



## GANDHI AND THE LAW OF NATURE

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### Abstract

This paper emphasizes “The Harmonization of Science and Technology with men and Nature”. Kennath Boulding, a leading environmentalist, observed that “Anyone who believes in indefinite growth in anything physical, on a physically finite planet, is either mad or an economist.” Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a Practical Idealist viewed that “Earth has enough for everyone’s needs but not enough for everyone’s greed”. In his set of principles, non-stealing has been a vital observation which means zero exploitation of human resources and earth resources. His nonviolent live style based on very minimal Himsa to humans, other living beings, and Nature. He desired to build a conscience-centered universal system that capitalized on collective human energy over machine energy. His ideas are relevant to present-day problems of Earth overshooting and the quality of life. He fought for the altruistic Spiritual Ecological consciousness against the world’s Dominant view. The real problems of the world are not Climate change, Biodiversity loss, or Ecosystem Collapse but actually selfishness, Apathy, and Greed. A Chief obedient to the law of Nature, Gandhi emulated a Sarvodaya society based on Truth and Nonviolence. Sarvodaya differentiates Nature, humans, and the Machine. Quality of life is the priority in this society over the Standard of Living. This research article concludes that the outcome of the present-day competition between the World’s dominant view vs Spiritual Ecological Consciousness will determine the future destiny of the human race.

**Keywords:** *anthropocentric, common good, earth overshoot day, Sarvodaya, spiritual ecological consciousness, quality of life*

### Introduction

***Anyone who believes in indefinite growth in anything physical, on a physically finite planet, is either mad or an economist.” – Kennath Boulding***

Gandhian ideals seem to be conservative and anti-science & technology. He emphasized that Science and Technology should harmonize with man and nature. Any technology that limits human potential is anti-humanity. S & T should be used to enhance human potential and not cripple man. (Gandhi, the Gospel of Bread Labour) A man comes first for the question of man or machine, and for man or nature, nature must come first. But in the era of Artificial intelligence, human and natural resources are being exploited like never before. In the process, we are utilizing 1.75 earths in a year (Willige). That is known as “Earth Overshoot”. The human race is rapidly transforming from self-sufficient to parasitic and forgetting the fact that natural resources are finite. JC Kumarappa, a Gandhian Economist classified this type of economy – Killing its own source of benefit as a Parasitic Economy. (Kumarappa) For



example, Big Corporate, whose sole objective is to make money, values machine power over human power. Instead, Gandhi wanted to build a conscience-centered universal system that capitalized on the collective human energy. Hence Nature vs Man vs Machine is a tussle between Conscientization vs. Corporatization perhaps the challenge between Human Existence vs. Extinction. Hence, the need of the hour is that man has to re-examine his lifestyle and get a new perspective based on Spiritual Ecological Consciousness.

### **Problem Statement**

Today's problem is neither machinery nor technology, big Corporate capitalizes on technology and machines and exploits nature and people. A corporate mind is an Egoistic mind which attempts to conquer Nature and humans. The consequences of these exploitations result in following irreversible harm to humans and nature.

**Earth overshoot** day marks the date when humanity's demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in the year. In 1971 it was December 25 but July 28 in the year 2022. Over 50 years, the rapid growth of technology and the corporate mindset increase human beings' demand (Willige).

The standard of living is been increased throughout the world but the question is **Quality of life**. The latest reports revealed that 46.2% of Indian Adults reported a Poor quality of Life (Protein Week 2021). The United States declined from 14<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> in the Quality-of-Life Index despite of having wealthy and world-power peers. (Haynie).

### **Research Objectives**

- To classify the etiquettes for a conscious-centric universal system for Harmonious Living from Gandhian Perspective.
- To analyze the difference between 'Man and Nature' and 'Man and Machine' from Gandhian Perspective.
- To find the root cause and Gandhian Alternative for the "Earth overshoot"
- To analyze the difference between the 'Standard of living and the Quality of Life'.

### **Man vs. Nature**

Gus Speth, former Dean of the School of Forestry & Environmental Studies at Yaler argued that World thinks Bio-diversity loss, Ecosystem collapse, and Climate change are the top environmental problems but in reality, the top environmental problems are *Selfishness, Greed, and Apathy* (Sterling) which reflects in etiquettes of corporations. They are;



1. Nature's Environment as a resource for humans
2. High Technological Progress and Solutions
3. Consumerism
4. Centralized Community
5. Dominant over Nature.
6. Materialistic Growth
7. Belief in ample resource reserves
8. Living without a strong social purpose
9. Focus on Self and personal Gain.

The major challenge today is Anthropocentric vs. Nature centric. The survival of the human race is based on the rapid transformation towards the *Spiritual Ecological consciousness* from world Dominant view. The need of the hour is spiritual and cultural transformation. (Sterling)How sooner the human realizes this fact, the sooner the damage can be mitigated. Otherwise, destruction is inevitable.

Gandhi said "Earth has enough for our needs but not enough for everyone's greed. Basically, minimalist in Nature, he experimented "Need-based Community Living" in his ashrams. The spirit behind this concept was John Ruskin's unto this last. Gandhi termed this concept as "*Sarvodaya*" – *Welfare of all or universal upliftment* which is an appeal to life based on nature. His Spiritual Ecological Consciousness comprehends the following etiquettes:

1. Laws of nature are primary.
2. Earth resources are finite.
3. Elegantly simple materials are needed.
4. Myth of Technology "Progress" is flawed.
5. Work for common good. (Sarvodaya)
6. Stewardship for creation.
7. Attention to local and global needs.
8. Treat Earth as living.
9. Socially Purposeful life.

### **Man vs. Machine**

Gandhi did not accept any kind of machinery that blunts human potential. He quoted, "***Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization; it presents great sin***". He predicted that the Machine age aims to convert men to Machines. In the process, the human race is losing its identity. In Sarvodaya society, everyone should toil together to earn food. The men, who do not work, eat stolen food. He valued a Lawyer's Profession as equal to a Barbour's Profession as both are having the same rights to earn their



food from their livelihood. According to him, the profession of “Tiller of the soil” and handicraftsman is worth living. It means the value of Physical Labor is higher than Intellectual Labor. Gandhi felt that modernized machines are crippling men.

For Instance, Gandhi advocated cloth made by using a Spinning wheel (Charkha rather than cloth made by Manchester textile mills. Even he used Charkha as a tool for social revolution. Millions of Indians followed his path and boycotted foreign clothes. The swadeshi spirit fired in the mind of Indians and triggered Indian Independence. The following table illustrates the outcomes of machine-made and traditional manmade.

**Table 1: Machine-Made vs Man Made**

S.No.	The outcome of Machine Made	The outcome of traditionally Man-made
1	Mass Production	Production by Masses
2	Forces unemployment	Creates Employment
3	Welfare of few	Welfare of all
4	Encourages Luxurious life	Need-based Life
5	Profit is the Supreme Consideration	Man is the supreme consideration
6	High Standard of Living	Better Quality of Life
7	Encourages Competitiveness	Encourages Cooperation and Co-existence
8	Inflation	Equitable Distribution of Wealth
9	Maximal utilization of Natural Resources	Minimal utilization of Natural Resources

When we buy a product, we determine its value from its price. But actually, methods of evaluating consumer goods in the Gandhian view are

1. Does it seem to be Luxurious for a simple life?
2. Does it affect the employment opportunities of People?
3. Does it consume more non-renewable resources?
4. Do the waste materials of the main production affect the environment?
5. Does it pave the way to exploitation, inequality, domination, war, and competition?

***If the answer is yes, we should not purchase that good***



### **Standard of Living vs. Quality of Life**

One has to realize the difference between the standard of living and Quality of Life. In the world of science and technology luxury living and materialistic possessions are the primary objectives and inner peace and happiness are the secondary considerations. The Country's Development is measured by its Gross Domestic Product. The standard of living is derived from per capita GDP, determined by dividing GDP by the number of people living in the country. In general, the increase in the GDP results in the growth of the Standard of living but decline in Quality of life. But the quality of life is determined by the following Indicators such as.

1. Global Happiness Index
2. Global Peace Index

These indexes reflect the need for Universal Health Care, Peace and Value Education, Natural and Living Environment, overall Experience of Life and Social interactions, etc. Gandhi emphasizes *four etiquettes necessary for quality of life*. They are

1. Obedience to the law of Nature
2. Simple living and High thinking
3. Means justify the end
4. Claiming rights by doing duties

### **Obedience to the law of Nature**

Rather than being an Environmentalist, Gandhi was more obedient in following the laws of nature. He adopted a nonviolent lifestyle in tune with nature without harming others. He followed the minimal utilization theory and voluntarily adopted poverty. His core principle of non-stealing is based on Zero Exploitation of Human resources and Earth Resources. He observed that "Man had no power to create life; therefore, he has no right to destroy life". We should more compassionate to the other lower beings. Gandhi strongly opposed the Western view of man's conquest of nature. He warned against man's dominance over nature leads to his alienation from the order of nature. He also warned against using nature for unlimited mass production and consumption purposes. Gandhi was a man of Principled Nonviolence. His ashrams were built on discarded land. Even poisonous snakes in the Ashram were trapped by wooden scissors and snake cages and later leave them in the forest. His policy is profound. He claimed that

***"The world is full of Himsa and Nature does appear to be "red in tooth and claw". But if we bear in mind that man is higher than the brute, then is man superior to that nature. If man has a divine mission to fulfill, a mission that becomes him, it is that of Ahimsa". (Gandhi, The law of Human Species)***



### **Simple Living and High Thinking**

A book Gandhi read on a train journey in 1904 changed the course of his life. John Ruskin's *Unto the Last* taught Gandhi from individual life to Community life. The Phoenix settlement is the first Ashram launched by Gandhi in 1904 for his experiments on Community life. Here Gandhi started his journey of transforming from a lawyer to a Peasant with a passion for liberation, nonviolence, and Spirituality. Since then, Gandhi started four Ashrams in Johannesburg, Ahmedabad, and Sevagram where he did experiments on

- i. Communal living
- ii. Non-Possession
- iii. Interfaith Harmony
- iv. Simplicity
- v. Environmental Protection
- vi. Conservation
- vii. Manual Labour
- viii. Social and Economic Justice
- ix. Nonviolent Action

Through these experiments, Gandhi realized that “*Our highest Moral authority is to achieve the greatest common good*”: In the process, he

- invested in the growth and well-being of others
- found the greatest Joy in causes greater than himself
- model the character others to emulate
- Assessed his purity of Intention

### **Means Justifies the Ends**

Gandhi believed that the road to the man of success is a man of values. He observed that “the creator has given us control over means, none over the end”. In reality, all the problems arise from the impure intent of human beings. Impure means result in an impure end. As mentioned earlier, if we obey the law of nature, the earth will provide all the necessities for a human being to live happily and harmoniously. If we try to dominate nature, like the glow of a lamp that goes out, humanity is consumed by sensuality.

The real problem is not science and Technology; the problem is Selfishness, apathy and Greedy Science should be based on humanity and Spirituality. In other words, the means to Science and Technology are Spirituality and Humanity. Likely

- Means to Wealth is **Physical Work or Bodily Labour**



- Means to Business is **ethics and Morality**
- Means to Pleasure is **Conscience and Self-control**
- Means to Politics is **Principle**
- Means to Religion is **Spirituality**
- Means to Education is **True Knowledge and Character**
- Means to Success is **Values**

This method may be long or too long, but Gandhi convinced that is the shortest of all. The following lines of Gandhi indicate that “Means and Ends are inseparable components like a Seed and Tree”. “The taste of the fruit depends on the quality of the seed”. (Gandhi, Ends, and Means)

*“The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree, and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree”.* (Gandhi, Hind Swaraj)

### **Rights and Duties**

Gandhi proclaimed, "Real rights are the result of the performance of the Duty". Most of occasions, we focus on our rights and forget our duties. This egoistic nature leads to dominance, competitiveness, and Exploitation. Out of his experience, Gandhi wrote that, *“As a young man I began life by seeking to assert my rights and I soon discovered I had none - not even over my wife. So "I began by discovering and performing my duty by my wife, my children, my friends, companions, and society and I find today that I have greater rights perhaps than any living man I know”.* (Prabhu)

The difference between the right-oriented and Duty oriented is the transformation from Enlightened Self Interest into ethical and Moral Principles of Self Realization. Here, the self is the self in others; thus, self-realization is interpreted as necessarily implying the realization of others and the good of society. (Sharma)

**Table 2: Right vs Duty**

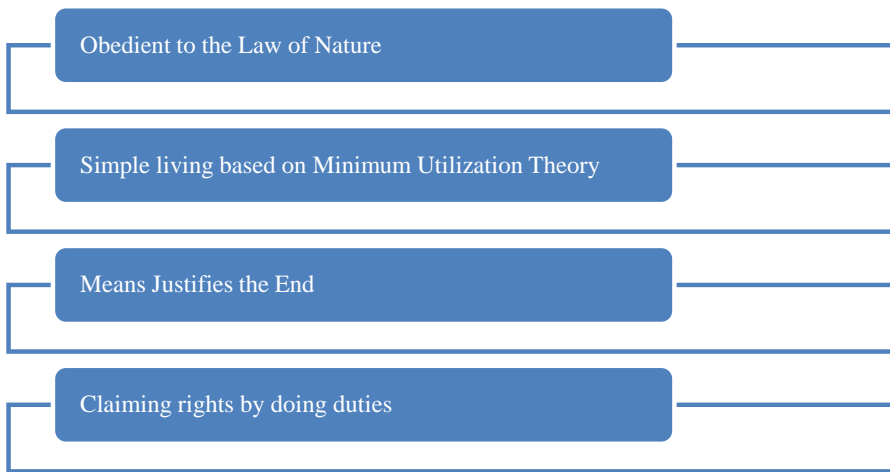
<b>S No.</b>	<b>Right</b>	<b>Duty</b>
1	Ego	Society’s Expectation of the Individual
2	Self-Assertive Claim	Individuals’ recognition of social expectation
3	Social Recognition	Moral obligation and Legal duty

Gandhi viewed the path of Duty presupposes two-fold obligations.

- i. Obligation towards oneself
- ii. Obligation towards the community



While rights start with self-assertion, duty starts with the idea of Self Discipline –Discipline even to the extent of total subordination of self to the higher consciousness. (Sharma)



**Figure 1: Etiquettes for Conscious-Centered Universal System of Harmonious Living**

### **Conclusion**

This descriptive research gives us the choice between Man and Nature, Machine and Men, and Quality of Life and Standard of living. The corporate deliberately tune us towards their personal agenda and make our choice towards less conscience towards universal welfare. The outcome of corporatization is selfishness, greed, and Apathy. These results in exploitation, inequality, domination, war, and competition. As this research indicates Gandhian approach to Spiritual Ecological consciousness will drive us towards co-existence, mutuality, universality, and equitable distribution of wealth. The choice is ours.....

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