

MAHATMA



GANDHI

AND THE ENVIRONMENT

ANALYSING GANDHIAN ENVIRONMENTAL THOUGHT

T N Khoshoo
John S Moolakkattu



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Mahatma Gandhi and the Environment

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The Energy and Resources Institute

© 1995 The Energy and Resources Institute, New Delhi
First reprint 1996
Second reprint 2002
Third reprint 2006
Revised edition 2009

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ISBN 978-81-7993-223-0

Published by
TERI Press
The Energy and Resources Institute
Darbari Seth Block
IHC Complex
Lodhi Road
New Delhi – 110 003

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Printed in India

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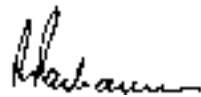
Foreword

Throughout human history, there has probably not been a person who has made such a difference to the lives of such a large number of people during one single lifetime as Mahatma Gandhi. Indeed, there have been religious leaders and revolutionaries whose work has spread much beyond their lifetimes, and in fact, most religions that have emerged over the last 2000 years or so have spread only after their founders departed from this world. Gandhiji is known as the father of the nation by all Indians, who in 1947 numbered 345 million, perhaps the largest number to have been influenced so profoundly by the actions of one individual in his lifetime. This culminated in the successful attainment of freedom by non-violent means. But there are several aspects of Gandhiji's contributions that have remained relatively unknown. One such facet of his thought and beliefs was environmental protection and ecological balance.

My acquaintance with this dimension of Gandhian thought only began when Dr T N Khoshoo, a respected colleague, brought to my attention a few quotations of Gandhiji that showed enormous wisdom and farsightedness in highlighting the conflict between environment and development that vested interests and human greed have created in recent decades. Dr Khoshoo was Secretary to the Government of India in the then Department of Environment. When his term as Secretary ended in 1985, I invited him to come and work at TERI as a Distinguished Fellow. He remained associated with TERI in that position till he breathed his last on 10 June 2002.

When Dr Khoshoo and I discussed Gandhiji's relevance to environmental thought and action in this period, I encouraged him to write a book on the subject. With his customary dedication, Dr Khoshoo applied himself diligently to this project and very soon came up with a manuscript that was

insightful, absorbing, and full of valuable knowledge. TERI was privileged to publish this book, which incidentally went out of print very soon, and it was only after the third reprint in 2006 that we decided that perhaps a new version of Gandhiji's environmental thoughts should be produced by TERI. For this purpose, we were able to get the assistance and involvement of Prof. John S Moolakkattu, who is currently the Gandhi-Luthuli Chair Professor in Peace Studies, School of Politics at the University of Kwazulu Natal, Durban, South Africa. Prof. Moolakkattu has added another valuable dimension to Gandhiji's environmental philosophy, embedded as it is in the larger canvas of Gandhian principles and worldly vision. We really could not have blended two more valuable sets of analyses and thoughts than those provided by Dr T N Khoshoo and Prof. Moolakkattu. In this day and age, when Gandhiji's relevance is becoming increasingly clear and his sage advice more pointedly applicable, this book should really become the Bible for those who have any interest in protecting the earth's environment and natural resources, and therefore, safeguarding the future of the human race and all species that inhabit this planet. Sustainable development and the protection of natural resources are neither a simple technological fix nor a mere substitution of one set of materials with another. They involve in their fullest form changes in lifestyles and basic values. This is what Gandhiji conveyed in a very simple but profound way, and this is what is provided in the following pages. I am sure the readers of this book would find it absorbing and thought provoking.



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Director-General
The Energy and Resources Institute, New Delhi
and Chairman
IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)

Authors

Dr T N Khoshoo (1927–2002)

Dr T N Khoshoo was a unique environmental scientist and thinker. He started his career as a geneticist and a breeder of trees, ornamentals and subsidiary food plants; turned his attention to ecorestoration of derelict lands; conservation and utilization of biodiversity; sustainable development in resource-rich and technology-poor developing countries; and then to Gandhian environmentalism and development aimed at welfare of the weakest (antodaya) leading to welfare of all (sarvodaya). In Indian parlance, a Sarvodaya society is a holistic version of what the West now calls a 'sustainable society'. Dr T N Khoshoo was associated with TERI for about 17 years, after he retired from office in 1985 as Secretary of the Department of Environment, Government of India.

Dr Khoshoo received a number of prestigious medals, prizes, and awards, including the Padma Bhushan (in 1992), one of the highest civilian honours in India. His achievements are best summed up in the citation that accompanied the award of the Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar, Government of India (in 1993), for his contributions to the field of environmental management and sustainable development:

Dr T N Khoshoo's breadth of vision and depth of knowledge, coupled with broad humanism, has made him what he is today, a dedicated strategist for human survival. His work both in high office and outside relating to the management of resources, the utilization of biodiversity and the need to develop forests for long-range ecological security are pathbreaking.

In 1996, Dr Khoshoo received the United Nations Award (UNEP Sasakawa Environment Prize), the highest award in the world in the area of environment.

John S Moolakkattu

John S Moolakkattu (born 22 April 1959) is currently Gandhi-Luthuli Chair Professor in Peace Studies, School of Politics, University of Kwazulu Natal, Durban, South Africa, and editor of *Gandhi Marg*, the quarterly journal of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi. He had studied at Jawaharlal Nehru University, University of Bradford, University of Hyderabad and Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, majoring in subjects like political science, peace studies, and international relations. He has published two books and over 50 research articles in various national and international refereed journals. He has been a recipient of the Commonwealth (UK) scholarship, UGC Research Award, Commonwealth (UK) Fellowship, and Fulbright Visiting Lectureship. His areas of interest include Gandhian studies; peace and conflict resolution studies; political theory, including international theory; gender and development; decentralization and participatory planning, and African political economy. He has had a total of 25 years of teaching and research experience at St Joseph's College, Calicut, and Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala.

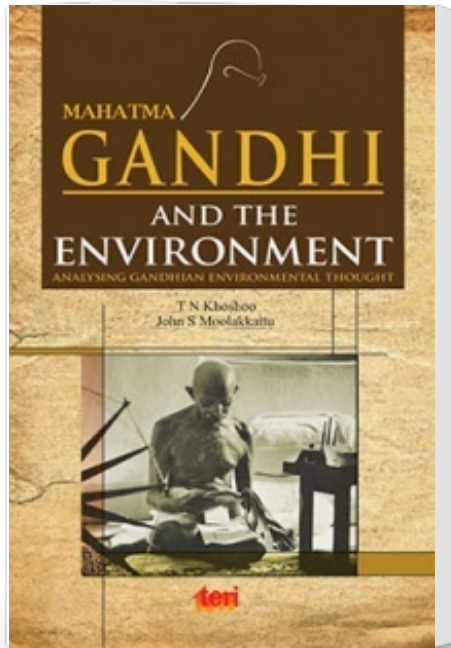
Synopsis

The inspiration for this effort came during the 125th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, and it originated from a suggestion that there was a need for a formal paper on the Mahatma's perceptions of the environment and development. Ideally, one would have liked to write the present account after going through the 100 volumes of Gandhi's writings. This was not possible in the short time available. However, the benefit of a book of *Quotes of Gandhi* made available to me by H P Nanda, the former Chairman of Escorts, in January 1985.

The present work is partly based on the personal notes on the subject made by the first author over the years. Gandhiji's sketch used on the cover is from the new year card that accompanied the book of quotes. The sketch is incredibly simple, yet it is forceful and embodies the essence of what Gandhi was and stood for. This book is perhaps one of the few attempts on Gandhi as an environmentalist, and at the time of its first edition was the only work of this kind. In its present form, it is more an introduction, rather than a comprehensive research document. The latter needs to be attempted, keeping in view the fact that environment is now a meeting ground of a very large number of disciplines.

Writing about Gandhi has been a rare experience and an education. There is no doubt that he was much ahead of his time, as is borne out by his life and work. Few could have made such futuristic statements on environment and development (Appendix I), particularly when, at that time, environmental problems were either not too obvious, or at best were only in their incipient stages. It needed the Mahatma's mind and eye to discern these, and talk and write about the same. This only shows his forethought and vision of the shape of things to come.

Mahatma Gandhi and the Environment : Analysing Gandhian Environmental Thought



Publisher : **TERI Press**

ISBN : 9788179932230

Author : **T N Khoshoo,
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Type the URL : <http://www.kopykitab.com/product/6080>



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