

Study on Mahatma Gandhi & Indian Education

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Abstract:

Education system proposed by Mahatma Gandhi is called as "Basic Education". He mainly aims at the education in mother tongue and asked for activity centered education to make the children skilled and independent. Gandhiji wanted to construct small, self-reliant communities with its ideal citizens being all industrious, self-respecting and generous individuals living in a small co-operative and community. He wished that some local craft should be made as medium of education for children so that they develop their mind, body and soul in a harmonious way and also meet the needs of their future life. Such Gandhian Educational thoughts are relevant for development and providing solutions of the current problems like unemployment, poverty, corruption and many others. An attempt has been made in this paper to discuss the Gandhi's educational thoughts.

Keywords: Education, India, Mahatma Gandhi

Introduction:

Gandhi was a utopian; he tried to bring 'the Kingdom of God on the earth (Ram Rajya) where truth and non-violence would be guiding principles. His utopianism arose out of his love for humanity. "Gandhi was humanist, shall we say from the first moment of his self consciousness."¹ He firmly believed that the goodness of the individual formed the constituent part of the goodness of the society. Like John Ruskin, he considered 'man' is the most important to bring a peaceful and harmonious society. He says, "The individual is the one supreme consideration."² "Man is neither mere intellect, nor the gross animal body, nor the heart or soul alone. A proper and harmonious combination of all the three is required for making of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education."³ His concept of political system is closely connected with education. In a good political system, there must be the element of goodness necessarily present in every man. There is the need of a proper education system to the individuals in order to bring out such element of goodness. He talks about education is more comprehensive than that of the literal meaning. He says, "By education I mean an all round drawing out of the best in child and man-body mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education not even the beginning. It is one of the means whereby man and women can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education."⁴

He thought that education is closely associated with the socio-economic development of the society. He took up scheme for basic education in which vocational training or work experience is the utmost important. It is due to the fact that it stimulates the human mind for creative thinking or dignity of manual labour. He thought that such creative thinking should be taken up from primary to higher level education. His view on basic education is greatly influenced by his philosophy of satya (truth), ahimsa (non-violence), firm belief in God, dignity of labour. The Kothari Commission also followed Gandhi's ideal of vocational training in education. This commission says, "We recommend that work experience should be introduced as an integral part of all India education-general or vocational. We define work experience as participation in productive work in school, in the home, in a workshop, on a farm, in a factory or in any other productive situation."⁵ This commission re-emphasizes the Gandhian principle of learning by doing in the modern education. The main aim of education is the development of human personality. He expanded fourfold personality in the individual that is body, mind, heart and spirit. True education stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical strength of the individual. His view on education of heart which brings the idea of sympathy, fellowship and deep feelings of love. The aim of education is not only to produce good individual but also one must understand one's own responsibilities in which one lives. It is closely related to Hindu concept of varnashram dharma. One who understood his or her responsibilities would lead to the spirit of

social consciousness and social mindedness. Then, all the activities of such persons will have a social content as well as co-operation to others.

He talks about education in terms of discipline. It is regarded as one of the most important parts and parcels of education. Without discipline, the sound education system is impossible. It is a quality that one's self can lead to the regulation of one's intellectual, moral, spiritual and social behaviour. It is stated that the goal of education consists of character-building. Such character-building requires the moral, intellectual and social behaviour under all circumstances i.e., strength of personality, the virtue of compassion, kindness, fair-mindedness and the spirit of dedication. Gandhi strongly holds that education is not end in itself but it is the most powerful weapon which creates all persons of genuine characters. There is degeneration of education when the qualities of truthfulness, firmness, tolerance are absence from it. True education is life process which helps in cultivating the spirit of co-operation, tolerance, public spirit and a sense of responsibility. All these qualities are considered as disciplines for the development of human personality. Such disciplines can create the harmonious balance between the individuals and social aim of education. His principle of 'learning by doing' tries to stimulate the individual's mind to think creatively, independently and critically. His great emphasis on work-culture to the students from the primary stage to higher stage is to enable the students to start producing from the time he started his training. So, his primary information of basic education is Head, Heart and Hand rather than Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.

Gandhi also maintains that education is essential for the attainment of the goal of peace. It can be attained only through morality and ethics. According to Gandhi, education is the realization of the best in man - body, soul and spirit. He maintained that education must be based on ethics and morality. Ethics and morality are integral to Gandhi's life. All his thoughts, actions and speeches are based on these two concepts. From the ethical perspective, education may be considered as a means of attainment of salvation. It helps to the path of the complete peace. Peace is the absence of violence and hostile thought. As a daily practitioner of non-violence, Gandhi right from his earlier stage considered that non-violence is an indivisible, important and essential part of education. We cannot be separated education from ethics, morality and spiritualism. For this purpose Gandhi has given some rules for all students so as to ensure that morality and righteousness always be considered as an essential part of their education. Regarding this, such rules can make to right thinking, self-control, service to the society, respect to others and constant awareness for their duties and responsibilities.

Today, the world is suffering from immense crisis from many sides. Crimes, conflict, hatred and distrust between one community and another, hunger, unemployment, poverty and literacy, paucity of resources and pollution of environment, deforestation and desertification, swelling number of migrants and refugees, ethnic and sub-national violence, terrorism, drug trafficking, AIDS etc., all these altogether make a grave danger to peace. The present day crisis is greater than the crisis that occurred during the time of Gandhi. The world is now full of violence. With the advancement of science and technology human being has invented many new technologies which are very helpful in our life. In some other ways, some selfish people who used it as a weapon for gaining his desire wish and pleasures. An action done under the motives of selfishness is a kind of violence. Purity of means is an essential condition of realizing good ends. If a good end is to be attained, it is also essential that the means adopted for the realization of the end is also good. He says, "if one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself."⁶ End and means are the two important concepts in Gandhian philosophy which play very important implication for his doctrine of truth and non-violence. His principle of aparigraha is one of the most important to bring simple and peaceful living, co-operation with one another. However, in our present day society we are facing so many conflicts. One of them is based on our knowledge which has been separated from work-ethics. Knowledge is separated in thought, in life as well as in market values by faulty psychology, faulty sociology and faulty economics respectively.

Education plays an important role which helps to equip individuals with the skills and attitudes that are necessary in order to adapt in changing situations and to add the creative spirit in the task of social change. 'Work and knowledge should go together' is the Gandhian principle of education. The educational systems try to develop the individual soul and mind, courage and self-reliance, cultivate the highest intellectual, scientific, moral and ethical accomplishments.

Gandhi's concept of education is of quite significance in the contemporary situation. His philosophical concept of education is entirely based on the development of human personality, to maintain the discipline, to create the manual work with learning and to develop the culture of the peace. He was a great educationist and an individualist par excellence. He knew that education is the most important means in the society which can be used as an instrument of socio-economic progress, material advancement, political evolution and moral development of an individual. Gandhi's whole philosophy and work was based on ethics and morality. His concept of education is also founded on ethics and morality. It may be said that his concept of education has full of religious ideas. His idea of religion is different from common concept. His concept of religion is 'service of humanity'. For the spirit of religions he propounded 'Nai Talim' or 'basic education'. This new education system, Archarya Kriplani says, '...is the coping stone of Gandhi's social and political edifice'. His philosophical thought on education is highly pedestal that creates the socio-economic development of the society.

Gandhi's Educational Thoughts

Gandhiji's Basic Education was the practical embodiment of his philosophy of education. His basic education takes up the challenging task of preparing the young learners to become morally sound, individually independents, socially constructive, economically productive and responsible future citizens which can prove helpful in solving the problem of unemployment by making youth self-employed by giving them skill training. Gandhiji believed that education should develop all the capacities of the child so that he becomes a complete human being. In this way, fully and harmoniously developed personality is able to realize the ultimate aim of life which is Truth or God. Gandhiji has himself explained - "By education I mean all-round drawing out of the best in child's and man's body, mind and spirit. Literacy is neither the beginning nor the end of education. This is only a means through which man or woman can be educated." His Basic Principles of Education includes:-

1. From seven to fourteen years of age, education of each child should be free, compulsory and universal.
2. The medium of instruction should be mother-tongue.
3. Mere literacy cannot be equated with education. Education should employ some craft as a medium of education so that the child gains economic self-reliance for his life.
4. Education should develop human values in the child.
5. Education should create useful, responsible and dynamic citizens. By education all the hidden powers of child should develop according to the community of which he is an integral part.
6. Education should achieve the harmonious development of child's body, mind, heart and soul.
7. All education should be imparted through some productive craft or industry and a useful correlation should be established with that industry. The industry should be such that the child is able to achieve gainful work experience through practical work.
8. Education should be made self-supporting through some productive work. Education should lead to economic independence and self-reliance for livelihood.

Thus, in Gandhiji's educational thoughts the development of the personality of child is more important than mere literacy or knowledge of different subjects. In other words he believed in life-centered as well as child-centered education. Besides learning of three R's Reading, Writing

and Arithmetic in school, he insisted on development of these H's Hand, Heart and Head. Thus, the aim of Education should be of developing the integrated personality of the child.

Gandhiji was having clarity in the idea that one of the basic principles of education is that work and knowledge must never be separated. Separation of learning from labor results in social injustices. In dynamic societies, education has to equip individuals with the skills and attitudes necessary for them to adapt to changing conditions, and for constructive participation in the task of social change. This can prove helpful in solving the problems of frustration, depression, anxiety and feeling of committing suicide among youth.

According to Gandhiji through education a child must be able to learn a productive craft to meet his future needs of life by adopting some industry or business. Hence, he advocated education for self-reliance and capacity to earn one's livelihood as the main aim of education. By this aim he did mean to make the child a laborer but wished that each child should earn while engaged in learning and gain some learning as he is busy with earning. He advocated that together with vocational education cultural advancement should also be achieved. The two aspects of development should go together side by side.

Gandhiji insisted that education should develop all aspects of individuality harmoniously. He also believed that one of the essential aims of education is the moral development or character development. Gandhiji wishes that every child should grow into a divine human being by realizing Godliness in his self. Gandhiji himself writes. "To develop the self is to build character and to prepare the self for complete realization and realization of Godliness.

Gandhiji's 'Basic Education' was job centered, value based and mass oriented. Here it is important to note that these are still the important requirements of education in our country. In his scheme of education, knowledge must be related to activity and practical experiences. Therefore his curriculum is activity centered. Its aim is to prepare the child for practical work, conduct experiments and do research so that he is able to develop himself physically, mentally and spiritually and become a useful member of society. In this activity-centered curriculum, Gandhiji included Mother-tongue, Basic Craft, Arithmetic, Sociology, General Science, Art, Music and other like subjects. He further advocated that curriculum for boys and girls from classes 1 to 5 should be the same. After that boys should be taught some Craft and girls should study Home-Science. It should be noted that Gandhiji's scheme of Basic Education is limited to primary and junior stages only.

Gandhiji also insisted that his scheme for primary education would include "the elementary principles of sanitation, hygiene, nutrition," besides "compulsory physical training through musical drill. Gandhiji argues that his scheme would make students strong, confident and useful to their parents and their country. Gandhiji adds that his system would lead to communal harmony because it would be the same for all; it would this be "practical religion, the religion of self help".

Gandhiji disapproved rote learning educational methods and considered it as defective and emphasized to make crafts and vocations as means of education. He wished that some local craft should be made as medium of education for children so that they develop their body, mind and soul in a harmonious way and also meet the ends needs to their future life. In this way, Gandhiji's method of teaching was therefore, different from the current one. He emphasized the importance of the following principles in his method of teaching:-

1. To achieve mental development, training of senses and parts of the body should be given.
2. Reading should precede the teaching of writing.
3. More opportunities should be given for learning by doing.
4. Encouragement should be given to learning by experience.
5. Correlation should be established in the teaching methods and learning experiences.

Conclusion:

The modern system of education acts as an instrument to increase the value of consumerism, materialism, undue competition and violence. The growing concern over the erosion of ethical values, youth unrest, ecological violence and increasing cynicism in society have brought to focus the need of revival of indigenous Indian heritage and life-style. Gandhiji could foresee such possible developments half a century ago and advocated a new alternative of Basic education (Shah, 2017). By which Of course, the emphasis on learning through craft may be retained, but perhaps modified to suit the times. His educational thoughts are based on eternal principles of truth, love, self-sacrifice, character building non-violence, so, will never lose their relevance. The requirement is to adapt his thoughts according to the present scenario. When Environmental consciousness, moral values, intrapersonal skills, community and society oriented awareness are all inculcated in young minds through education, then only development of the country in true sense can be possible.

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