

Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi: A Contemporary Reading In Changing Socio-Economic Context

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Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi was a great philosopher, educationist and sociologist who led India to independence and inspired movements for non-violence, civil rights and freedom across the world. His philosophy was based on truth, non-violence and ethics. He was fully aware of the problems of Indians and he kept this thing in mind, when he tracked about focusing of education on job-orientation, character formation, social development and giving sex-education and basic education. When we relate these aims of education with existing condition in the society we feel that the education in schools and colleges it's not fulfilling the target of job orientation and the child is now more involved in violence and other anti-social activities. The number of crime done by adolescents is increasing in every country throughout the world. The demand of the situation is that the philosophy of Gandhi should be followed seriously and only in that condition we can save humanity and could do overall development of the child.

KEYWORDS: Truth, Non-violence, Nai Talim, Three R s, Three H s, Tolstoy farm, Wardha Scheme

Most of Gandhi's important writings on education have been compiled and edited by Bharatan Kumarappa in two slim books, Basic Education (1951) and Towards New Education (1953). These writings are mostly miscellaneous, consisting of letters, speeches, extracts from books, and so on, but together they may be taken to constitute a coherent philosophy of education. The most significant single document in all of Gandhi's writings on education is probably the Inaugural Address that he delivered at the Wardha Conference of 1937.

The Agenda, formulated by Gandhi, contained four propositions, which may be summarized as follows:

1. "The present system of education does not meet the requirements of the country...."
2. "The course of primary education should be extended at least to seven years and should include the general knowledge gained up to the matriculation standard, less English and plus a substantial vocation."
3. "For the all-round development of boys and girls all training should as far as possible be given through a profit-yielding vocation."
4. "Higher education should be left to private enterprise and should be to meet national requirements whether in the various industries, technical arts, belles-letters or fine arts" .

At the conclusion of the conference, four Resolutions were adopted. These had been proposed by a committee, which worked through the night, under the Chairmanship of Zakir Hussain. The resolutions were:

1. That...free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale.
2. That the medium of instruction be the mother-tongue.
3. That ... the process of education ... should centre around some form of manual and productive work.
4. That...this system of education ... be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers”.

Cardinal postulates Gandhi on education:

1. Education means all round development; it is best obtained through action.
2. Education has to be through a craft, not merely through books and abstractions.
3. The basis of true education is character building; an educated person should become an ideal citizen.
4. Education should be self-supporting as far as possible and also equip the pupil to better his own economic conditions.
5. Education should be based on non-violence and should work for communal harmony.
6. The medium of instruction should be the mother-tongue, not English.
7. Primary education should be free and compulsory for all children and should last for at least seven years.
8. All educational planning should be undertaken with the rural Indian masses in mind; in other words, education should not be elitist, but popular in its character.

Concept of 3 H's

1. Hand-psychomotor domain/skills
2. Heart-spiritual domain/skills
3. Head-Cognitive domain/skills

Concept of 3r's :

1. Read,
2. Write and
3. Arithmetic

Gandhiji emphasized certain ideals, practical work and the potentiality of students in education. It is education through which we can find out the potential of the students and teach them certain ideals which will help them to be a good citizen and through practical activities students will be in a position to think practically and they will be attentive and active, this will help them to mould their character. Thus Gandhian education has been characterized as encompassing the head, the heart and the hands that means the all-around development of child. According to him education is that which draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of children. Thus Gandhiji's purpose of education is to raise man to a higher order through full development of the individual and the evolution of a "new man."

AIMS OF EDUCATION:-

Bread and Butter aim: Bread and Butter aim refers to utilitarian aim which is an immediate requirement. Gandhiji focused on education that provides learning while learning. This has to be a tool with each and every learner. S/he can remove unemployment keeping in mind the poverty and unemployment of India. Gandhiji focused and suggested industrial training and development of manual skills and handicraft as subject of education which will give satisfaction to the student of his earning and self-reliance but also it will be proved as a support to his/her family and nation at large.

Cultural Aim:- According to Gandhiji cultural aspect of education is more important than the literacy. Culture is the foundation, the primary thing which the girls ought to get from here. It should show in the smallest detail of your conduct and personal behaviour, how to sit, how to walk, how to dress etc. it is the education through which students or everyone learn the glorious culture of the country-India, its incredible arts, religions and so on. Education is the device which makes them familiar with our great culture and it is to be taught that how do they adopt and what is the importance of value of our culture. Thus Gandhiji laid much emphasis on cultural aim of education and recommended that Geeta and Ramayana to be taught as a means of introducing students to their rich cultural and spiritual heritage.

Harmonious development:- Education should develop all the three levels i. e. 3RS-read, write and arithmetic. The education should help in feeling what is taught and what happens to him and to express, what he feels and also what he wants to do so all the faculties of person should be developed. Writing and reading will make him literate and arithmetic will help in calculating day-to-day expenses and more importantly it will help in logical thinking and analyzing things.

Moral Aim:- Education should make person aware of what is right & wrong. It inculcates in us values and manners and moulds our character. Gandhiji focused more on character building than on literacy. According to him development of personality was more significant than accumulation of intellectual tools and academic knowledge. And we also believed that an educand should be taught non-violence, truth, and importance of thoughts, word and deed.

Social and individual Aim:- The aim of education of Gandhiji is both social and individual. He wanted individual perfection and a new social order based on “Truth” & “Non-violence”. Education trains an individual and makes him an ideal citizen who will help his nation. An individual learns so many things from surrounding, culture, society and so on and he progresses simultaneously society progresses because the individuals’ growth is nothing but the growth of the society and nation.

Ultimate Aim:- Self-realization is the ultimate aim of life as well as of education. Through education everyone understands about themselves and get answer of the universal question who am I? It is the education which helps them to understand their existence and its purpose. It is the spiritual education which provides knowledge of God and self-realization. The individuals recognize their potentials or abilities and prove them as ideal citizens of their nation via education. It is the education which makes them familiar with spirituality and different religious and finally every individual realize what they are? This is the self-realization- the ultimate aim of education. In the words of Gandhiji- “true education should result not in material

power but in spiritual force. It must strengthen man's faith in God and not awaken It." he further adds "Development of the whole-all were directed towards the realization of the ultimate reality –the merger of the finite being in to infinite."

Types of Education:

After the Zakir Hussain's report of education Gandhiji initiated a concept of Sarvoday Society. Gandhiji has given six types of education under the Sarvoday society.

- Basic Education
- Buniyadi Talim
- Nayi Talim
- National Education
- Wardha Shikshan/Education
- Life Education

MAJOR COMPONENTS OF GANDHIAN EDUCATION

Free and compulsory Education:- Gandhiji advocated free and compulsory education for all because within the age of group 7 to 14 everyone enables to read, write, and count the basic expenses or sums. If the education is not free and compulsory then students who are coming from poor families remain illiterate who will be the future of India. He wanted to combine the primary with secondary education and called: it "English less Matriculation"

The curriculum:- According to Gandhiji curriculum of the basic education should be consisted of the craft, the mother tongue of the students, social studies, natural science and music. He introduced the following subjects:-

- **The craft:**Gandhiji believed in the utilization of swadeshi things so the Basic National Education aimed at providing education through the medium of craft or productive work. The basic craft which may be agriculture or spinning and weaving or card board, wood and metal work, gardening, leather work etc. His curriculum was activity centered which should transform the schools in to "place of work, experimentation and discovery."
- **Mother Tongue:-** Gandhiji emphasized the mother tongue to be the medium of instruction. Mother tongue would enable the children to express themselves effectively and clearly. If a student/child learns through mother tongue then he can easily learn ethical and moral values and importance of national heritage. According to him if English is to be taught as medium of instruction then it hinders the development of understanding and clarity of thoughts/ideas.
- **Subjects:-** Gandhiji emphasized mathematics, social studies, general science including nature study botany, zoology, chemistry, astronomy, hygiene, physical culture and knowledge of stars. According to him mathematics helps the students to solve the numerical and geometrical problems connected with craft and community life and in teaching of mathematics emphasis were laid on practical measuring and field work. Teaching of mathematics helped the students to develop their reasoning capacities. Social studies was a combination of some subjects like History, Geography, Civics and Economics. It was introduced to enable the students to understand and appreciate their own culture and also to understand nature and function of family state and the

nation and their inter-relationship. General science is necessary from the point of view of knowing our health, hygiene and also to think logically the cause and effect relationship. It gives students an intelligent and appreciate outlook on nature. It forms in the students the habit of accurate observation and of testing experience by experiment. Domestic science was initially for both boys and girls but how it is limited to girls only. It is necessary to learn about how to manage house and its expense. Drawing and music were included in the curriculum to develop creativity in boys and girls. Drawing has its importance at three levels, it develops expression skill through drawing, it touches to imaginative faculty of mind and also focuses on aesthetic sense to appreciate art at both level- artist's and interpreter's level.

Basic curriculum includes three things:

- Physical environment i.e. seen and felt which compresses biology, botany, zoology, geography and astrology.
- Child's social environment which contain his interaction with society- his work as individual and as a member of society.
- The child's craft work which helps in knowing craft- how to weave, learning to do something which lead to productivity.

PRINCIPLES OF BASIC EDUCATION:

Free and Compulsory Education:- Gandhiji regarding basic education or bunyadi talim, has given his views that education is i.e. elementary education should be free of charge and all should get educated so that they can do minute calculations of daily life expense, read and write. This is necessary because this will make a person live independently.

Mother tongue as a medium of education:- Gandhiji emphasized the mother tongue to be the medium of instruction. Mother tongue would enable the children to express themselves effectively and clearly. If a student/child learns through mother tongue then he can easily learn ethical and moral values and importance of national heritage. According to him if English is to be taught as medium of instruction then it hinders the development of understanding and clarity of thoughts/ideas.

Craft centeredness:- Learners should get exposure to learn skills and craft like knitting, weaving, agricultural activities, cooking which make them self-dependent because they will not only earn on their own but also develop three domains:-

- Physical Domain – by doing physical work like agriculture which will give good physical exercise.
- Psycho-motor Domain- by developing social skills- how to behave, how to work in groups; how to co-ordinate.
- Cognitive Domain- by developing thinking skill, analyzing, estimating- what would be the expense to prepare craft and how much material will be required.

Gandhiji also suggested there should be any inferiority or superiority regarding work. We should do every work/everything with the thinking that those works are mine and they have value whether it is sweeping or working in an office.

Self-sufficiency:-Basic education should provide such training that one can realize that immediate aim- earning- after or during basic education. Earning for one's own self and satisfying one's needs.

Co-related teaching:- Gandhiji considered knowledge as a whole that is each and every subject interrelated. While doing craft work, it requires economical skills to buy material and to keep estimate how much it would require. It will also require mathematical skills to calculate the earnings and so on. As the subject should be taught which will lead to all-round development, students should develop love for subjects to learn them.

Non-violence:- One of the aims of basic education is to prepare ideal and responsible citizen who will develop virtues like non-violence so that they are not attracted by violence and other anti-social activities. If each would try to inculcate this value then there will be peace and harmony among the citizen of India. There will not disagreement and it will good understanding with each other.

Ideal citizen:- Education makes man to think from broader and ideal perceptive therefore Gandhiji focused on preparing ideal citizens of the nation who are responsible and sensible to nation, duties and rights. Education of civics will give them civic sense- rights and duties to the nation, how government works and it exist. History will make them aware of golden days as well as of the bravery of the nation, heroes who fought for the freedom of India which will lift their nationalistic feeling.

Basic education and the role of a Teacher:

The teacher has higher responsibilities. He has to develop values among the learners. The teacher should follow morality. There should not be any dark patch on his character because he is role model for many students. Gandhiji says-“education of the heart could only be done through the living touch of the teacher.” Education becomes effective and faithful only to the extent to which there is personal touch between the teacher and the taught. It will be very difficult to achieve character building in the absence of devotion to the teacher. He should have devotion to duty, to the students and to God. He is to play the role of a mother. An ideal teacher in Gandhiji's word is the “mother teacher.” He says I used the word “mother teacher” because the teacher must really be a mother of children.

CONCLUSION

Gandhian educational ideas, founded as they are on certain eternal principles, will not lose their fundamental relevance in the years to come. Our planners will have to think of a self-supporting primary education, which will improve the lot of the poorest of the poor. That such an education would be based on action, problem-solving, and practical activity, rather than mere book learning is also perfectly valid. An integral education, which allows the whole being of a person to grow, an education which emphasizes character-building and cultural identity, is once again, obviously desirable. It is equally clear that we have failed miserably in our state-sponsored schemes to provide free, compulsory primary education to all. The Gandhian model, therefore, retains its relevance and attractiveness. However, whether such an education can be imparted solely or primarily through the learning of a craft, and whether the potential beneficiaries or the state will accept it remains to be seen. Finally, the Gandhian model needs, in my opinion, a built-in mechanism of absorbing or confronting the

newer and newer technologies that are emerging each day. As it stands, it seems to be somewhat backward looking, or at any rate, designed for a static society in which stable ancestral occupations persist from generation to generation. I think that the coming age will be one of phenomenal and unprecedented change. But this does not mean that the perennial values that Gandhi lived by and advocated will lose their influence. What this does mean is that we shall have to find newer and newer ways to interpret, understand, impart, and live them out.

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