

MAHATMA



# GANDHI

## AND THE ENVIRONMENT

ANALYSING GANDHIAN ENVIRONMENTAL THOUGHT

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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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