

**Ecological Nationalism in Modern India; A Comparative
Study on Ideas of M. K. Gandhi and Deendayal Upadhyay**

**SUMMARY OF
DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO**

**BABASAHEB BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY
LUCKNOW**



**FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY
IN**

HISTORY

**SUBMITTED BY
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ENROLLMENT NO: 246/13**

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UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA
2019**

SUMMARY

Environmental history emerged as one of the important historical inquiries in the 1960s and established itself as one of important branches of history in 1980s. It became one of the sought after fields of historical research across the continents. The main objective of environmental history is to document the relationship between human beings and nature in the past. This study entitled **Ecological Nationalism: A Comparative Study of M. K. Gandhi and Deendayal Upadhyay Idea of Ecology** is an attempt to investigate into the intellectual environmental history of India by focusing on two important intellectuals of i.e. Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay. The main objective of this study is to explore and document the ecological dimension of two important nationalist thinkers who exercised significant impact upon the life of India after independence and its relevance in the contemporary India.

The burden of colonisation and into commitment for decolonisation strongly exists in the minds of intelligentsia in India. Accordingly, the idea of decolonisation as a conceptual category emerged as one of the important sources of organising India after acquiring independence from the British rule. This study aims at exploring the ideas of Gandhi and Upadhyay from the perspective of decolonisation of India with particular reference to ecological dimension. Both these thinkers strongly urged that independent India should be reconstructed based upon the civilizational ethos of India in order to get rid of British model of development and replace it with Indian centric development. In order to provide conceptual clarity, both these thinkers reconstructed the philosophical category of Indian culture and civilisation and thereby urged Indians to follow their model for attainment of perfection in national life. This study is interested in exploring the ecological dimension of both Gandhi and Upadhyay ideas.

CONTEXT OF STUDY

Ecological crisis in general and climate change in particular begun to impact upon the global humanity in the contemporary times. Particularly tropical countries like India, were victims of this trend. It is this context that had generated vibrant debate on the question of how to handle human induced ecological problem and how to arrive at solutions. Wide range of strategies are being contemplated and adopted by global community and national governments to handle ecological problems. This process also generated keen interest in public discourse and academic debate in India on ecological issues. This contemporary imperative had compelled historians to look at the past from the perspective of the ecology in order to indentify the solutions that history offer to humanity.

Besides several strategies and policies, the attitudinal changes towards handling ecological problems have always been recognised as critical. In this context the oriental spiritual and philosophical traditions which are considered more eco-sensitive in comparison with Judo-Christen belief systems received the attention of public and academic attention. It is in this context Buddhist ecology, Hindu ecology, Jain ecology etc acquired prominence. These spiritual systems are perceived as promoted of in reverence to nature and its resources for sustenance of humanity. Indian centric values thus emerged as one of effective solutions for handling ecological crisis by the way of bringing about transcendental reality on ecological crisis. In this context, thinkers such as Gandhi and Upadhyay represent Indian centric spiritual values for addressing various issues of humanity. Hence, a comparative study of Gandhi and Upadhyay on their ideas on decentralised rural development and its ecological dimension is useful to the society which is grappling with ecological crisis.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF STUDY

The Environmental history is basically a study about relationship of human societies and rest of nature. In the last four decades it had established itself as one of the important fields of historical research. Historians of environmental history have divided its scope into three broad fields. Those as follows:

1. The domain of material environmental history studies about human engagement with plants, animals and forest they are study of human interaction between man natures.
2. Secondly political and policy related environmental history the concerns the self conscious human efforts to regulate the relationship between society and nature. They are depends upon the social community nature interaction.
3. The third concern of environmental history study of cultural and intellectual history it concern with human behaviours thought believed written and other areas.

While the first two category of environmental history received main attention of historians, particularly in India, the third category remained less explored. This study is basically falls under intellectual environmental history which deals with the contribution of intellectuals for creation of ecological sensitivity and relevance for promotion of environmental conservation. By focusing on cultural and intellectual environmental history this study proposes the ideas of Gandhi and Deendayal Upadhyay not only attempted to create Indian centric economic development, cultural consciousness but also Indic solutions to ecological problems that are products of western capitalistic development trajectory instituted in India by the British colonial rule. Thus the ideas of Gandhi and Deendayal Upadhyay attempt to decolonise not only cultural and economic sphere

but also ecological sphere. This study is an attempt to explore and document this fascinating dimension of intellectual environmental history of India.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

While focusing on the ecological dimension of ideas and practices of Gandhi and Upadhyay, this study revolves around the following objectives:

- I. To explore the decentralise rural development paradigm proposed by both Gandhi and Upadhyay.
- II. To document the linkages between development process and spirituality and morality in the writings of Gandhi and Upadhyay.
- III. To analyse the ecological dimension of thoughts, practices strategies that are contemplated by Gandhi and Upadhyay.
- IV. To capture sustainable ideas and strategies for use of nature and its resources by Gandhi and Upadhyay.
- V. To explore and document the similarities in the ideas of Gandhi and Upadhyay in terms of the relationship between ecology and human beings.
- VI. To explore and document the differences in the ideas of Gandhi and Upadhyay in terms of the relationship between ecology and human beings.
- VII. To evaluate the relationship between nationalism and ecological conservation that are being expressed by Gandhi and Upadhyay.
- VIII. To capture the cultural centric economic and ecological conservation ideas and practices that are propagated by Gandhi and Upadhyay.

IX. To highlight the village reconstruction model that are devised and propagated by Gandhi and Upadhyay.

X. To narrate the ecological hygiene practices that are propagated by Gandhi and Upadhyay.

HYPOTHESIS OF STUDY

For a comparative analysis of Gandhi and Deendayal Upadhyay in terms of their ideas on the relationship between human beings and ecology in India, this study attempt to test the following hypothesis:

- 1- Both Gandhi and Upadhyay seriously engaged in the concept of moral economy by the way of focusing on village life of India.
- 2- The ideas of Gandhi and Upadhyay on village centric development had fascinating ecological dimension.
- 3- Both Gandhi and Upadhyay believe in the fact that conservation of ecologically important resources such as land, water, forests etc is not only a material duty but also a spiritual and moral duty of human beings.
- 4- Preservation and conservation of ecologically important resources for Gandhi and Upadhyay are part of Dharma which every Indian should follow:
- 5- Both Gandhi and Upadhyay articulated the fact that Indian culture and civilisation essentially different from that of the West and our value system towards economy and ecology needs to be rooted in Indic value.
- 6- Sensitive and compassionate treatment of ecologically important resources for both Gandhi and Ambedkar has been perceived as commitment to Indian culture and values.

METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

This study is essentially a historical analysis on the history of ideas expressed by Gandhi and Upadhyay from the perspective of human ecology in India. So far as conceptual framework is concern, this study falls under the domain of intellectual environmental history which focuses on the contribution of intellectuals and activists of society for promotion of conservation of ecologically important resources. This study uses discourse analysis method which mainly deals with emergence of ideas on particular phenomenon expressed in the form of multiple narratives. By using this method, attempt has been made to explore and document the narratives of both Gandhi and Upadhyay on the relationship between Indian culture and conservation of ecology.

So far sources material is concern, two kinds of sources are being in this study. The first category is that secondary sources consisting on books and articles on environmental history, intellectual environmental history, issues related to ecology and studies on Gandhi and Upadhyay. For primary sources, the original works written by Gandhi and Upadhyay are being used. Most of the scattered material of Gandhi and Upadhyay have been gathered and published in the form of collective works. This study uses this published material being written by Gandhi and Upadhyay which represent their ideas and reflections on the relationship between human beings and ecology in India from the perspective of Indian civilizational values.

Chaptarisation of Study

This study has been divided into four chapter for narration of contribution of Gandhi and Deendayal Upadhyay for Indian environmentalism. These chapters as follows:

The first chapter deals with thematic and schematic concepts of the study. It introduces the topic and narrates about context of study, objectives of study, hypothesis of study, methodology of study, review of literature and a brief note on chapters of the study. This chapter is thus offers a narrative on framework of this study.

The second chapter of this study deals with contribution of Deendayal Upadhyay to Indian philosophy, economics and culture with particular reference to ecological dimension of his ideas and practices. This chapter provides brief biographical details; brief narration on his major contribution of different fields of knowledge and major focus was devoted to ecological dimension of his ideas and strategies.

The third chapter of this study focuses ecological dimension of Gandhi's thought and practices and its relevance to contemporary India. Attempt has been made to explore the core ecological ideas of Gandhi and his strategies for development of villages with particular references to management of ecologically sensitive resources. At the same time, attempt has also been made to document the solutions that Gandhi offers for effective conservation nature and ecologically sensitive resources.

The last chapter of this study proposes conclusion and some of findings of the study. A comparative analysis on Gandhi and Upadhyay from ecological perspective. This comparison was done at three levels: their ideas on rural development, management of natural resources and development process. The main objective of this chapter is to capture the similarities and

dissimilarities in the ideas of Gandhi and Upadhyay on management of natural resources. In this chapter, besides proposing findings attempt has also been made to identify future prospects for extending this framework for exploring the ideas of other national leaders in order to arrive at understanding Indian environmentalism.