

# Reflections on Gandhian thoughts in a Nation amidst Crisis

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## Abstract

*The past century has seen development in environmental consciousness. Gandhi's writing on varied subjects was always interrelated with ethical laws. Just like he believed in the 'Advaita' concept which promotes the unity of humans with everything else, similarly the environment constitutes life within itself in holistic fashion without any division. I will explore how Gandhi always strived for an ecological model that promoted mental and physical harmony rather than a profit-making system as it is an obstacle to higher thinking. It will follow the analysis of the path of Swadeshi and Satyagraha as means of passive resistance which are grounded on Satya and Ahimsa entailing conflict resolution to purify oneself. There will be an advocate for philosophical anthropology which is environmentally conscious and alienates unlimited interference of humankind over resources along with an emphasis on female leadership. There is a sense of recommendation to be followed by people for a sustainable and long-lasting plan for life as a whole. These are essential thoughts to build a future.*

**Keywords:** *Environment, Ahimsa, Modernisation, Injustice, Coronavirus, Consciousness*

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## **Introduction**

Gandhian principles of consciousness, based on environment and humanism, have played a motivational factor for us to slowly come over the challenges posed by COVID 19 in a mental, ecological, physical, and economical manner. The thought of uniting worldwide to engage with this uncertain time has signified that with strength any situation can be overcome. This paper elaborates how by taking into consideration social and political philosophy, the present functioning of the democratic system of our country can be remodelled underlined by Gandhian thoughts.

Mahatma Gandhi was one of the founders of the movement of environmental consciousness in the world. In his manner, he tried to teach humankind the value of a healthy and peaceful life based on non-violence and truth. He focussed on a sustainable living rather than a mechanical one emphasizing the supremacy of universal love by rising above the segregations brought by caste, class, race, gender, etc. According to Vyas, "Gandhiji did not stand for a social and economic order based on material values alone. He always upheld the ideal of plain living and high thinking and worked for a higher standard of living and not merely for a higher standard of living."<sup>1</sup> This pandemic has again resurrected these noble ideas before the world that can hardly be ignored. The importance of co-living and co-sharedness with mutual respect and non-discrimination has come to the forefront. It is now being experienced reasonably. It is the love for each other that would bind us and help us face this trying time. Relative thoughts of positivity and contentment have thus been redefined. His emphasis on yoga and meditation has emerged as a

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<sup>1</sup>Mahatma Gandhi. *Village Swaraj*. ed. H.M. Vyas. (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1962), 03.

hope to sustain in a time of mental chaos. Being in isolation has also defined for people their idea of happiness and not the expectations posed on to them by others where investment has to be done in a person and not the goods. They understand that the 'I' alias 'Brahman' is wholesome and everything is in them and the materialistic aspects are something that revolves around them. Essentialism lies within them and not on the exterior. There is no need to go outside to fulfil their gratifications.

However, the pandemic has brought in both positive and negative aspects. It has displayed the huge gender gap of our society as women are exposed to more care work at home and are also obliged to perform professionally. There is no compensation for these changes in both the domains for measuring the performance standards brought on by Covid. Millions have been pushed into poverty. Increasing workload, domestic and relationship issues and lack of economic support and upcoming obstacles to future endeavours have affected the mental health of people. The section who has emerged out to be more vulnerable is women and children.

People are investing their time more on themselves to grow physically, mentally and spiritually. Taking care of oneself is like investing in the growth of humankind. In order to overcome this, the sense of community companionship is on the rise as people are making efforts to reach out and help those who are in need because of being pushed towards poverty due to lockdown or are facing distresses due to mental health issues or exposed to violence and abuse.

## **Coronavirus and India**

There are 21.6 Million cases of Coronavirus and 774K deaths caused

by it in the world. India itself has 2.65 Million confirmed cases and 50,921 deaths.<sup>2</sup> The country saw five stages of lockdown and even though normal functioning has started, things do not seem to get better for people and the economy in the coming times. The lockdown was done to close human contact to curb this chain of infection. India has been highly appreciated by its decision and the result to contain it successfully.

Previously, the world held the idea that it can function only with the interdependence on each other. It is now impossible to imagine how it could go the other way round. The obstruction of exchange of goods and services is one of the most negative aspects of corona which every country has to deal with. Some countries have manufacturing units but are dependent on another for raw materials and vice-versa which are making things more difficult to function. Certain countries are taking up unethical advantage of this problem and are negotiating for profits for their services. This act is sinful as the interest of a nation's economy should always be less significant than other people's well-being. To get over this challenge, the answer could be found in Gandhi's profound concept of *Gram Swaraj* where he emphasized that every village of India should function as entities of social organization and be self-sufficient in nature. Similarly, every country should be self-reliant i.e. they must-have necessities for survival. No one should suffer from wants and struggle for survival. This issue could be resolved only with mass control.<sup>3</sup> There should be an introduction of moral values in international commerce to prepare the world for a longer run.

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<sup>2</sup>“Coronavirus cases in India”, Google, accessed Sep 15, 2020, [https://www.google.com/search?q=corona+cases+in+india&rlz=1C1AWFC\\_enlN818IN818&oq=corona&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j69i59j35i39j0l2j69i60l3.3240j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=corona+cases+in+india&rlz=1C1AWFC_enlN818IN818&oq=corona&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j69i59j35i39j0l2j69i60l3.3240j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)

<sup>3</sup>Mahatma Gandhi, *Village Swaraj*, ed. H.M. Vyas (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1962), 46.

## **Criticism of Technological Exploitation**

Mahatma Gandhi had termed civilization based on technology as a disease from which it is important to dis+associate oneself. Similarly, COVID -19 has emerged as a call to humankind to rise from its aggressive ways of exploitation. It is staunchly surprising to see that what Gandhi advocated for was so much true and it has now taken up a real shape of its own. The virus emerged as a carrier on those aspects of civilization which Gandhi had opposed. Gandhi had said that the modernity which people were entailing would eventually make them more vulnerable. It can be seen that the global lifestyle indeed made us very weak. It has become difficult to find a sense of privilege both physically and mentally. Since it is not possible to go back and make certain modifications, it is important to pause and reflect how we can enhance the well-being of our planet.

During lockdown, we experienced a cleaner environment and sustainable living which we never thought was possible. This was because multinational companies provided us with an unhindered flow of resources for consumption for comfortable and ‘dependent’ living like vehicles, fast food etc. All this resulted in a huge amount of wastes. This time we learned that it is possible to survive ‘minimally’. Now, companies are giving thought on reducing office spaces which is going to impact the structure of cities and working professionals are considering moving away from cities with the onus of having work from home.

Ecology has always been part of human consciousness which is embroiled in our culture and traditions. Gandhi’s vision of society was guided by ecological practices for the sustenance of humans. His writings on core subjects were always infused with environmentalism. He promoted the idea that a comfort zone is not needed beyond a point. To practice this, one should increase their daily dependence on physical satisfaction which requires their

engagement with the environment. Doing this elevates one's higher thinking and purpose. But his model did not come into practice as it discouraged people to exploit nature to fulfil their own materialistic goals. Therefore, authorities shied away from implementing norms both ethical and legal in nature as it would have prevented them from satisfying their greed for power and position in world politics. They ignored their cultural, social, and moral obligations to take the path of dominance at the world stage.

JC Kumarappa known as 'Green Gandhian' said, "In studying human institutions we should never lose sight of that great teacher, Mother Nature. Anything that we may devise if it is contrary to her ways, she will ruthlessly annihilate sooner or later. Everything in nature seems to follow a cyclic movement. Water from the sea rises as vapour and falls on land in refreshing showers and returns to the sea again ... A nation that forgets or ignores this fundamental process in forming its institutions will disintegrate."<sup>4</sup> This has been proven to be true in practicality as countries that were considered world powers are facing this crisis due to the non-engagement with their spirituality thereby losing one's individuality.

Gandhi said that nothing would go waste or there would be starvation. If people would have consumed what was provided to them by Mother Nature, as she produces enough for us all, as conservation is a feeling and practice shared and acted upon by everyone. He advocated for a peaceful co-existence of humans and non-humans because every life is sacred and meaningful. To live a life like this, *Ahimsa* should be exercised by everyone. "It is a way of

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<sup>4</sup>John S. Moolakkattu, "Revisiting Gandhi's Environmentalism," Terragreen, accessed Sep 09, 2020, [http://terragreen.teriin.org/terragreen/TGOct19/TG\\_CoverStory/mobile/index.html#p=1](http://terragreen.teriin.org/terragreen/TGOct19/TG_CoverStory/mobile/index.html#p=1).

life where individuals act devoid of feelings of anger, enmity, hate, etc. All the relations and activities should take place according to this thought. Its negative sense means not harming others and in a positive sense is charity. It's a weapon to be utilized in a civilized manner. It's a weapon of the strong".<sup>5</sup>

On the other side, we cannot ignore the fact of an incredible rate of growth of the human race brought in by technology. These innovations have only played a crucial role in saving lives, economic and cultural development and improvement in lifestyle which are making our lives easier day by day. However, we are also witnessing this growth of technology in recent times to be fuelling loss of connection with each other at mental levels and physical contact because almost everyone is fascinated by social media contact. This shows lowering of empathy with each other and increase in superficiality as it is providing a virtual platform to exhibit one's 'good' life.

Purely adopting the Gandhian model is not possible but what is important is what efforts we can make to absorb its positive aspects and live a fulfilling life for ourselves and with each other. We don't have to succumb to the delightful picture provided by giant corporations to succumb to consumerism and only to receive from Mother Earth but to give back to it by sustainable and mindful living as well.

## **Gandhi on Dharma**

The term Dharma is derived from the root 'Dhri' which means to sustain or to hold. Dharma is something that holds society or individuals. Religion is not the total connotation of the term Dharma.

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<sup>5</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London: The Bodley Head, 1941), 540.

There is in some sense where both of them agree with one another.

We usually do not recognize the simple regressive things that become our habits and the modern world taught us to be progressive materially and not spiritually. But in fact, actual religion is a matter of realization and connection with the ultimate reality. We are not different from the ultimate reality. There is only one reality and whatever we experience are different facets of that reality. Everything in motion is covered with the goodness of God. We should gather that dealt with happiness through sacrifice. The present world has become a battlefield. All political and religious schools are engaged in increasing their dynasty and territory and increasing the number of their followers through violent means. But these are not the proper ways that someone can be made to follow a religion. For example, fruits appear on trees as natural products. If we try to produce them artificially, it will lose its taste. Similarly, one will lose the real essence of spirituality if asked to practice forcefully. Humans are finite just like other creatures but he can go beyond self. When a bird is in a cage, its wings are of no use. But when it comes out of the cage, using wings it can fly in the sky.

All aspects of life are bounded by Dharma as it is believed in Hinduism because morality comes out of it. Dharma motivates one to follow laws which are social and moral in nature for sustenance on spiritual and materialistic life. For Gandhi, Dharma constitutes religion and duty. Performance of their respective duties by people helps make the society more self-sufficient and maintain social order. When people will understand that Dharma is a quality of soul, they will know how to live and have a good relationship with others.

One should follow the religion of humanity which suggests doing service for others means doing service to God. Religion helps us get closer to truth. Gandhi had suggested in *Hind Swaraj* to contribute to

the larger context and benefit everyone. Dharma lays down norms for the society.<sup>6</sup> To engage in these activities Gandhi promotes practising of 'Purusharthas'. If one does it, the person witnesses transformation in oneself and is able to do tasks which are desirable for personal and social concerns. Therefore, Dharma and Moksha (spiritual values) and Artha and Kama (secular values) helps one develop socio-politically.

### **Gandhian thoughts**

Mahatma Gandhi's understanding and knowledge of humanitarian issues was a pinnacle in its form. It is very surprising to find answers to any situation of life and the world in his writings. To uphold the worth of co-living, Dharma plays an essential role in maintaining the harmony between humankind and nature whose amalgamation leads to cosmological awakening. Environmental ethics plays a major part in promoting global humanism as it advocates coexistence, co-sharedness, and sustainability. This is also in consonance with *Vedantic* thought. Humanity has to protect the resources so as a reverence to the future generations where development seeks the preservation of the heritage for the latter. Respecting the sanctity of life, people should follow the ethic to behave to realize the value of available resources and services as Gandhi promotes the view of the right action. Harmony with the environment with *Ahimsa* (Non-violence) is related to the vital understanding of Gandhi with Hinduism which entailed that moral action has to be followed by the

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<sup>6</sup>Satya Sundar Shetty, "Reinterpreting Gandhi's Notion of "Dharma": An Entanglement of Duty, Religion, and Ethics," Gandhian Institutions – Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal, accessed Nov. 02, 2020, [https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/reinterpreting-gandhis-notion-of-dharma.html#:~:text=According%20to%20Gandhi%2C%20dharma%20means,teachings%20and%20approach%20to%20life.&text=Gandhi%20identifies%20dharma%20as%20duty.&text=His%20view%20was%20to%20have,sannyasa%20\(an%20ascetic%20life\).](https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/reinterpreting-gandhis-notion-of-dharma.html#:~:text=According%20to%20Gandhi%2C%20dharma%20means,teachings%20and%20approach%20to%20life.&text=Gandhi%20identifies%20dharma%20as%20duty.&text=His%20view%20was%20to%20have,sannyasa%20(an%20ascetic%20life).)

right action. Gandhi took the idea of *Ahimsa* from the five fundamental vows from Jaina school: *Ahimsa*, *Satya*, *Asetya*, *Brahmacharya*, and *Aparigraha*. “From a Gandhian perspective, the present environmental mess, ranging from deforestation, soil and biodiversity loss, to pollution and climate change, is a disease and not the symptom. A good doctor treats the disease and not the symptom. The disease is the very concept and patterns of growth and development that are being followed everywhere.”<sup>7</sup>

The current pandemic has led people to establish a new ground for rethinking the base of human-nature establishment which is underlined by practicing morality necessary for spiritual awakening. Civilization will be hard hit if this cooperation flies away. The cultural norm of *Sarvodaya* will be helpful which is to uplift oneself to uplift the community. “He emphasized that everyone's work irrespective of the difference in income and social status possesses the same value and based on cooperation. This is an attempt to reform society and the individual. Individuals develop a conscience for their responsibility for others. In this way, people belonging to different castes, religions, and races will promote the well-being of all. This also promotes cultural unity.”<sup>8</sup>

The role of Indian Self –Rule and sustainable development in *Hind Swaraj* which is governed by self-control is crucial. A relationship in a social, cultural, and political context is created with self-reliance or *Swadeshi* in a homogenous form. He led this idea because he saw India from the perspectives of farmers as it is still primarily an agricultural economy. He had faith in the divinity of life which

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<sup>7</sup>John S. Moolakkattu, “Revisiting Gandhi’s Environmentalism,” Terragreen, accessed Sep 09, 2020, [http://terragreen.teriin.org/terragreen/TGOct19/TG\\_CoverStory/mobile/index.html#p=1](http://terragreen.teriin.org/terragreen/TGOct19/TG_CoverStory/mobile/index.html#p=1).

<sup>8</sup>Anonymous

entailed dignity in work guided by self-sufficiency including all the forms of life. He led the thought of *Swacchta* while preaching for the upliftment of Harijans and advocated for cleanliness. He included both inner and outer cleanliness which promotes health and nutrition beyond caste, class, and race. He believed that the habit of hygiene also gets embedded in one's personality. The opportunity of doing cleaning work will help absorb the distinctions between people as then the importance of those doing this work will be realized and not be taken for granted.

His belief in spirituality led him to find sustenance in society, the environment, and the economy. The *Advaitin* concept encompasses this unity in all lives. This balanced form gives a moral character. He talked about *Swaraj* advocating love for the community, environment, and way of life. Dependency on local products upholds happiness giving cultural and moral autonomy to the people involved. Gandhi's model was opposed by the west clearly who distinguished between the haves and have nots and struck down this idea for their political dominance. Arne Naess said there are many spiritual and philosophical paths to a proper spiritual perception of the earth as sacred and towards actions congruent with belief.<sup>9</sup>

Since the pandemic is followed by different eating practices, his concept of vegetarianism wins the stand. Gandhi puts, "I do feel that spiritual progress demands at some stage that we should cease to kill our animals for our bodily wants. Any seeker of the truth and spiritual advancement should use vegetarian food as a means, for purification of heart, for cleansing of the soul, to be nearer to the awakening and

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<sup>9</sup>Bron Taylor, "Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality (Part- I )": From Deep Ecology to Radical Environmentalism," *Religion*, accessed Sep 09, 2020, 180, <https://indiachinainstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Taylor-Religion312.pdf>.

enlightenment of inner essence.”<sup>10</sup>

Criticizing the capitalist outlook Gandhi said that the idea of mass production has created a huge gap in the emotional functioning of humans and has created a sense of alienation. To explain this he distinguishes economics and ethics. He says that any economy which hurts people is immoral. To curb this, he promoted moral principles to replenish used resources and avoid waste. The Second World War dawned upon an essential relationship between ecology-economics and politics. Since these linkages, it is now after COVID 19 that the world is witnessing a balanced nature as ecology has dominated the other two. This change was inevitable as it already seemed that the world had reached its carrying capacity.

Evolutionary biologist Rob Wallace states that the industrial model of livestock production with multinational companies are trying to make as much profit as they can to be the reason behind the outbreak of viruses.<sup>11</sup> For generations of wealth, they fail to provide a sustainable structure for sheds. The infringement of the space belonging to the wildlife by humans are one of the main contributing factors as this leads to swift mutation of the concerned viruses creating havoc when they come in contact with humans. Despite such losses the authorities fail to keep them in check which leads to their repeated occurrences and they try to make it a political and economic gain for themselves.

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<sup>10</sup>A.K. Singh, “Mahatma Gandhi was an Ecological –Yogi & An Environmental Mystique,” accessed Sep25, 2020, p 03, [https://www.academia.edu/34717168/MAHATMA\\_GANDHI\\_WAS\\_AN\\_ECOLOGICAL-YOGI\\_and\\_AN\\_ENVIRONMENTAL-MYSTIQUE\\_](https://www.academia.edu/34717168/MAHATMA_GANDHI_WAS_AN_ECOLOGICAL-YOGI_and_AN_ENVIRONMENTAL-MYSTIQUE_)

<sup>11</sup>Rob Wallace, “Capitalist Agriculture and Covid-19: A deadly Combination”, interview by Yaak Pabst, in *Climate & Capitalism*, March 11, 2020.

## **Gandhi and Women**

Men and women since the dawn of the human race have been conditioned in a certain hierarchical way. Most women in those terms perceive themselves to be psychologically and biologically inferior. Adding on to the pressure, personal laws of certain religions, customs have worsened the situation because they impose challenges like Purdah, Dowry, Women's Honour, birth control, etc.

Women have been understood to be close to nature and have affinity towards all forms having life or non-life. They are producers as well as preservers of life. For sustenance of their family they associate themselves everyday with the environment like fetching water, firewood and cultivating crops. According to Hunter, "Ecofeminism helps us see that we are all connected, that divisions such as human and nonhuman, are false binaries - and that by harming nonhuman forms of life, we harm ourselves. Ecofeminism asks that we eliminate all forms of "power over," and that we live in equity with all biotic life."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, times like this when everyone is affected by the pandemic requires feminist leadership. Having close collaboration to issues like this has insinuated them to raise their voice against rampant consumerism. This idea has been beautifully explained by Ms. Srilatha,

I define feminist leadership as a process of transforming ourselves, our communities and the larger world, to embrace a feminist vision of social justice. It's the process of working to make the feminist vision of anon-violent, non-

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<sup>12</sup>Heidi Hunter, "Earth Day, Ecofeminism and Racial Injustice in the Year of the Plague, COVID-19", accessed Sep. 01, 2020, <https://msmagazine.com/2020/04/22/earth-day-ecofeminism-and-racial-injustice-in-the-year-of-the-plague-covid-19/>.

discriminatory world a reality...it's about mobilizing others around this vision of change. Humans should live in a non-exploitative manner with others.<sup>13</sup>

Domination of women in this forum will lead to control of the activities of unfiltered consumerist patriarchal culture. Ecofeminism displays an interdependent approach. It entails that everyone is essential and not superior to each other and tries to remove the categorization of subjugation based on dualism. The removal of hierarchy is necessary for mutual respect and preservation.

Mahatma Gandhi's thoughts on sexual equality of mind display respect for women. His thoughts on the empowerment of women during the time of crisis exhibit a significant strength in character. Although his certain ideas were backwards but still his thoughts for them are pertinent. Gandhi in his letter to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur said,

If you women would only realize your dignity and privilege, and make full use of it for mankind, you will make it much better than it is. But man has delighted in enslaving you and you have proved willing slaves till the slaves and the slaveholders have become one in the crime degrading humanity. My special function from childhood, you might say, has been to make women realize her dignity. I was once a slave holder myself but Ba proved an unwilling slave and thus opened my eyes to my mission. Her task was finished. Now I am in search of a woman who would realize her mission. Are you that woman, will you be one?<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Srilatha Batliwala, "The Feminist Leadership Project," accessed on Aug 27, 2020, <https://feministleadership.org/2020/04/30/meet-srilatha-batliwala/>.

<sup>14</sup>Jaya Jaitly, "Gandhi and Women's Empowerment," accessed on Sep 15, 2020, <https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-articles/gandhi-and-women-empowerment.php>.

He advocated that for women to rise above their society driven backseat and fulfil their potential for the well-being of humanity. To start off with this task, he initially targeted the private sphere. He motivated men and women to do the housework together as he held that a home belongs to both. This was done to improve the cultural discourse of a new society of humankind. This constructive proposal promoted for women a dignified life because they would no longer be denigrated with the status of being the primary caregiver. Gandhi's concept of empowerment entailed the "welfare of all through the weakest of the society."<sup>15</sup> It is therefore uncanny to experience that despite the constitutional rights given to them, they are still highly deprived. In Gandhi's opinion, one of the ways for empowering them was through encouraging financial independence by associating with women Self Help Groups (SHG) which can create a huge impact. Bringing about such change will be difficult in women who are tradition bound especially in rural areas. Therefore providing mental courage will be crucial here with group formation. "Poor women can internalise production possibilities in groups only. They are better equipped to overcome the negative social pressure and gender biases operating against them through group identity and activity."<sup>16</sup>

Women were highly inspired from him and some of the famous personalities like Sarojini Naidu, Sushila Nayyar exuded their energy to participate in the struggle for independence with the meaning of liberation provided by him. He promoted them to participate in the

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<sup>15</sup>Marina Periera, "Gandhian Principles and Women Empowerment through Self-Help Groups," accessed on Aug 20, 2020, <https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-articles/gandhian-principles-and-women-empowerment-through-Self-help-groups.php>.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

freedom struggle advocating that they have a bigger role to play and give themselves an essential thought to their Self. They took the initiative right at their homes and tried to increase the moral level by expanding their boundaries of growth. Gandhi helped in rooting out age old regressive practices against women. He always held that women have an innate competence for nonviolence.

“Whenever there has been disease outbreaks and the societies are getting infected ‘they expose and exploit existing forces of marginalization, seeking out fault lines of gender, race, caste and class.’”<sup>17</sup> Women belonging to low income have been cut off with stimulus funding and girls belonging to adolescent age have no access to phones for their online classes. Women’s jobs will be affected 1.8 times more than that of men and their unpaid work i.e. caring for children and family members will increase. “Since this outbreak on the public display is the best and worst of people. A clear message from *Bhagavad Gita* of continuing our Karma in the midst of despair, disruption and death is so relevant.”<sup>18</sup> To help empower the girls during this time, the role of communities, local leaders and teachers become crucial. An outreach program should be there to keep a tab that these girls are studying during this period and are not at loss in terms of their education. India till date hasn’t witnessed any women driven movements despite the high intensity of their exploitation. Due to changes in the environment women have been their direct victims because of their close association with it. They are the most affected in terms of violence meted out at them, malnourishment and ill health. Despite being the primary caregivers and food producers they are ignored.

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<sup>17</sup>Melinda Gates, “The Pandemic’s Toll on Women,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 15, 2020. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2020-07-15/melinda-gates-pandemics-toll-women>

<sup>18</sup>. Ibid.

According to Vandana Shiva, women have an affinity towards the earth-health. One of the reasons is their ever growing attachment due to their reproductive capacity and increased dependency for sustenance. They utilise its resources time and again in order to safeguard their family and community. Shiva links causes of male domination and injustice towards women with environmental degradation<sup>19</sup>. She has vastly written about the plight that women of third world countries face due to corporate infringement and capitalism. Women's liberation and harmonious sustenance of the environment should be freed from capitalist domination. She believes that the hype surrounding the green revolution is a capitalist way to maximize their profits. They convince the farmers to move on from subsistence farming to the production for the global market. Due to the mentioned factors, the responsibility on women increases as they have to deal with the degraded environment i.e. contamination of food and water, depleting daily sources alongside taking care of her children. She also faces abuse mentally and physically from the hands of male superiors and family members where patriarchal norms are rampant<sup>20</sup>.

Tribal villages have a system of 'Madait' which means cooperation. According to Gandhi, this is one of the central aspects of the society. His emphasis on decentralization of political and socio- economic systems can be advocated for the upliftment of women. Community should play a vital role here by supporting women led groups and give them a chance to showcase their talents. One of the examples demonstrating this is certain villages in Rajasthan where women engage in making local textiles and handiwork which are imported, thus supporting their families; they no longer have to be dependent on their husbands for survival. Despite having constitutional rights,

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<sup>19</sup>Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, *Ecofeminism* (London: Zed Books, 2014), 165.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 168-170.

policies made for them fail to reach them for development investments. The meaning of empowerment means possession of resources to make decisions which affects individuals and also others. Women belonging to the disadvantaged groups face the issue that they are dependent on others for resources. When women involve themselves in self-help groups, financial independence increases their decision making powers and courage for self-employment. When a group of women are working together on something, it reduces their chances of exploitation. 'Think global, act local, should be followed. Looking at the current situation, there is an emerging voice for feminist leadership which could empower the most vulnerable. Feminist leaders must understand that will need to give attention to the affected communities and open doors for them to access.

## **Conclusion**

In *Samsara* at some point in people's lives, after experiencing a series of unsatisfying relationships, careers, and indulgence in technology, they realize that none of them can provide them with fulfilment. To overcome this, they try to find out a kind of spiritual awakening or establish a personal connection with God with the disbelief of searching for this completion at the material level with a separate self which gives them more suffering. Gandhian principles have been widely discussed by scholars but its practical application hasn't been much brought to picture for everyday life. His principles formed the basis for morality, nature, and ethics. Extending on this point Peter Drucker in "*the post-capitalist society*" says that in the modern world, management scientists have taken human nature to be granted as they are based on scientific notions<sup>21</sup>. People's awareness takes

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<sup>21</sup>Peter Drucker, *The Post-Capitalist Society* (Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1993), 45.

‘other’ forms - “*I am a student*”, “*I am a CEO*” etc. Their high physical, spiritual and creative possibilities are ignored and they are considered to be objects to be manipulated and managed for their profit. This is due to the misunderstanding of human nature. Peace is what present reality is, in a context where *anatta* advocates selflessness. The present reality is divided between the subject which perceives and acts upon and *object* which is being perceived or acted on. Moral actions guided by spiritual awakening are amidst all the social, political, cultural, and economic factors that influence and keep us engaged in our day to day lives. *Consciousness* is at the grassroots of every sensation and thought we witness. That is the real “*I*”. It is not confined to mind, body, or breath or any race, caste, creed, etc. and remains unrestrained from causality, space, and time since it does not make the body an important entity. Therefore, humans are not objects but are unknown and eternal subjects within themselves. Dharma stands as a moral ideal where it tells humans that they are not weak as Self is an infinite source of strength. This provides an individual with an ethical base for social behaviour. It provides the courage to face life with hope and strength. Modern life should follow the concept of *Aparigraha*, the idea of non-possession. When humans realize that they are spiritual entities the possibility of genuine moral and ethical relationships increases. This decreases a totalitarian framework and increases humanitarian approaches to management in social, political, and economic frameworks. This is the spirit which humankind is experiencing now with the ongoing crisis which was way long waited for. COVID 19 has provided us with the perspective of inner management along with a developed relationship with ecology.

The lesson which lies here is that the idea of sovereignty should not be limited to the territory but basic amenities as well. The official system must adopt practices that must reinstall faith in its citizens that all of us are in this together. The local market should be provided with

incentives and deranged and the needy one should be provided with services that meet their needs which should act as a moral imperative for its people. The solution that can come out of this situation is that people can thereon engage in cultural, social, economic, technology, and political issues underlined with ethics. Gandhi had suggested good sanitation, cleanliness which have become the pillars for curbing the spread of this pandemic. *Swacchta* and *Swadeshi* have become principal guidelines. Harmonious living with others on *Sarvodaya* will promote well-being.<sup>22</sup> This can be seen as an opportunity by the Indian government to redeem them from the debt of Gandhi by reviving the rural economy. The marginalized rural areas have led to herd migration to the cities looking for equal opportunities for either survival or hopes for higher standards of living because socio-cultural spheres of a state are not functioning with moral holds. We cannot expect development unless the economy functions in inclusive terms.

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<sup>22</sup>Salil Tripathi, "Mahatma Gandhi's Talisman is more relevant than ever today", *Livemint*, Opinion, accessed May 10, 2020 <https://www.livemint.com/opinion/columns/mahatma-gandhi-s-talisman-is-more-relevant-than-ever-today-11585772154724.html>.

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