



GANDHIJ'S VIEWS ON BASIC EDUCATION AND ITS PRESENT RELEVANCE

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ABSTRACT

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation gave 'The Wardha Scheme of Education' or 'Basic Education' for modern India, which can be called the first blue print of national system of education, which is job centered, value-based and mass oriented. It is the first model of vocationalisation of education in India. In Gandhian scheme of education, knowledge must be related to activity and practical experience. His scheme of education envisages, a close integration between the school and the community so as to make child more social and co-operative. This scheme was the first attempt to develop an indigenous scheme of education in British India by Mahatma Gandhi. As a nationalist leader he fully realized that the British system of education could not serve the socio-economic need of the country. So he had developed a complete philosophy of education for the whole country. He had worked out it after a good deal of experimentation based on his philosophy of truth and non-violence.

INTRODUCTION

The field of education is a social institution meant for preparing every human being a good member of family, community and society and for their harmonious co-existence. It is through education that the form and the structure of the social order are established and maintained. It is concerned with aims, ideals, values and standards worked out by society. However, the modern educational system which has been adopted in India is badly equipped to achieve the overall objective of humane, scientific and peaceful social order. It fails to prepare the learners effectively to tackle the problems of modern world. It is in this context

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that Mahatma Gandhi's scheme of education is an alternative measure to establish a new social order. This scheme is known as the Wardha Scheme or Basic Education.

The Wardha scheme of Education or 'Basic education' occupies a unique place in the field of elementary education in India. This scheme was the first attempt to develop an indigenous scheme of education in British India by Mahatma Gandhi. As a nationalist leader he fully realized that the British system of education could not serve the socio-economic need of the country. So he had developed a complete philosophy of education for the whole country. He had worked out it after a good deal of experimentation based on his philosophy of truth and non-violence. Describing the real purpose of education, he stated his views as follows:

"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 nor even the beginning. It is one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education."

Thus, in Gandhiji's educational theory 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 three H's –hand, heart and head. According to Gandhi, the aim of education should be build the whole man and develop his integral personality. Education is simply the process of bringing out what is latent in man.

According to Gandhiji, Aims of education are as follows:

(1) All round development:

Gandhiji repeatedly emphasized that education should offer an opportunity to a child for self realization and full development of his or her personality. He said "true education is that which draws out and stimulated the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of children." Unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul, Gandhiji would not be satisfied with the education system. In his life time, he severely criticized the present system of education as a meaningless and wasteful exercise for children.

(2) Self –reliance:

Gandhiji desired that education system should be self-supporting and each boy or girl should become self-reliant by learning a craft or occupational skill for livelihood. He wanted



education to be a kind of insurance against unemployment. He further said, "The child at the age of 14, that is, after completing seventh standard he should be discharged as an earning unit.

The Basic Education envisaged by Gandhi aimed at producing self-reliant and good citizens. In order to regain India's lost glory and prestige, Gandhi's educational ideas based on value-orientation have to be reemphasized. The education curricula should be value-laden as well as information-oriented. Eradication of illiteracy and spread of education is the prime need of the hour so that the citizens of Twenty-First Century can be alert and enlightened."

(3) Free primary education:

Gandhiji advocated for free and compulsory education for all-boys and girls between 7 and 14 years. Education should be imparted in primary level in the student's mother tongue. A free primary universal education is to be imparted to all the children in the village. This will make the backbone of a country strong.

(4) Place of vocational education:

A love for manual work will be injected in the mind of children. This is not a compulsion but the child will learn it by doing. Being free from mere bookish knowledge, a student should resort to manual work. He, thus, put emphasis on vocational and functional education.

"Earning while learning" was the motto of this education. This will increase the creativity in a student. As Gandhi wanted to make Indian village self-sufficient unit, he emphasized that vocational education should increase the efficiency within the students who will make the village a self-sufficient unit.

(5) Emphasis on morality:

By education, Gandhi meant the improvement of morality within a student. Without being bookish, a student should adopt certain moral ethical codes like truth, nonviolence, charity and so on which will illumine his character. Thus a character building through education was a prime concern for Gandhi.

Learning without courage is like a waxen statue, beautiful to look at but bound to melt at the least touch of a hot substance.⁴⁵ On the other hand, if the foundations of moral training are firmly laid "the children could learn all other things themselves."

(6) Non-participation in politics:



Gandhiji wanted to keep the students away from politics. If students will participate in politics, they will be pawn at the hands of the politicians who will utilize them for fulfilling their desire. This will hamper the development of a student and his education will suffer a setback. So, he advised the students to keep themselves completely away from politics.

(7) Citizen Skills:

The Wardha scheme did not ignore the ideal of preparing children as good citizens. It was visualized that children of free India would need to know the right values of social, political and economic life of the country. They must also inculcate the proper attitudes and skills as good citizens of India.

(8) Social service:

Gandhiji believed that social service should be an essential part of education. He used to advise students to inculcate the spirit of service and self-sacrifice. Addressing the college students once he said,

“Your education, if it is a vital thing, must shed its fragrance in your surroundings. You must devote a certain portion of your time daily to serving the people around in a practical manner. You must therefore, be prepared to take the spade, the broomstick and the basket. You must become voluntary scavengers of this holy place. That would be the richest part of your education, not learning by heart literary thesis”.

Thus, Gandhiji synthesized the ideals of social service and individual development in the system of education. In his view, 'If learning becomes merely a means of living, it will lead to degradation'.

Relevance of Basic education:

With the advent of British colonial rule in India, an alien system of imperial education was introduced. This inevitably murdered the age-old, unique and all-inclusive holistic educational system in India. It has not only caused irreparable damage to Indian education system in the long run, but also created number of problems like communalism, exploitation of all kinds, class-consciousness, ever increasing crave for western materialistic life style, etc. Even the modern system of education acts as an instrument to increase the values of consumerism, materialism, undue competition and violence. There has been an invasion of



western culture in India through education with the help of recent electronic media revolution. 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. His Basic education takes up the challenging task of preparing the young learners to become morally sound, individually independent, socially constructive, economically productive and responsible future citizens.

Besides giving a practicable scheme of education to the country as a great educationist, Gandhiji was exemplary of his educational philosophy in his life. He believed in the dictum; 'An example is better than precept' and this is the chief characteristics of a good teacher. He did what he meant and he meant what he did. Every act of his life was lesson to the world. Gandhiji could be classified as the top ranking educationist of his times. We can hardly find his match even today in our age.

CONCLUSION:

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation gave the scheme of education for modern India, which can be called the first blue print of national system of education, which is job centered, value based and mass oriented. It is the first model of vocationalisation of education in India. In Gandhi an scheme of education, knowledge must be related to activity and practical experience. His scheme of education envisages, a close integration between the schools and community so as to make child more social minded and co-operative

Need of the hour is to reorient education so as to channelize the manpower in the right direction. In the reports of the various committees and commissions the need and the importance of education has been emphasized to make it vocational i.e. job oriented and productive for self-employment. With the serious problem of mounting educated unemployed young men and women, growing unrest among the students, re-orientation of the educational system on the spirit of Gandhian conception of education seems to be the need of the 21st century.

Thus, it is quite justified to say that the fundamental principles of basic education are still valid and fruitful in the context of our present educational reform. They are relevant to be used as guiding principles of modern education. In fact, it needs to be reformed on modern lines then it may serve as one of the most interesting and fruitful techniques of instruction at elementary stage.



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