

SIGNIFICANT GANDHIAN COMMUNICATION AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

By

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Abstract: *India has achieved a remarkable sustainable socio-economic development since Independence. Unfortunately, this development has not been shared equitably by all. Some sections of the society have been left out and some areas like rural, tribal and remote areas, could not keep pace with the urban areas in development. If vast sections of society and areas are left out, it breeds unrest and is not conducive to a sustainable development of the country. Gandhian Communication strategies of various types have been developed and used for motivating people and increase their participation in the pathway for rural development. The R&D organizations interested in accelerating the process of social change through Gandhian model of communication of innovations have their goal in which the participatory process is expected to make the rural audience the makers of their own destiny. Gandhi being a national political leader had basically relied on mobilization of the masses and their economic uplift through the development of cottage and small scale industries. This Gandhian concept of Panchayati Raj was to be a communitarian habitat merging the individual self in a collective life- experience and forming the basis of a gradually expanding circle of supra-local existences. Participation, in the Gandhian sense, was an organic and technical concept and not something artificially created on the prescription of higher level authorities, as is in today's scenario. Gandhi's ideas on development are embedded in his philosophy of life. This paper highlights the role of Gandhian communication as part and parcel of human life, articulating their grievances on local problems. It attempts to explore the Gandhian model of development and examines the relevance or irrelevance of the same in the New World Order.*

Keywords: *Sustainable Development, Participatory Communication, Rural Development, Gandhian Communication, Localization and Globalization.*

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi, “The Father of the Nation” is one of the greatest freedom fighter, a revolutionary social reformer. Not only he held lofty principles but he effectively propagated his message among the masses by using the then existing media, mostly the print as well as through public meetings. Among his other qualities of leadership he was the best communicator. His distinguish quality was that he truthfully believed in the message and skillfully conveyed his philosophy which he himself also practiced. He sent his thoughts through the life by setting a personal example. His autobiography titled “My Experiments with Truth” narrates the actual life he lived and practiced his principles for setting a personal example. This was also the secret of his success as a communicator.

Mahatma Gandhi was not a best communicator, yet his theory is important to development. Gandhi's ideas on development are embedded in his philosophy of life. In the Indian development “context” the Gandhian meta-model development has been the ideal. It suggests that development isa social andfundamental transformation of values and motives and resurrection of man’s ethical and spiritual potential. It emphasized that developmentdoesnot meanindustrialization ratheris a rural reconstruction which isdefined as social andfundamental transformation of values and motives and resurrection of man’s ethical and spiritual potential. In later development decades, the conceptual and ideological slipperiness of development is evident because of the ideology of the political leadership of the country and the promise of delivering quick development to the masses. The current developmentalsituation and strategies present a different scenario.

The goal of Gandhian development is to build a self-sufficient society. Each community should be self-reliant. Throughout his life, Gandhi sought to develop ways to fight India's extreme poverty, backwardness and socioeconomic challenges, as a part of his wider involvement in the Indian independence movement. Gandhi’s championing of Swadeshi and noncooperation was centered on the principles of economic self-sufficiency. Gandhi sought to target European-made clothing and other foreign products, as not only a symbol of British colonialism, but as the source of mass unemployment and poverty in India. By championing homespun khadi clothing and Indian-made goods, Gandhi sought to incorporate peaceful civil resistance as a means of promoting national self-sufficiency. Gandhi’s idea of trusteeship was an innovative way of reconciling the psychological need for incentive or reward for skills and entrepreneurship on the one hand and the social need to take care of the deprived on the other. Gandhi in the beginning resonated such obscurantism in his concept of trusteeship which was defense of property that pragmatic equally to the industrial capitalist.

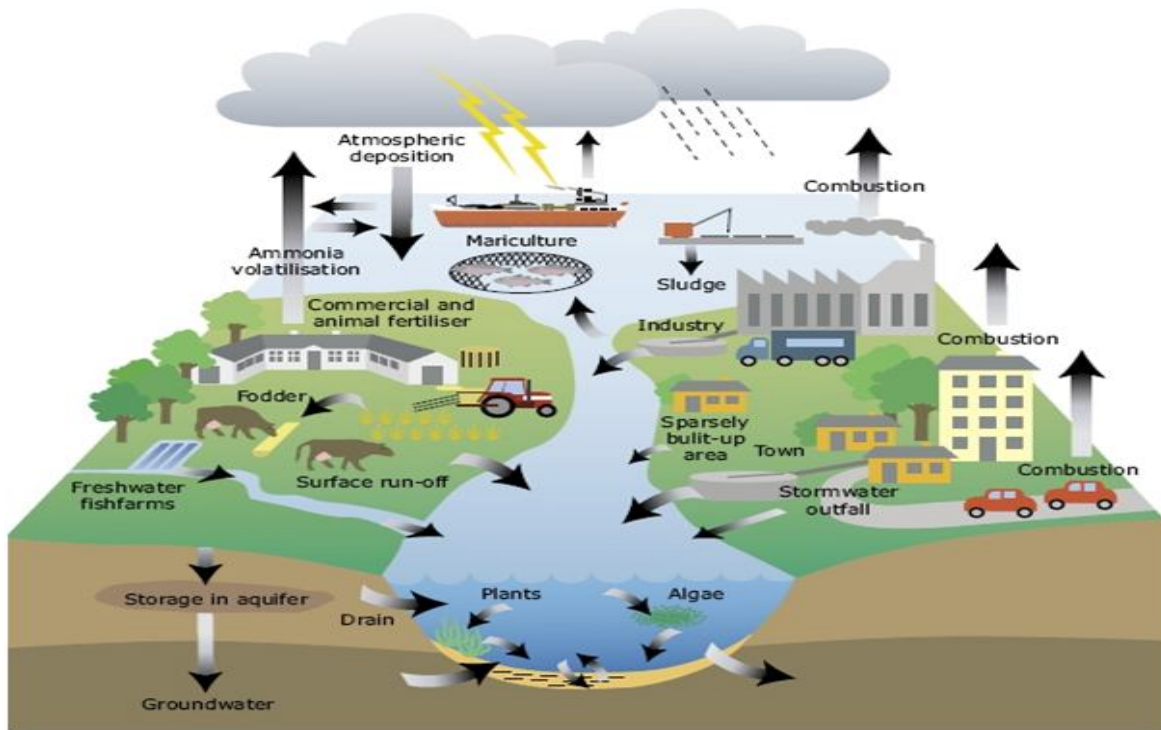
Gandhi was convinced that the salvation of the Indian economy depends on “Rural development”. Rural development depends on agricultural development, which is the integration of both, the farm and nonfarm activities of the village economy. He never accepted the inherent contradiction between economic development and human development. So he thought of

integrating and establishing harmony between both the two, through sarvodaya. The sarvodayaplan provides the foundations, on which the economic organization of a nation striving for the idealsof socialism is to be built. Sarvodayameans all round wellbeing of all. Truth and non-violence are fundamental points in Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya blueprint.

Gandhian opinion was that the nature has managed it in such a way that there will be a balance in the eco-system, and that everybody gets enough of what they need, in order to have good life. He appealed to human beings to be austere and follow the principle of abstinence for the welfare of all. The Gandhian model is based on an integral transformation of Man and society. The Gandhian concept basically pursues the unity of the individual and the social order. The Gandhian view may be seen as the “Unity of Existence”. The Gandhian model advocated the idea of decentralization, which ensures the people's participation. The Gandhian decentralized approach strengthens the feedback system which ensures self-correction and self-direction. It emphasizes gram swarajand human values. It emphasizes production by the masses, but not mass production. It emphasizes labour intensive technology, small scale village and cottage industries, handicrafts, charkha and the use of renewable energy, and ecological balance.

The Gandhian Model of Sustainable Development

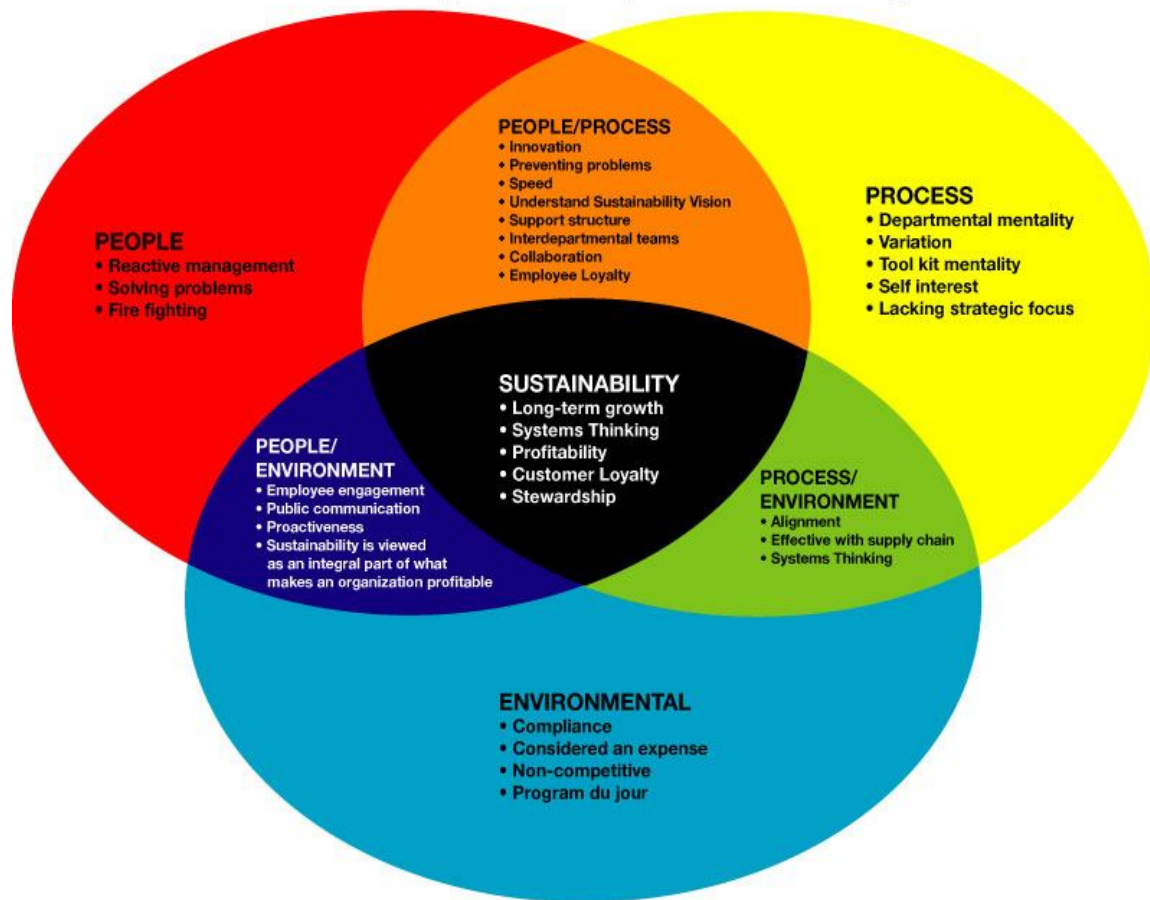
Sustainable development has become eminence and topic of concern of modern world. It has become the important aspect of each countries public policy and common agenda for the globe, every citizen of every nation has agreed upon its prominence. Brundtland’s report, 1987 has clarifiedthe definition of sustainable development as, Sustainable development is a development and well-off that meets the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. However, sustainable development is actually a justification of present generation with future generation; it is a pathway to achieve sustainability. It is a long term goal for thinking about future in which environment, social and economic considerations are balanced. (Education for Sustainable development, UNESCO, 2004). Sustainable development has gone far beyond the previous concept of just economic development because of the consequences of economic development alone and it has not satisfiedthe overall need of society and a balancedapproach in environment.



Sustainable development not only enhances the national power and improves the quality of life but brings a number of serious environmental issues such as air pollution, water pollution, soil degradation, and desertification. In contrast to development, Sustainable development does not focus solely on economic issues. It encompasses the three general policy areas namely economy, environment and society. It tries to maintain a balance between the various human needs like the desire to have improved lifestyles and feeling of well-being on one hand, and preserves natural resources and ecosystems on the other hand. Thus, Sustainable Development is the caretaker of the divergent factors needed for the existence of the present and future generations.

It is held that Gandhi's model of non-violent development satisfies the requisites of sustainable development. We are living part of Earth's life, owned and operated by the Earth. Our attitude towards the earth is defective and dangerous. Our deepest folly is the notion that we own it and can exploit it to our advantage. Gandhi's ideas are relevant for protecting the environment and to preserve the carrying capacity of Mother Earth. Gandhi emphasizes three aspects: economy, society and environment. He says, the present materialistic lifestyle has to be changed for sustainable development. Gandhian economics guides us towards a sustainable lifestyle. The Gandhian model suggests the following steps to attaining a sustainable lifestyle.

Sustainability ... A Competitive Advantage



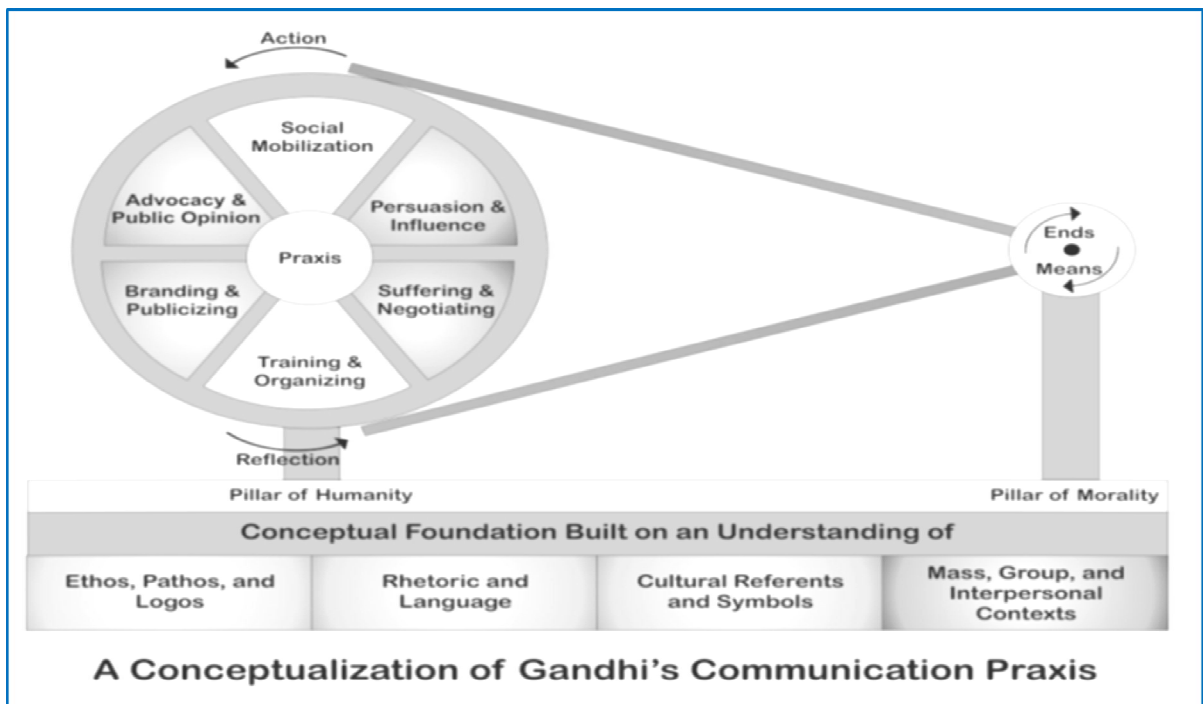
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- **Sustainable agriculture:** We should give up chemical fertilizers and pesticides and substitute them with bio-manures and bio-pesticides.
- **Verme-culture:** We should adopt Verme-culture and vermicomposting which is a must for restoring the health of the soil.
- **Village industries are ecofriendly:** They create employment and alleviate poverty. So we should promote khadi and products of village industries.
- **Appropriate technologies:** We should adopt technologies which are simple, and which our villagers are able to comprehend and operate themselves.
- **Renewable energy sources:** Solar energy is limitless and inexhaustible. We can harness solar energy for heating and lighting. Water and wind energies can also be harnessed for producing electricity.
- **Tree plantation:** Our policy should be to plant two trees for every tree we cut. Trees as a source of energy are non-renewable if we only cut them and do not grow them.

The Gandhi's Model of Communication Praxis

Mahatma Gandhi's life and his ideas can be and has been approached from various perspectives. As "a great mass communicator", who "has been considered more as an oracle or prophet", The reverence Gandhiji earned from the people made him "Mahatma" and that reverence came from the trust people had over him. He based his movement "on the highest values and concepts which only saints have upheld". Mahatma Gandhi "stood for a simple and, more or less, self-sufficient living in the rural surroundings". Gandhi's movement "was a movement with the support of the mass of the most miserable and the down-trodden who constituted the real India". He started with the masses and tested his principles in terms of their welfare.

He adopted 'Mass-line' approach to educate and mobilize millions of people for freedom struggle. Gandhiji succeeded in communicating with the masses through the mass-line of the Congress workers at various levels occasionally aided with his small journals and publications. However, essentially Gandhiji followed the mass-line approach to communication, identifying himself with the masses, turning his personal experience into public programme, adopting simple language and using parables, proverbs and quotations from Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana and other sacred scriptures. His salt Satyagrah is an excellent example of communicating effectively with masses. By undertaking Dandi March and defying British control over salt, an item of daily consumption in every home, Gandhiji in a masterly manner conveyed opposition to foreign rule and need for home rule to millions of people throughout the country. His fasts and even silence were exercised in communication with people.



In With various strategies for Sadharanikaran, such as employing religious and cultural connotations, use of religious and cultural symbols and rituals, employing the fast and silence as tools of communication, emphasis on the charkha and wearing particular type of clothes. The

charkha was, quintessentially, integrated Gandhian communication praxis in action. The charkha, although materially a hand-cranked spinning device used to make thread and yarn, represents a rich metaphor of Gandhian communicative wisdom: a non-verbal symbol of village labor, human dignity, self-reliance, self-discipline, social cohesion and mobilization, as also standing for actionable participation, protest, and progress. The charkha also symbolized Gandhi's emphasis on "putting the last first," an unequivocal belief in the well-being for the poor, the marginalized, and the overlooked. He made hand-spun, hand-woven cloth the centerpiece of his program for Indian independence. For farmers, who engaged in productive labor only during agricultural seasons, the charkha equated to food and wages. Gandhi noted: "The spinning wheel alone will solve, if anything will solve, the problem of the deepening poverty of India". In the Gandhian vision, the charkha symbolized much more than the wheel and wages of the spinner. The charkha was at the center of his village reconstruction ripple, connecting both economically and socially the village farmer, weaver, dyer, washer man, blacksmith, carpenter, and citizen-consumer. The charkha was, quintessentially, integrated Gandhian communication praxis in action. As he went about his daily routine of spinning, Gandhi spun a yarn of moral authority that would bring together the impoverished masses of a subjugated nation. Khadi was a quintessential communication message, a daily statement made by all Indians, cutting across caste, religious, region, and social class differences. Its mass appeal especially for the poor, rural, and marginalized in India was swadeshi, the production of, and pride in, indigenous products. The Indian National Congress, at Gandhi's urging, voted to require its officers and workers to spin and wear khadi and to boycott foreign cloth. The spinning wheel was adopted as the symbol of the National Congress, and placed in the center of the party's flag.

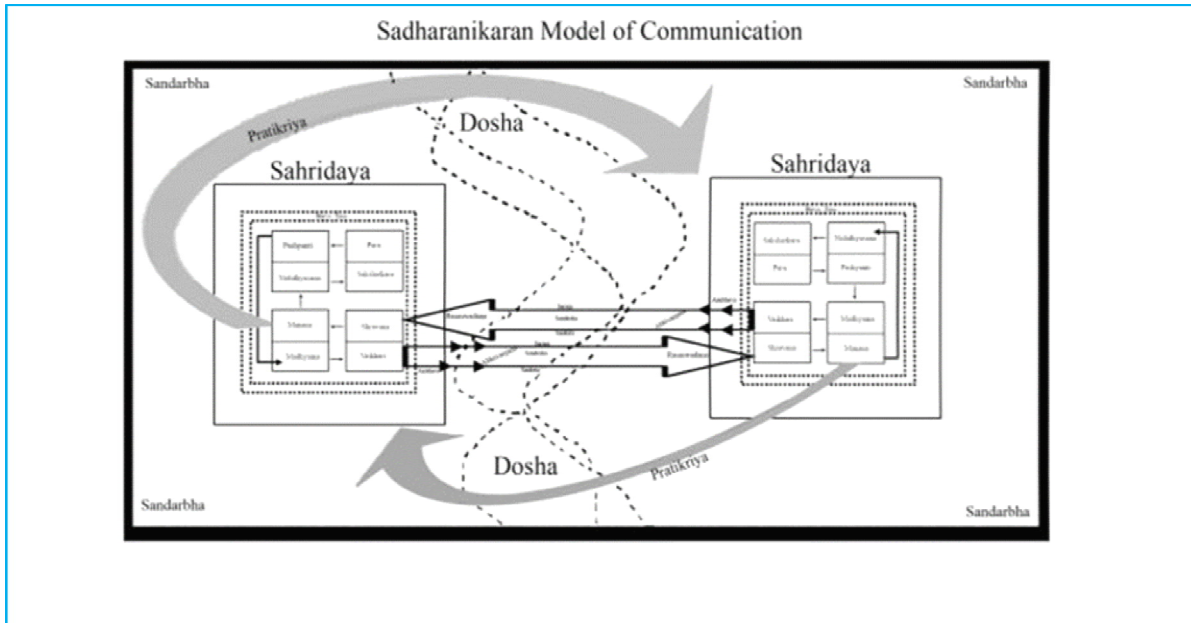
Up until the late 18th century, until the Industrial Revolution gathered "steam" in England, cloth production was India's premier industry, a major employer, and revenue generator. However, the policies of the British East India trading company and later the British colonial administration systematically destroyed the spinning and dying of cotton cloth by Indians, moving cloth manufacturing to their mills in Manchester and Leeds. The result was massive unemployment and poverty in India, and a realization of India as former clothing workers were forced to move back to villages. Gandhi made hand-spun, hand-woven cloth the centerpiece of his program for Indian independence. He spun his own yarn on a charkha each day, and urged the poor, the unemployed, and people from all walks of life to do the same.

The Gandhian "brand" was not directed to affluent customers but rather cultivated to appeal and to resonate with, the 400 million poor, impoverished Indians who lived in its remote villages. Gandhi's "branded" message was carefully constructed, targeted to a segmented audience, and enacted and fulfilled in his daily routines. Like all good brands, the message and the messenger resonated with their constituents. Gandhi's life and communication praxis would suggest that he was a rhetorician of enormous stature, pushing the boundaries of logic, affect, argumentation, naming and language use. He was a coiner of new terms, new language, and new arguments to create new uplifting realities.

Gandhiji universalized each of his concepts which were begun in narrower contexts. "He broke all barriers, territorial, social, religious, etc", and this is why he could get sadharanikaran in effect. When the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication and the core concept of this model are understood in continuum with Mahatma Gandhi's concepts of Satyagraha and Ahimsa, theorizing Gandhian communication practices through the SMC certainly seems rational. A Satyagraha can be seen as an act of communication, and hence all the activities conducted during the Satyagraha bear communication dimension. Thus, the similarity of broad theoretical outlook between the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication and the Gandhian concept of Satyagraha is self-revealing. Similarly, there is conceptual resemblance between Sahrdayata as envisioned in the SMC and Ahimsa as envisioned by Gandhiji. In Gandhian communication, Ahimsa can be considered humans' "greatest instrument for achieving fraternity by which social fabric is made". In this process, Ahimsa can be understood as "positive love". Further research will shed light on the similarity of worldview between Sahrdayata and Ahimsa.

In Gandhian context, 'Satyagraha' is a process of generating public opinion, such that it covers all the elements of society". Gandhi's Satyagraha consists of "an ongoing task of communicating well: sharing, cooperating, building desire and determination to communicate, developing and refining skills, giving commitment constitute praxis of the first order". It is pertinent here to observe the non-violent resistance practiced by Gandhiji and his followers from communication perspective. According to Gregg (1938), Non-violent resistance is in effect a sort of language, a means of communicating feelings and ideas. It uses the expression of the face, glances of the eye, tones, intensities and modulations of the voice movements and postures of the limbs and body, just as in all personal communication. In prolonged situations it may also use writing and printing. Its means of expression are a sample as those of any language.

The Salt Satyagraha is illustrative of the various conceptual components undergirding Gandhi's integrated communication praxis. The rotating bigger wheel represents Gandhian communication praxis as a core activity, shaped by an ongoing cycle of actions and reflections. The reflections may lead to adjustments in actions, keeping the wheel in motion. The undergirding structures holding the wheels of Gandhi's communication praxis are the pillars of humanity and morality i.e. making a moral commitment to serving humanity where the needs are most ubiquitous. The upper half of the Gandhian praxis wheel shows the three desired outputs of communicative actions: (1) Advocacy for just laws and educating and influencing public opinion about it, (2) social mobilization of all sectors, strata, and institutions, and (3) mass persuasion through direct and indirect actions.



The lower half of the Gandhian praxis wheel, shows the necessary communicative inputs by which the desired outputs can be achieved:(1) Branding and publicizing the message,(2) training and organizing committed cadres in small and large groups, and (3)suffering and negotiating. The actions and reflections in Gandhian communication praxis are governed by an abiding belief in the circularity and purity of both means and ends. The undergirding structures holding the wheels of Gandhi’s communication praxis are the pillars of humanity and morality i.e. making a moral commitment to serving humanity where the needs are most ubiquitous. Further, the pillars and wheels of Gandhi’s communication praxis rest on a rock-solid conceptual foundation comprising of an understanding of Aristotelian notions of ethos, pathos, and logos, rhetoric and language use, cultural referents and symbols, and mass-mediated, group, interpersonal, and intrapersonal contexts.

Gandhi’s rhetorical repertoire drew heavily from both the West and the East: from two millennia of Vedic Hinduism texts, to his British training in law, and his several decades of uninterrupted experience as a practicing journalist. The distinguishing aspect of Gandhi’s rhetoric was his unshaken belief on the moral character of the rhetorical enterprise. His rhetoric was made up of moral practice with moral claims.

Gandhi understood the power of naming in constructing new social realities, especially for the weak, the vulnerable, and the marginalized, rejected, or over looked. Such groups are generally muted with a limited vocabulary to name their experiences. Gandhi labeled the poor as Daridranarayan and the low-caste untouchables as Harijans. These new rhetorical frames were backed by, and made visible through, visible civic actions. For instance, when traveling, Gandhi consciously lived in Harijan neighborhoods, drank from their wells, cleaned their latrines, and escorted them to Hindu temples, a place that was out-of-bounds for them.

Gandhi's communication praxis was steeply anchored in ancient Hindu religious and cultural practices. His genius lay in taking such practices fasting, prayers, sacrifice, and fire worship and turning them into meaningful techniques of struggle, protest, advocacy, social mobilization, and mass persuasion. Gandhi fused ancient Indian moral and cultural values with pragmatic politics, subscribing to the ancient Hindu notion of being a karmayogi, one whose self-effacing action can lead to spiritual liberation. Well versed in the thousands of years of India's rich cultural heritage, Gandhi knew that the Indian ethos, that dictated life on a daily basis in its 641,000 villages, "believed in the immortality of the soul rather than the adoration of the body."

Gandhi's bodily practice, rooted in cultural practices, represented a doorway to public communication with a view to social change. He embraced poverty, chastity, self-denial. He would often undertake a fast-unto-death, and as his body suffered in full public view, the "intensity of his personal sacrifice, magnified and focused by the massive authority of his public iconicity," compelled masses to his moral point-of-view.

For Gandhi, fasting was also a method for influencing political policy and social attitudes not possible through ordinary speech and negotiation. The self-denial and self-suffering was indicative of one's self-resolve. During the last four decades of his life, Gandhi undertook public fasts, championing causes ranging from millworkers' rights, to removal of untouchability, for communal harmony, and once even for being allowed to do menial work in prison.

Gandhi's last fast, launched on January 13, 1948, was against the appalling rioting that followed India's partition. After the formation of Pakistan Gandhi drew up eight demands all favoring the Muslim state, and unless they were agreed to by India, he would fast unto death. Gandhi's health, deteriorated rapidly. Each day tens of thousands of hushed spectators filed past his weakening body. Speeches, telegrams, and editorials around the world expressed hope for his survival. After five long days, with Gandhi on the brink of death, communal leaders accepted all his demands.

Steeped in the Indian cultural ethos, whether for Hindus or Muslims, Gandhi knew that fasts spoke the "language of the heart i.e. the willing sacrifice of the human body, slowly, overtime, stirred not just human pity but also its moral conscience.

Gandhi's communication praxis demonstrated a keen grasp of the traditional cultural referents and symbols. Spinning, fasting, prayer meetings, chastity, self-suffering were derived from the collective reservoir of India's cultural and spiritual past. He harnessed them for meaningful and moral ends.

The Gandhian thought for Sustainable Rural Development

The Gandhian plan of rural reconstruction was the meta-model of Indian development. It emphasized three dimensions: socio-economic development of localized need; village participation for self-development and self-reliance; and rural industrialization.

As India grows into one of the world's largest economies, millions of people are left behind who are incredibly poor, illiterate and living in grim conditions. Thus, removal of poverty is therefore a prerequisite for the protection of the environment and no doubt a great road map for achieving sustainable development. Poverty and a degraded environment are closely inter-related, especially where people depend for their livelihoods primarily on the natural resource base of their immediate environment. Restoring natural systems and improving natural resource at the grassroots level are central to a strategy to eliminate poverty.

In India around 700 million people in the rural area are directly dependent on climate-sensitive sectors and natural resources. Since majority of the population exists in rural areas are poor and living in wickeded conditions. It is obvious that most of the violation to environment and other natural resources is from rural areas. However since independence, policies, programs and target schemes have introduced to eradicate poverty through direct focus on employment generation, which is one of the greatest obstacles for achieving sustainability. Building up of assets for the poor, protection of environment, re-innovating rural India. India sustainable development is more relying on rural sector because most of the population lives in rural areas most of the sustainable development related problems such as degradation of environment, deforestation poverty other social stoppages for achieving sustainability are reasons of poor rural areas.

The Gandhian Communication for Sustainable Rural Development

The Popular participation and sustainability of message are imperative in people's development communication. The overall communication is considered as field of experts where strategies are planned and implemented by the elite. Exact opposite is the people's communication which could be defined as 'evolutionary sustainable communication by the people for themselves'. People chose their medium and message and various factors contributed in making this choice such as to motivate, persuade and conceptualize, people's medium is the most appropriate way to achieve successful and sustainable communication. Other forms of communication including the mass communication can play role of facilitator in this process. People communicate within their families, groups, friends, society and communities. People's communication takes many forms in various mediums. Community newspaper, radio, group discussions, chats, traditional folk arts, internet chatting, Facebooks, blogs and twitters etc are some of the people's communication mediums where they have control over the content. In the South Asian nations strong presence of traditional people's medium to communicate never became part of the mainstream communication strategies. But still at grassroots levels people's mediums remain the main tool of effective communication. The need is to identify the people's medium of communication which they have chosen for themselves to communicate. This will facilitate the development communication process which intends to emancipate and empower people to facilitate popular participation in the process of sustainable development. The new age media that have an integrated character of interpersonal and mass media has emerged as new people's

communication mediums. It has become popular because of its communicative format. People are able to vent their feelings and can communicate through this medium. Popularization of this new age media has forced other forms of media, especially broadcast and print media to become more communicative and allow people their space in communication. Newspapers and television channels are now on websites, chatting zones, facebook, twitter, e-paper with feedback, blogs and concept of citizen journalist has become popular. Communication is not just technical process, it involves social- cultural economic dimensions and is participatory process. And this needs to be emphasized in communication planning for development of deprived. The Satyagrahi communication has been success in many development projects like that Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka. Gandhian Satyagrahi journalism could be re-energized using people's medium and communication.

Conclusion

Gandhi's concept of rural development is 'uplifting of the common man'. With the development of a common man, upliftment of the village life can be expected. He realized the need for integrated rural development and believed that proper education and good health shall parallelly cater to the gradual development as education is knowledge of power and health is stamina of person and society. His approach of rural development was non-violent. Self- governed self - sufficient in regard to food, clothing, and shelter in rural areas shall reduce the rural poverty. He focused his attention on agriculture and Non Agricultural aspects of rural economy through all-round development of rural India, remove the untouchability, caste system and social evil and give the rights of people, which are enhancing social and political status. He has shared different concept of rural development. Beside the generally inoperative nature of Gandhian philosophy, Gandhi must be credited for emphasizing the role of small scale industries and agriculture in the development of the Indian rural economy. Almost all the economists recognize the importance of small scale industries, and the need for their decentralization in an overpopulated and rural based underdeveloped country. Gandhi also correctly realized that in such an economy, reorganization and revitalization of agriculture is a pre-condition to economic development. Gandhi further, conceived a broader view of rural development and asked people to cultivate rural mindedness and fully utilize the local resources for becoming self-reliant. An ideal village imagined by Gandhi and his conception of rural development may not be permanent panacea for the multiple crises of the modern state but these days and for some times the Gandhi-like post-modern slogan of thinking globally and acting locally seemed suited to the needs and temper of the 21st century.

In conclusion, Gandhi was a consummate communication strategist and practitioner. His communicative "acts" mobilized a nation, bringing new language, rhetorical frames, and understandings to the study of social movements, symbolic persuasion, and civil public discourses. We conceptualized communication praxis as being an integral component of Gandhian life, emphasized by the Mahatma's own words: "My life is my message."

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