Gandhi had bewildering insights and foresight. One is really appalled by his farsightedness so clearly and emphatically expressed in the Hind Swaraj almost a century ago nil 909 when few people talked of environmental problems and hazards. Similarly one is overwhelmed by his grasp of the resultant human predicament and his ingenuity to suggest appropriate measures to root out the problem rather than search a solution o control it. M. K. Sandhog’s words, “ What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another. It needs hardly any mention that entire problem of environmental hazards and <https://assignbuster.com/gandhi-as-an-environmentalist-assignment/>

degradations are rooted in the scientific-technological development leading to large scale and speedy industrialization and the consequent socio-culture upheavals the world over. True, the achievement of industrialization for mankind cannot be undermined. Industrialization has given to human society tremendous material pleasure and prosperity. But at the same time, it has also imperceptibly done irreparable loss to mankind.

Reckless and limit less pursuit of industrialization by all nations are now posing serious problems for very existence of not only man but for all living creatures and all kinds of species on our planet. Detection of depletion of the ozone layer, reported recurring of acid rain and the warming up of the earth as a result of green house effect are serious pointers to the existential problems. Already numerous species of animals, birds and plants have become extinct. Desert formation is increasing with rapid speed.

Deforestation and increasing emission of smokes and injurious gas are not only polluting the atmosphere, but also affecting adversely climatic conditions to the awful disadvantages of living being, Mushrooming of the slum area (in most of the third world countries ) as an unavoidable byproduct of arbitration the syndrome of our cherished mode of development is fatal to the physical atmosphere required for proper living. Disposal of industrial wastes and things like plastic and synthetic containers and used/discarded wares has already become a formidable problem not only in the developed west but also in the developed countries.

The cumulative effect of all these factors on the health and living of human beings has caused an alarming concern among people in the entire world.

Everybody now knows that scientific and technological development is at the root of the state affair. And yet, people are taking resort to the same science and technology for a solution of the environmental problem. Gigantic efforts are being made for the management Of this problem. But its magnitude and viciousness are defying any proper and satisfactory solution. The reason is quit obvious.

The factors responsible for the problem continue to aggravate the situation with ouch faster pace than the effort to control it. There is no control and management of environmental pollutions and degradations. The permanent cure of this dreadful problem lies in a suitable alternative life style in tune with nature. People now do realize the truth of it but the naked materialism of modern civilization becomes a roadblock in putting it into practice. The words of Harridan, “ The reason why we are getting more and more impoverished is that we have neglected villages. We have thought of them, but only to the extent of exploiting them. Gandhi had clearly perceived this solutions. His indictment of the modern civilization in the Hind Swards was intended to caution mankind against this calamity. He made a relevant appeal to the people of his countrymen not be trapped by the allurements of this civilization. He also wanted the western society against its ill effects. As a front leader of the Indian nationalist movement and a visionary and planner of society and political systems of India after Independence, he drew a blue – print which accordingly rejected the western model based on that scientific- technological culture.

To Gandhi, the main plank of the modern civilization is he insatiable and unending pursuit of material pleasure and prosperity. All modern western

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socio-economic and political theories and institutions are based on this cardinal principle and people in other parts of the world are blindly imitating it. If the trend is not arrested and a suitable alternative to it provided, Gandhi believed, the result would be disastrous. For instance, the modern western economic development is flourishing on the extravagant utilization of the non-renewable resources I. E. , coal, oil and metal.

So long it was confined to a few western countries, it did not create that much of robber. But when the whole world is involved in this never ending venture, this will play havoc with nature. Nature is a sine qua non of existence and if man interferes with it beyond a point, he will be doing it at the cost of his own existence. Perfect and meaningful existence is possible only in harmony and conformity with nature. Gandhi fully understood the primordially of man- nature relationship and his theory and philosophy of life, society and politics are in consonance with it. T is this understanding of, and, reverence for, the salience and senility of nature for human existence which makes him an environmentalist par excellence. He was not an environmentalist who analyzed the causes and consequences of depletion in the ozone layer. He belonged to the school which believes in remedy rather than cure. In Plat's ideal state, there was no place for doctors, for he advocated the practice of a life style in which nobody would fall ill. Gandhi also subscribed to this line of thinking.

He was promoter of a kind of life, culture and society which would never lead to environmental problems. He also believed that one must “ be the change that one wants to see in the world” and hence he practiced what e preached. His life was his message. So he and his wife gave away all their property.

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They had nothing beyond the clothes that they wore and a change or NON. He used scraps of papers to write brief notes and reversed envelopes for reuse to send letters.

Even when he used to bathe with water of the free flowing Substrata river he consciously used only the minimum water needed for taking a bath. However he did not equate simple living with abject poverty. In fact he believed that to deny a person the ordinary amenities of life is far worse than starving the body. It is starving the soul – the dweller in he body. To him poverty was the most severe polluter. Hence poverty must be eradicated and that can be done only when everybody is taking their own share and not grabbing others' share by limiting their needs and sharing their resources.

However his concerns were not limited to human beings alone as he had a very strong sense of the unity of all life. He believed that all creatures had the right to live as much as human beings and felt a living bond between humans and the rest of the animate world. He believed that humans should live in harmony with their surroundings. The best part of Sandhog's ideas was that they empower the individual. It is up to each and every individual to simplify his or her life; to share his or her resources and to care for his and her surroundings. God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner Of the west... Keeping the world in chains. If [our nation] took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts. " Mahatma Gandhi The real importance of Gandhi as an environmentalist lies not in his vision and his right understanding of man-nature relationship. He made honest efforts to translate his percepts in actual life. Even before he became an internationally known leader and a <https://assignbuster.com/gandhi-as-an-environmentalist-assignment/>

Mahatma, he patterned his person life and that of a small community on these ideals.

His Phoenix and Tolstoy Farms in South Africa testify to it. Subsequently, in India too he established Ashrams on that pattern. He did eulogies the village life but he was pained to see the poverty, illiteracy and unsanitary conditions in Indian Villages. Therefore, throughout his life he kept on telling people and giving demonstration on health, hygiene and sanitation. Hardly any political leader of his stature in the world had ever devoted so much of time and energy on those problems with so much sincerity and dedication.

Environmentalists of today give scholarly lectures and write research papers and books on the subject. There are also activist environmentalists no doubt. But we can easily discern in them the motives to be prominent and cash it for political purposes. Gandhi tried to carry the message to the mass through the life he himself led. This is what made him an environmentalist with a difference. I'd like to end by quoting a few words from him, " The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated. "