

Gandhian Views on Education & Its Relvance

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Abstract : *Generally the common people identify Gandhiji's educational philosophy with what is popularly known as the Wardha Scheme. Which is not synonymous with Gandhiji's entire philosophy of Education. "Education must be of a new type for the sake of the creation of a new world". He elaborates it- "our system of (Basic) education leads to the development of the mind, body and soul. It is the first model of vocationalization of Education in India.*

Keywords : *Adult Education, Primary Education, Non-Violence, Swadeshi, Vocationalization, Wardha Scheme*

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Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation gave the scheme of Education for modern India which can be called the first blue print of the national system of education which is job centered, value based and mass oriented. It is the first model of vocationalization of Education in India. Gandhiji realized quite early in his life that education was a pivotal activity on which not only the progress of the individual but moral, economic political progress of the entire society depends.

Gandhiji's conception of education is in harmony with his philosophical beliefs. His entire philosophy and activity stands on two foundation pillars, first is 'Truth' and second is 'Non-violence'. Truth and non-violence are not merely abstract values cherished by Gandhiji but it is the quintessence of Gandhian thought. For Gandhiji a student means one who is hungry for learning. Learning is knowledge of what is worth knowing about. "The only thing worth knowing about is the atman. True knowledge is thus knowledge of the self."

Views on Education

The aim of education is society is determined by the nature of society and man we cherish. Thus for him education is a means for the up liftmen not only of the individual but of the entire society. The main feature of the educational system that Gandhi considered the best was that education should enhance around development of the personality of the individual along with some vocational training to cater the economic needs of the members of the society. Thus in his scheme - aim of the education is to bring about a harmonious development of all the four aspects of human personality - body, heart, mind and spirit.

The broader aim of education according to Gandhiji is inculcate the values of truth, non-violence, bread labor, non-stealing, non-possession, Brahmacharya or chastity, Swadeshi, anti untouchability, worship and prayer, fasting and service to humanity. Gandhiji includes secondary in primary education, because it is the only education so-called that is available to small number of the people in our villages. Gandhiji wants to leave higher education to private enterprise for meeting national requirements whether in the various industries, technical arts or fine arts.

This it is manifest that Gandhiji considered education as one, indivisible and integrated, process, but in views of the circumstances in which the country has been placed, he focused his attention on the education of the children between the age of seven and fourteen years.

Craft as the Centre of Education

Education should be imparted through some craft as productive work, which should provide the nucleolus of all the instruction provided in the school. his own

words - "The core of my suggestion is that handicrafts are to be taught, not merely for productive work, but for developing the intellect of the pupils.

1. Self-supporting aspect of Education

The aim of education is society is determined by the nature of society and man we cherish. Therefore Gandhiji wanted to make the individual and society both self-supporting by his scheme of education. Gandhiji hold that the child at the age of fourteen i.e. after finishing a seven years course should be discharged as an earning unit. His plan aimed at imparting education and simultaneously cutting at the root of unemployment.

2. Cult of Non-violence

Gandhiji's scheme of education is imbued with his cardinal creed on non-violence. In his speech at the Wardha conference he said:

"The idea of self-supporting education cannot be divorced from the ideological background of non-violence and unless we bear in mind that the new scheme is intended to bring into being a new age from which class and communal hatred is eliminated and exploitation is eschewed, we cannot make a success of it. We should therefore, approach the task with firm faith in non-violence and in the faith that the new scheme is evolved by a mind that has conceived non-violence as the panacea for all evils."

3. Education for Democratic Values

Gandhi wanted that the education should aim at training the children of leading corporate life based on social aspects of democracy. They should learn to adjust themselves in the best manner with their social environment. A proper development of civic sense and adjustment with the surroundings would make children worth citizens of the country.

Relevance

In Order to understand the relevance of Gandhian conception of education we should have a clear picture of the educational system, which was introduced during the British period and has been in existence till to the present time. The year 1835 was a turning point in the history of Indian education for Lord Macaulay presented his famous minute in favor of the adoption of English as the medium of instruction to Lord Bentinck. Dealing with the aim of teaching English in India, he said "we must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern a class of persons Indian in blood and colors but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect".

Macaulay's minutes gave a new dimension to Indian education, which had for-

reaching consequences. The introduction of English and European culture led to results - both good and evil, but the latter far out numbered the former, therefore Gandhiji was compelled to remark in 1931 at Royal Institute of International Affairs that India was more illiterate then than it had been fifty or a hundred years before. Let us see some more aspects and evil consequences of this educational system:

1. The system divorced the child from his physical and social surroundings, for the courses taught in schools were entirely unrelated to Indian life.
2. It created a new class in India on knowing English and the other innocent of it, it laid emphasis on literary education, as its primary aim was to prepare young men for subordinate govt. posts. It failed to develop a sense of citizenship in the students. There has been a neglect of mass education, for it was believed that, when the classes were educated, they would carry down the culture to the masses by the process of filtration.

The new scheme of education, which Gandhiji launched in 1937 and advocated widely in India, was named Basic National Education or the Wardha Scheme. This means all round economy. Inaugurating the Wardha Conference on the 2nd October 1937, Gandhiji said:

“I am convinced that the present system of primary education is not only wasteful but positively harmful.” Gandhiji made a long inaugural speech wherein he dwelt at length on the salient features of his educational philosophy.

The conference therefore appointed a committee of leading educationists with Dr. Zakir Hussain as its Chairman with the objects of preparing a detailed syllabus. This committee examined the problem of education in all its aspects and submitted its report to Gandhi on the 2nd December 1937. The Report embodies what is known as the Wardha Scheme of Basic National Education.

The present system of education designed to meet the needs of an imperial administration within the limitations set by a feudal and traditional society, will need radical changes if it is to meet the purposes of a modernizing democratic and socialistic society... In fact, what is needed is a revaluation in education, which in turn will set in motion the much-desired social, economic and cultural revolution.” This is what Gandhiji desired while he promulgated his new scheme of education to develop a new socio-economic order based on justice. Gandhi was a firm believer in the principle of free and compulsory primary education. He hold that we could realize this only by teaching the children a useful vocation and utilizing it as a means for cultivating their mental, physical and spiritual faculties. The resolution on National Policy on Education in 1968 adopted Gandhiji idea of free and

compulsory education for all the children up to the age of 14. Gandhiji's emphasis on vocational training to students has been given due importance by Kothari Commission in its report. We visualize the future trend to social education to be towards a fruitful mingling of general and vocational education.

The policy of vocationalisation of education was finally promulgated when the National policy on education 1986 was adopted by the Parliament. After the declaration of the National Policy on education 1986, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India, announced the programme of Action for its implementation, it laid emphasis on vocationalisation of education as well as adult education. The central advisory board of education committee or Janardhana Reddy Committee 1992 also reported -

“Every effort should be made to ensure that the constitutional obligation of providing free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years becomes a reality before we enter the twenty-first century.” Regarding vocationalisation of education JRC reported- The work experience programme may be systematically implemented by allocating 12.5 per cent to 20 per cent of the school times for these activities, the activities should have a practical orientation in relation to various subjects under this programme. The vocational “core” would find place at the secondary and higher secondary stages; work experience would relate to elementary education.

We find that the genesis of our National policy of education and programme of action 1986 laying emphasis on early childhood care and education, Universal Elementary Education, vocationalisation of education, education for women's equality, Adult education are present in Gandhiji's new scheme of education.

Basic Education:

In the document entitled ‘The concept of Basic Education 1956.25- broadly speaking the concept of basic education is the same as that was defined in the report of Basic National Education Committee (The Zakir Hussain Committee) and elucidated by the Central Advisory Board of Education. This concept of Basic Education is as much relevant today as when it was announced by Gandhiji.

Basic education as conceived and explained by Mahatma Gandhi, is an education, which aims at creating a social order free from violence and injustice. Therefore, creative, socially useful and productive work in the schools in which all boys and girls may participate, irrespective of any distinction of caste and class is placed at the core of basic education. The fundamental objective a basic education is nothing less than the development of the child's total personality in totality includes productive efficiency as well.

In basic education knowledge must be related to activity and practical experience. To ensure this basic education postulates that curriculum should be related to - craft work and natural and social environment. The emphasis on the productive work, crafts in the basic schools should not be taken to mean that the study of books would be ignored. The basic scheme envisages a close integration between the schools and the community so as to make the child more social minded and co-operative.

In the scheme of Basic education no differentiation has been made between boys and girls. It is equally possible for a girl to grow to her full stature, if she receives her education through a basic craft. The introduction of the new pattern of education 10+2 in India envisaged the vocationalisation of higher secondary education at an extensive scale. National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in 1976 prepared a document and spelled out details of implementing the scheme. Curriculum committee on Higher Secondary Education and its Vocationalisation, 1976 emphasises vocationalisation of education at higher secondary level -

The aim of which is to avoid forcing students into the academic channel alone and to offer them opportunities to choose subjects and programmes to study in a much wider field of education in keeping with their aptitudes, interests and abilities, with a view to increasing their employability which would in turn provide society with personnel having a wide spectrum of knowledge and training for its own needs and Upliftment. It also aims at the reduction and elimination of frustration among the youth resulting from non-productive and aimless education offered at present.

Elaborating on vocationalisation of education the report quoted - Vocational Education as defined by UNESCO; in its recommendation of 1974 on Technical and Vocational Education as a –

Comprehensive term embracing those aspects of the educational process involving in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations, in the various sectors of economic and social life. Such an Education would be an integral part of general education and a means of preparing for an occupational field; an aspect of continuing education should further contribute to the achievement of society's goals of greater democratization and social cultural and economic development.

Committee was clear in its recommendations that vocationalised higher secondary

education cannot be equated with mere technical training; it is essentially education in the broader sense of the term. Education does not produce jobs, but vocationalised education makes it more likely for an individual to get a job or to be his own master by either starting a new productive activity or a service which may satisfy a felt need of the community.

Adult Education

Gandhiji realized very early that it was by an awakening and re-orientation of the adult mind that society could be organized on a new and healthy basis. The UNESCO seminar on Adult education held at Mysore in November 1949, discussed the definition of adult education. After a thorough study of various social conditions obtaining in Asian countries the following conclusions were arrived at –

Adult education stands for basic minimum education of every adult above 18 years of age, but benefit of this type of education might be modified and extended to adolescents below that age. It was agreed that the aim of adult education was to prepare the individual to live a same healthy life in a decent home, to work profitably, and to raise his economic level through literacy by the provision of extension of education and by recreational facilities. Literacy was defined as ability to read and write.

Adult education in India assumes immense proportion. Gandhiji was aware of it. Under the guidance of Gandhiji young men and women went to villages and provided the illiterate villagers the knowledge of reading and writing and gave them the first lesson of literacy.

In few countries is the need for adult education more urgent than in India. Gandhiji was aware of it. Ashrams at Sabarmati and Sevagram and the training that he imparted to hundreds and thousands these are all achievements in the field of adult education. The Govt. of Indians recognized importance given by Gandhiji to the enlightenment of the grown people by making a policy statement on Adult Education on April 1977. National adult education programme was launched in the country on October 2, 1978. Some countries have extended the age of free and compulsory education up to the age of 16 or 18.³² Thus the need of the hour is to reorient education so as to channelize the manpower in the right direction. In the reports of various committees and commissions the need and the importance of the reorientation of education has been emphasized to make it vocational i.e. job oriented and productive for self-employment.

Conclusion

Here it seems to be very clear that Gandhiji is more relevant today than in

the Era of pre-independence when he advocated that education should be imparted through some craft or productive work but the craft or productive work chosen should be rich in educative possibilities. Moreover manual work brings the child in contact with matter. In working with matter, the child realizes the utility of the various raw - materials and tools, which he handles, cleans and sharpens. Such knowledge opens his mind to science and economics. This is Gandhi conception of literary training through manual work. For Gandhiji no education would be social that does not make useful citizens of boys and girls.

Today our Prime Minister focused on start-up programmes, small employment tools, means Gandhi and his thoughts run in every Indian mind always. Thus we see that Gandhiji conception of education is indigenous and based upon the social conditions and future needs of the country.

In Gandhian scheme of things education lays emphasis on manual labour, production and self-sufficiency, it will help students to choose vocation easily after completing their education-thus they will not become parasites on society after completing their learning. Instead of waiting for jobs requiring only mental labour they can employ themselves by learning the dignity of labour which lacks today among the young boys and girls. With the serious problems 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.

Therefore, he came to the conclusion that education was the most potent instrument for the regeneration of women viz a viz society. In his own words - "As women begin to realize their strength, as they must in proportion to the education they receive, they will naturally resent the glaring in qualities to which they are subjected.

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