



A qualitative study of educational ideals, values and contributions of Mahatma Gandhiji

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Abstract

In this paper discussed that Gandhiji's views on ideals of education and relevancy of those ideals in the present education system and he was the lovely and very good minded universal person, who was born in India in the modern age. He stressed on traditional spiritual attitude with the total development from education, which is related to modern age of the world with reference to India. Gandhi is the great thinker, the politician, the philosopher, the socialist and the educationist. He lives with the accumulation of Karmayaogi and Gyanyoga. The thought of Gandhi on Education is the basic way of life for all. An attempt has been made to analyze the impact assessment of educational philosophy of Gandhiji, with special reference to curriculum of basic education. This study is primarily empirical as well as analytical in nature covering the areas of Gandhiji's educational philosophy such as view of life, historical background of basic education, meaning of basic education, main features of basic education and curriculum of basic education. This paper also tries to explore ideals and philosophy of education and its relevance in modern society with the help of scientific outlook. Finally a critical evaluation is made on the basis of relevance of basic education in present times of Gandhian educational philosophy.

Keywords: educational philosophy, educational ideals, Mahatma Gandhiji's basic education, educational contributions

Introduction

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) was a man considered one of the great sages and prophets. He was held as another Buddha, another Jesus, Indians called him the 'Father of the Nation'. They showered their love, respect and devotion on him in an unprecedented measure. They thronged his way to have a glimpse of him, to hear one world from his lips. They applied on their foreheads the dust on the path he had trodden. For them, he was almost an incarnation of God, who had come to break the chains of their slavery. The whole world bowed to him in reverence. Even his opponents held him in great respect.

"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 or even the beginning."

M. K. Gandhi (Harijan: July 31, 1937) ^[1]

Gandhiji's contribution to education is unique. He was the first Indian who advocated a scheme of education based upon the essential values of the Indian culture and civilization. The methods and techniques advocated by him and the environment he prescribed revolutionized Indian thinking and way of living. At heart he was devoted to idealism. He wanted to translate his ideals and values into practice. His philosophy of education is a harmonious blending of idealism, naturalism, and pragmatism.

Educational philosophy of Gandhiji

Education, to Gandhiji, was a means to achieve perfection of

individuality on the one hand and an instrument of service to the nation on the other. Thus, individual and social both the aims of education were considered by him equally important. "By education mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, and spirit", he said. This in other words meant development of whole child, the whole personality of the child. Harmonious development of all the aspects of human personality such as physical, intellectual and spiritual was emphasized by him as an individual aim of education. Emphasizing the social aim of education he said that the individual has a responsibility to work for the welfare of the whole society. "Willing submission to social control and restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society" were considered by him important attitudes to be developed in the people through education. Good of the individual and good of the society were interdependent. So education should be both for the child as well as for the state. Education, to Gandhi, was something more than literacy. Though he did not belittle the importance of vocational aim of education, self-realization and knowledge of the Ultimate, God was considered the ultimate aims of education. Emphasis on vocational aspect led him to say that education has to be self-supporting, a theory which culminated into his system of basic education. Cultural refinement of human personality through education was also considered important by Gandhiji. But, it was Indian culture that was emphasized by him. Culture, according to him was in quality of the soul which was reflected in all aspects of human behavior. For achieving this kind of cultural refinement he emphasized the study of the Geeta and the sacred books of all other religions.

Gandhi attached much importance to character education and moral development of the child through education. This would

mean to him development of such qualities in the individual as purity of personal life, self-restraint, and service of humanity, courage, strength of conviction, righteousness and sense of responsibility. The attitude of "Ahimsa", non-violence was the supreme value to be developed in the people through education. The ultimate aim of education according to Gandhiji is the Self-Realization. All other aims are important as they lead to self-realization. Self-realization, to him, means realizing that the ultimate reality, the Truth is the universal soul, some unknown supreme power and that the man is only a spark of that which fuses with that supreme ultimately.

The Curriculum

Gandhiji considered elementary education the most important phase of the educational system. He, therefore, expressed his views only about the curriculum of primary stage curriculum. About this stage he said that intellectual development alone should not be emphasized. The curriculum should be so designed that it caters to the development of all the aspects of child personality. Physical, social, moral and spiritual development, too, are important. Hence, there should be provision in the curriculum for activities, experiences and subjects of knowledge that can help achieve these developments also. He, then, suggested making the curriculum activity centre by introducing teaching of some craft like spinning, weaving, handicraft, book craft, art, agriculture, and pottery etc., whichever is close to the child's life in his environment. Besides, he recommended that mother tongue should be the medium of instruction at this stage. It was also suggested by him that mathematics, social studies, drawing and music should necessarily included in the curriculum. General science including biology, chemistry, physical science, hygiene, nature study, physical education and general knowledge of astronomy were also recommended to form the basis of the curriculum. He also suggested that upto class boys and girls should be subjected to the same curriculum. But, after that girls should be taught home science instead of general science.

Methods of Teaching

Gandhiji once wrote in *Young India* (1921) that "schools and colleges should become almost, if not wholly, self-supporting". He, then emphasized that teaching should be done through arts and crafts, work and play, voluntary activity and self-chosen activity. Gandhiji said that the method of teaching should be such as it provides to the child freedom, a chance to come into closer contact with the teacher, a chance to be an active investigator, observer and experimenter. Craft-centre teaching and correlation method may be said to be the most important ingredients of the educational method Gandhiji suggested. Correlation method would mean relating the knowledge, of each subject being taught to the craft on the one hand and to the child's life on the other. Gandhi, emphatically, demanded that craft should be made the center of all education, centre of the school life. The idea, afterwards, found an expression to the Basic Education System which was introduced in all the states of the country. Some writers have tried to put labels on Gandhiji as a naturalist, an idealist and a pragmatist. In fact we find elements of all these three philosophies in his views on education. But, basically, he was

an idealist. His emphasis was on character formation and spiritual development of the child. He himself lived a spiritual life and stood for higher values throughout his life. The good of the society, according to him, was contingent upon the goodness of each individual, should develop in him attitudes of self-control, social service, ahimsa, sacrifice righteousness, brotherhood. These are all higher values like the idealistic he also emphasized that education should be used to cultivate these moral and spiritual values in the people. There are elements of naturalism and pragmatism too found in his educational philosophy. He considered the child an important element in the process of education and emphasized, like the naturalists, that education should conform to the nature of the child. The child should be allowed freedom. He should be taught in natural environment for "drawing out the best in the child". Like the naturalists, he also said that education should aim at the development of all aspects of child's personality. Activity, play, experimentation and own experience as the strategies of education were emphasized by Gandhiji also like, the naturalists. He also considered books as the means of imparting knowledge to young child unimportant. Thus, several ideas of naturalism are found expressed in Gandhiji's educational philosophy also. Yet, it cannot be said that he was a naturalist only. Some elements of pragmatic philosophy may also be seen in Gandhiji's educational philosophy. His emphasis on making education self-supporting and preparing individuals for vocation, craft-centered education, activity centre, teaching, learning through child's own experience and experimentation, correlated teaching clearly brings him closer to the pragmatists.

Gandhiji's Basic Education

Mahatma Gandhi explained the concept of Basic Education through a series of articles in his *Harijan* magazine in 1937. In the conference at Wardha after a detailed discussion about Gandhiji's articles the scheme of Basic Education took shape under the leadership of Dr. Zakir Hussain. The following four resolutions were passed. (i) Free and compulsory education should be given to all children for a period of seven years. (ii) The medium of instruction should be the mother tongue, (iii) The process of education should be centred round some form of manual production work in the shape of a craft. (iv) This education should be self-supporting to some extent.

The Central Advisory Board of Education set up a Committee under the Chairmanship of Sri B. G. Kher to suggest measures for implementing these resolutions. Then another Committee was appointed under the same Chairman to recommend action coordinating the Basic Education with higher education. The recommendations of both these Committees were approved by the CABE and included in the Report on Post-war Educational Development in India. In 1944, although Govts, both at the national and state levels accepted Basic Education as the national pattern, progress in its implementation was not satisfactory.

Merits of basic education

1. Work as a central place: Since work occupies a central place in life, it had an important place in Basic Education. Dignity of labour was emphasized by him and work was made an integral part of this education.

2. A new method of teaching: Through Basic Education Gandhiji introduced a new method of teaching. This method is to teach all subjects through crafts and taken as activity-centred meant to free children from tyranny of words and cramming.
3. Self-supporting education: As a corollary to craft-centred education, it was visualized by Gandhiji that schools need be self-supporting. The crafts organized scientifically would result in more production and the sale-proceeds must fetch a good income.
4. Socially sound system of education: Basic education was sound sociologically. The then class-labour and chasm between mental and physical labour and the spirit of dependence on others were required to be removed from the society. In short, Basic education was intended to eradicate many ills of the society.
5. Training for Citizenship: Basic education was providing for training students in democratic living and practices. It was aiming at forming positive attitudes, creating interests and appreciation, developing understanding and imparting skills in citizenship. On the whole, it was a training citizenship.

His Contributions

Gandhiji's model was not only holistic and practical, it was highly decentralized and integrated, with a demonstrated capacity to motivate the entire community and place responsibility and accountability at the community level versus the State. To highlight just a few of his contributions. Gandhiji's contribution to education is unique. He was the first Indian who advocated a scheme of education based upon the essential values of Indian culture and civilization. His important contributions to education are the following:

- Gandhiji put forth a very comprehensive and practical system of education suited to genius of our country. It is a constructive and human system integrated with needs and ideals of national life.
- Gandhiji was the first educationist to advocate the large scale use of handicraft, not only as a productive work but as a pivot round which the teaching of different subjects should be undertaken.
- He presented a practical scheme of education based on the principles of equity, social justice, non – violence, human dignity, economic well being and cultural self respect.
- Gandhiji gave a very broad - based concept of education describing it as all round development of human personality.
- He recommended immediate and ultimate aims of education which are in accordance with the Indian socio political, economic, cultural and social aim of education.
- He suggested a very practical and broad based curriculum. It is needed an integrated curriculum which is psychologically sound.
- The method of teaching suggested by Gandhiji is highly pragmatic and pedagogically sound.
- Gandhiji's educational model was not only holistic and practical; it was highly decentralized and integrated, with a demonstrated capacity to motivate the entire community and place responsibility and accountability at the

community level versus the state.

- Gandhiji's educational scheme revived India's economic, social and cultural life through the instrumentality of a handicraft.
- The basic scheme of education was a practical solution for rural unemployment. Gandhiji succeeded in presenting a type of education which can provide the necessary economic self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

Relevance of Gandhi's views on education in the modern context

The most important point in Gandhi's scheme of education is its emphasis on relating school education to the needs of the society. He wanted to achieve this objective through a system of Learning while earning. He gave an important place to the learning of craft. It will be seen from the curriculum of the present day schools that work experience and socially useful productive work find an important place. His views on early childhood education are quite relevant to – day. Parent education is stressed for the proper development of the early stages of the life. His emphasis on education through the mother tongue is the accepted principle throughout the period.

Conclusion

Gandhiji was very clear about man making or basic education, aimed to engage everyone as a self-employed person. Also it was an education that aimed at educating the whole person, rather than concentrating on one aspect. It was a highly moral activity. In Gandhi's scheme, higher education performed the essential function of providing training and properly motivating human power for national needs and there was an urgent need for the purposive expansion of such education. He gave greater importance to the child, than the techniques and method of education. It was his firm belief that a sound education should produce useful citizens of the entire humanity. Education in its true and broad sense is a lifelong process, which begins with beginning of life and ends with the end of life going on unceasingly. To Gandhi Education is a potent tool for social reconstruction. His interest in education was the outcome of a revolt against the defects of the then British system of education was purely literacy in content. It neglected the vocational and aesthetic dimensions of education. Gandhi believes, "by education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man - body, mind and spirit". He laid stress on the all - round development of the child. So gave much importance of exploring each individual, so that they can earn by learning to live peaceful life.

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