

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Sustainable Development and Poverty Alleviation- A Green Economy Initiative

Marina Bertha Pereira

(Co-Ordinator MA Economics & Director Gandhian Studies Centre,
Nagindas Khandwala College, Malad (West), Mumbai 400064)

Email: marina_bertha@rediffmail.com, marina.pereira07@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Sustainable development requires Inclusive growth and ecological conservation. Our future generations will inherit the values and environment we leave behind. There is enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed. The marginalised in society need to be provided with opportunities to improve their capabilities. Gandhiji's development paradigm namely Sarvodaya through Antyodaya, implying the welfare of all through the weakest of the society holds great value in meeting the challenges of this Millennium. This Paper is a Case study describing the Green Economy initiative of the Gandhian Studies Centre of our institution. With a twofold objective of Inclusive Growth and environmental protection the "Say No To Plastic" campaign was launched on October 2, 2012 in our Centre. Marginalised women identified by the students and staff from nearby areas stitch designer cloth bags from white cotton material provided by the Centre. Students paint patriotic or environment-friendly messages on them. These women also stitch everyday vegetable purchase and shopping bags from old bedsheets, sofa covers, etc. collected by the Centre. An exhibition-cum-sale of these bags is organised twice a year during the Non violence week in October and January in the campus and the women receive remuneration from the sales proceeds. This win-win strategy explains the Green Economy initiative in the context of Sustainable development and Poverty eradication. It can serve as an instrument of change we wish to see in the world.

Key words Sustainable Development, inclusive growth, Gandhian, green economy

Received 10.01.2017 Accepted 02.02.2017

© 2017 AELS, INDIA

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development requires Inclusive growth and ecological conservation. "There is enough for everybody's need, but not enough for anybody's greed," said Mahatma Gandhi. India faces many challenges in the New Millennium. Most notable among them is attaining the objective of Inclusive growth and reducing the Great Divide between the haves and the have-nots. On the one hand, the affluent are always clamouring for more while on the other, those in grinding poverty are struggling for mere survival in dehumanized conditions. Efforts should be made to bridge the gaps existing today. Otherwise, these gaps, if widened beyond a point give way to serious problems that escalate into out-blown proportion.

Development should facilitate the integrated growth of all individuals in society. It requires concern and commitment on the part of decision-makers to introduce reforms that reduce social and economic disparity and bring about upliftment of the marginalised. The underprivileged in society need to be provided with opportunities to improve their capabilities.

The plans for the economic development of our country should pay attention to the most backward and poorest people first. A beginning has to be made from the bottom of the pyramid with the people who have been left behind or swept aside. Growth that doesn't leave women, tribals, dalits and poor behind is defined as inclusive growth. Only Inclusive growth will lead to sustainable development. [1,5,6,7,11]

We cannot have real peace in the world if we look at each other's countries as sources for raw materials or as markets for finished industrial goods. The seeds of war are sown with economic greed. The economists and industrialists of our time fail to see when enough is enough. Even when countries reach a very high material standard of living, they are still caught up with the idea of economic growth. Those who do not know when enough is enough will never have enough, but those who know when enough is enough already have enough.

In "Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics As If People Mattered" the British economist Schumacher [14] discusses the destruction of ecological balance due to a materialistic profit-oriented society. In this era of globalization, luxuries have become necessities. The consumerist environment pollutes the youth with envy and greed. Our future generations will inherit the values and environment we leave behind. He called Gandhiji the greatest 'people's economist'. Gandhiji's development paradigm namely *Sarvodaya* through *Antyodaya*, implying the welfare of all through the weakest of the society holds great value in meeting the challenges posed by globalisation. The only effective means of distributing purchasing power is to provide productive employment to people. Gandhiji promoted production for the masses and not mass production. Instead of making its founders fabulously rich, Gandhi's khadi movement had the distributive power of putting a few valuable rupees into the pockets of the poorest of Indians. Spinning brought a measure of income and self-worth to those who desperately needed work. [2,9,10,15]

Gandhian Economics emphasizes minimization as opposed to maximization of wants, a co-operative approach rather than a competitive approach, the trusteeship principle, a village economy, conservation of resources and the environment. He gave importance to need-based and not want-based activities. The ultimate social order envisioned by Gandhian economics is the goal of promotion of happiness of all. Gandhian principles will definitely foster inclusive growth and environmental protection and lead to sustainable development.

Nobel laureate in Economics Prof. Theodore Schultz calls investment in education as human capital formation. The Youth are dynamic and can bring about a change in the world. Education has a vital role in building up a democratic, humane and inclusive society. In what is perceived to be the new social order being ushered in, vital aspects such as principles, conscience, character, morality, humaneness, sacrifice have become just secondary or inconsequential. By development, what is commonly understood is material advancement.¹⁶ Values associated with community like compassion and benevolence are very essential for maintenance of the fabric of society. Markets are essentially guided by narrow interests as the market participants become impersonal and co-operation vacates space for competition [3].

Akin to the views of Mohan⁸ and Rege [13], education should be truly inclusive and foster cohesiveness in society. It should reduce social disparity, mitigate gender inequality and empower the less privileged. According to Cotton and Winter [4], Social education is not just coming out with a degree. It is how you change and what your values are when you finish. Sustainable development is a way of thinking about how we organise our lives and work including our education system so that we don't destroy our planet.

We have to inculcate strong values in our future generations as well as leave them a healthy bountiful environment. Dr. N. Radhakrishnan [12] in his book 'The Sparks of Non-Violence' has advocated that the youth must learn from the life of Gandhiji. With this backdrop, this Paper describes the "Say No To Plastic" campaign of the Gandhian Studies Centre of our institution. Functioning since 2007, the Centre received UGC grant from 2010 to 2013 under the Scheme Epoch-Making Thinkers of India, under the Eleventh Five Year Plan. The driving force of the Centre is a group of very dedicated student volunteers highly motivated to bring about some change in the world. The Green Economy initiative of the Gandhian Studies Centre can achieve Sustainable development and Poverty eradication and thereby serve as an instrument of change we wish to see in the world.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Objectives of the study are as follows:

- To understand the significance of Gandhian Economics in achieving sustainable development.
- To analyse the role of the Say No to Plastic Campaign in achieving the objectives of Inclusive Growth and environmental protection.
- To sensitise the youth to the problems of the marginalized and involve them in community efforts for poverty alleviation.
- To create awareness about the need for recycling and conserving resources.
- To study the beneficial impact of this campaign on the marginalized women as well as the student volunteers

This study is based on the following Hypothesis:

"The Say No to Plastic Campaign – the Green Economy initiative of the Gandhian Studies Centre is a win-win strategy in the context of Sustainable development and Poverty eradication. It can serve as an instrument of change we wish to see in the world."

This Paper is a Case study describing the Green Economy initiative of the Gandhian Studies Centre of our institution. With a twofold objective of Inclusive Growth and environmental protection the

“Say No To Plastic” campaign was launched on October 2, 2012 in our Centre. Marginalised women identified by the students and staff from nearby areas stitch designer cloth bags from white cotton material provided by the Centre. Students paint patriotic or environment-friendly messages on them. These women also stitch everyday vegetable purchase and shopping bags from old bedsheets, sofa covers, etc. collected by the Centre. An exhibition-cum-sale of these bags is organised twice a year during the Non violence week in October and January in the campus and the women receive remuneration from the sales proceeds. Since October 2, 2014 this campaign has been incorporated into the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. Students create awareness of the dangers of plastic bags in littering and clogging drains and promote the use of cloth substitutes. This win-win strategy explains the Green Economy initiative in the context of Sustainable development and Poverty eradication. It can serve as an instrument of change we wish to see in the world.

RESULTS

The Say No to Plastic Campaign – the Green Economy initiative of the Gandhian Studies Centre is definitely a win-win strategy in the context of Sustainable development and Poverty eradication. This campaign has a beneficial impact on both - the marginalised women as well as the student volunteers.

The marginalised women are provided with self-employment and income earning opportunities. At their homes itself, the material is supplied to them and the design details are explained by the students. The finished bags are collected from the women and the money is paid to them immediately after the sale. The income comes in handy to meet various emergencies. Sheelaben used the money for her medical expenses while Kantaben used it for her child’s tuition fees. Shrimati Joshi did not have to depend on her son and daughter-in-law for minor expenses. The amount of money may not be large but it definitely empowers the women because they do not have to plead or beg for small sums of money from their spouses or relatives. Being active participants in this campaign they feel involved in the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. The awareness of their contribution towards environmental protection increases their dignity, self-worth and self-respect.

The campaign has very useful intangible by-products. It sensitises the youth to the problems of the marginalised by involving them in community efforts for poverty alleviation. It also creates awareness among the youth and the society at large the need for recycling and conserving resources. The campaign unearths hidden and mobilises latent talents, improves confidence levels and communication skills of the volunteers and leads to their overall personality development. It incorporates value education in higher education by inculcating the values of patience, honesty, sincerity and dignity of labour. Through this practical experience, many lessons are learnt in sales, purchase, accounting, management, leadership, problem-solving and peaceful conflict-resolution. This Green Economy initiative can certainly serve as an instrument of change we wish to see in the world.

DISCUSSION

What India needs is distributive justice and environmental protection. In this era of globalization, Gandhian economic principles can go a long way in combating the evils of a consumerist materialistic society. The education system must inculcate simple living and high thinking. Development must be people-centred thus respecting humanity and spreading a wave of peace and harmony. We must synergize our efforts and focus on green economy initiatives which promote inclusive growth to achieve the goal of sustainable development and protect our planet. We must be the change we wish to see in the world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Shri TRK Somaiya of Mumbai Sarvoday Mandal for his constant support and guidance to our Gandhian Studies Centre. My heartfelt gratitude to my College Principal Dr. Ancy Jose for giving me the opportunity to carry out this Green Economy initiative. I also wish to acknowledge the efforts of the student volunteers and women involved without whom this venture would not have been possible.

REFERENCES

1. Bandopadhyaya J (1969). Social and Political Thought of Gandhi. Allied Publishers
2. Chakrabarti M (2000). The Gandhian Philosophy of the Spinning Wheel. Concept

- Publishing House New Delhi
3. Chattopadhyay S (2009). The Market in Higher Education: Concern for Quality and Equality. *Economic and Political Weekly*, July, 18 Vol. XLIV No. 29
 4. Cotton D and Winter F (2010). It's not just Bits of Paper and Light Bulbs. A Review of Sustainability Pedagogies and their Potential for Use in Higher Education. In Jones P, Selby D and Sterling S (eds) *Sustainability Education – Perspectives and Practice across Higher Education*, Earthscan
 5. Desai V G (1959). *Abridged and edited Character and Nation Building by Gandhi M K*. Navjivan Publishing House
 6. Devdutt (1969). *Sarvodaya, Our Times and Gandhi'* in Biswas SC (ed) *Gandhi Theory and Practice – Social Impact and Contemporary Relevance, Volume 2, Seminar Proceedings, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla*
 7. Gadre G (1969). *Trusteeship* in Biswas, S.C. (ed.) *Gandhi Theory and Practice – Social Impact and Contemporary Relevance Volume 2. Seminar Proceedings, Indian Institute of Advanced Study Simla*
 8. Mohan P (2010). *Learning in Inclusive Classrooms*. *Economic and Political Weekly* November 13 Vol. XLV No. 46
 9. Nanda BR (2007). *In Search of Gandhi*. Oxford University Press
 10. Nimbalkar N (2014). *The Economics of Khadi*. In *Gandhi in the New Millennium Issues and Challenges*. Khandwala Publishing House Mumbai.
 11. Prabhu R K and Rao U R (1967). *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*. Navajivan Publishing House Ahmedabad
 12. Radhakrishnan N (1998). *The Sparks of Nonviolence*. Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti New Delhi
 13. Rege S (2010). *Education as TrutiyaRatna: Towards Phule-Ambedkarite Feminist Pedagogical Practice*. *Economic and Political Weekly* October 30 Vol. XLV Nos. 44 and 45
 14. Schumacher E F (1973). *Small is Beautiful – A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*. Blond and Briggs (1973-2010) and Harper Collins 2010
 15. Sharma Y C (1999). *Cotton Khadi in Indian Economy*. Navajivan Publishing House Ahmedabad
 16. Venugopalan K R (2005). *Training in Nonviolence and N. Radhakrishnan*. Gandhi Media Centre New Delhi, Madurai and Thiruvananthapuram

CITE THIS ARTICLE

Marina Bertha Pereira. Sustainable Development and Poverty Alleviation- A Green Economy Initiative. *Res. J. Chem. Env. Sci.* Vol 5 [1] February 2017. 11-14