



Gandhiji's Education (Nai Talim) - a brief study

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Abstract: "The destiny of a nation is built in its class rooms" says Kothari Commission 1964-66. The development of a country depends on its Educational policies. Gandhi's educational policy, which is in many respects a revolt against the Western or European education, is designed in such a way that it caters to the needs of Indian children. It is more of an ideal education set up which perhaps lacks scientific element. Gandhi's educational policies reflected Nai Talim (Basic Education for all) a spiritual principle which states that knowledge and work are not separate. It was a reaction against the British educational system and colonialism in general, which had the negative effect of making Indian children alienated and career-based aims seen forth by Gandhi from time to time are correlated to his philosophy and ideals of life. The end of knowledge, according to Gandhi has been building up of sound character. True education, he thought should draw the best out of the students. Schools and colleges should not become factories for making Government employees or clerks in commercial offices. His ideal of education was attainment of peace and bliss and not wealth and power. Though today's students have to gain sound technical knowledge character building is also one of the important traits of improved personality...ability would enable a man to go to the top. But it takes character to keep him there.

Key words: Education, Philosophy, Experiments, Wardha, Character

Introduction:

"The destiny of a nation is built in its class rooms" says Kothari Commission 1964-66. The development of a country depends on its Educational policies. Gandhi's educational policy, which is in many respects a revolt against the Western or European education is designed in such a way that it caters to the needs of Indian children. It is more of an ideal education set up which perhaps lacks scientific element. However, the value system it promotes makes it more viable and meaningful. In the modern era value based education has become need of the hour. This is what exactly the doctor ordered.

Objectives:

- 1 To present the meaning and definition of Education
- 2 To discuss the educational scenario of India in the 19th century
- 3 To present the evolution of Gandhi's educational policy
- 4 To find out basic elements of Gandhi's education
- 5 To analyze the educational philosophy of Gandhi
- 6 To discuss the merits and demerits Wardha scheme of education



- 7 To high light the aims of Gandhi's education
- 8 To discuss the concept of education as a liberating force
- 9 To explain Gandhiji's educational experiments

Meaning and definition of Education:

The word education is derived from the Latin word 'educare'. As per Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, "Education is a process of teaching, training and learning especially in schools and colleges to improve knowledge and develop skills. The meaning of education in Sanskrit 'Vidya' which originated from 'vid' which means knowledge or wisdom. Swami Vivekananda defines education as 'the manifestation of perfection that is present in a man'. Education is of paramount importance for overall development of an individual, a society or a nation at large.

Education in India in 19th Century:

There is a general observation that the development of education in society runs parallel to the socio-economic structures and evolution of that society. Indeed, more can be said, "The education development is ultimately determined by the economic and political needs of society and, in a class divided society, by the needs of the dominant classes in society". We may re-call the early debates between the Orientalists, supported initially by the British, and the Occidentalists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy who were pleading for a modern western type of education for our people. We may recall also the British policy of utilizing the division in Indian society, to keep sections away from the move for modern education as well as from the general movement for

independence. To the name of Raja Ram Mohan Roy can be added the names of Vidyasagar, Jotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule, Syed Ahmd Khan, Gokhale who tried unsuccessfully in 1912 to get a legislation passed to make education compulsory. Mahatma Gandhi, Maharsi Karve and Dr B R Ambedkar made significant contribution to the development of progressive education ideas.

The Evolution of Gandhiji's Theory of Education:

Gandhi's ideas in regard to education, did not, of course, suddenly emerge from his brain. They have been outcome of long years of sustained thought and experience. It has evolved out of his long and wide experience of the political, social and economic life of his country and that of his countrymen in South Africa. After a long drawn out process of various kinds of experience and experiments, conducted for nearly forty years, in both South Africa and in India, his (Gandhiji's) views on education took their final shape and developed into a philosophy of education. It is the final shape of this philosophy of education that entitles him to world-wide renown as a great educationist and as one who has made a revolutionary contribution to educational thought.

Basic Elements of Gandhi's Education:

Gandhi's educational policies reflected Nai Talim (Basic Education for all) a spiritual principle which states that knowledge and work are not separate. It was a reaction against the British educational system and colonialism in general, which had the negative effect of making Indian children alienated and career-based; it promoted disdain for manual work, the development of a new elite class, and the increasing problems of



industrialization and urbanization. The three pillars of Gandhiji's pedagogy were its focus on the lifelong character of education its social character and its form as a holistic process. For Gandhi, education is 'the moral development of the person', a process that is by definition 'lifelong'.

Gandhiji's Philosophy of Education:

Gandhiji's contribution to educational theory and practice is outstanding. He was a great educational thinker of modern India. The common people ordinarily identify his educational philosophy with the popular Wardha Scheme. It is of course an integral part of his educational philosophy but does not cover the whole of it. The Wardha Scheme is mainly concerned with the education of children between 7 and 14 years of age. This is not the only scheme which Gandhi had propounded. He had made several experiments in education during his lifetime, of which the Wardha Scheme is only a culmination of his system. Therefore it is not synonymous with his entire philosophy of education. In his system of thought, education is for life and through life and therefore everything is related to eternal values. He is a revolutionary educational thinker, in the sense that he wanted to bring about a new social order through his new scheme of education.

He is a great idealist in educational philosophy. In his ideal society service unto man would be service unto God. According to him, the ultimate aim of man's life is the realization of God and all his activities, social, political, and religious have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. His ideal is that of universal brotherhood, to be brought about by ahimsa, which implies love for all and hatred for none.

He is a practical educational philosopher and an experimentalist to the core. The whole of his life has been spent on experiments with Truth and the educational experiments have been one of the instruments have been one of the instruments for the realization of his ideal in life. In his several educational experiments he has tried to translate his philosophy into actual practice. In fact his educational system has a great political philosophy-evolution and establishment of an ideal society. His educational system is the dynamic side of his entire philosophy. His several thoughts on education converge and do form a coherent and complete educational philosophy.

Gandhi has evolved a philosophy of child-centric education. In his philosophy of education, the personality of the educand is of greater significance than the tools and subjects. He has restored the child to the legitimate place in the scheme of education.

The Wardha Scheme or Basic National Education :

Gandhiji believed that the present system of education was not suitable to a poor country like India. He was in favour of a more utilitarian system of education. It was under his guidance that the Wardha Scheme of education was adopted. The children were to get not only the knowledge of three R's (Retention, Recognition and Recall) but also learn some art which was to help them while studying.

The Government of India Act 1935, introduced provincial autonomy and popular ministries started functioning from 1937. The Congress party came into power in seven provinces. The Congress party set at work to evolve a



national scheme of education for the country. In 1937 Mahatma Gandhi published a series of articles in his paper, *The Harijan*, and proposed a scheme of education called Basic Education, better-known as the Wardha Scheme. The main principles of the scheme and prepared detailed syllabi for a number of crafts and made suggestions concerning training of teacher, supervision, examination and administration. The scheme centered round 'manual productive work' which might cover the remuneration of the teachers. It envisaged a seven years course through the mother tongue of the students. The outbreak of the war in 1939 and the resignation of Congress Ministries led to the postponement of the scheme. It was left to the National Government to take up the work after 1947.¹

Gandhiji's aim of Education:

Educational philosophers at different periods in history have formulated different aims of education. Naturally therefore, there has been no unanimity among them regarding the ultimate aim of education. It is no wonder then that the educational thinkers of different ages and countries contradict one another.

Different educational thinkers might have formulated different aims and ideals in education, each differing from the other but there are very few instances of one individual setting forth different aims of education, which at the same time come under one all-inclusive and all-comprehensive aim. Gandhi is a typical example of an educational philosopher who has set forth not only one aim but different aims which are not exclusive of one another but come under one all-inclusive and all-comprehensive aim. Even though Gandhi's different aims

appear at the outset to contradict each other, they are in fact only the different views he held from different standpoints at different times and in different places.

The different aims seen forth by Gandhi from time to time are correlated to his philosophy and ideals of life. The end of knowledge, according to Gandhi has been building up of sound character. True education, he thought should draw the best out of the students. Schools and colleges should not become factories for making Government employees or clerks in commercial offices. His ideal of education was attainment of peace and bliss and not wealth and power.

In a speech delivered before the students of the Shamaldas College, Bhavnagar, Gandhi says: "The parents take the lead in giving the wrong direction. They feel that their children should be educated only in order that they may earn wealth and position, Education and knowledge are thus being prostituted and we look in vain for the peace, innocence and bliss that the life of a student ought to be. Our students are weighed down with cares and worries when they should be really 'careful for nothing'. They have simply to receive assimilate. They should know only to discriminate between what should be received and what rejected. It is the duty of the teacher to teach his pupils discrimination. If we go on talking indiscriminately, we would be no better than machines. We are thinking, knowing beings and we must in this period distinguish truth from untruth, sweet from bitter language, clean from unclean things and so on.

"Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaya":

Gandhi made 'Sa Vidya Ya vimuktaya'-education is that which liberates-one of the most important aims of education. It



was the motto of the Gujarat Vidyapith which was founded by him in 1920. This education for freedom can be interpreted in more than one sense. It may mean political freedom as well as spiritual liberation. Since the country was in bondage at that time, he was very particular that national education should aim at freedom enabling the students by their training to emancipate India from Western domination. By education for freedom, he might as well have meant spiritual liberation also, since his ultimate aim of education was self-realization. He could not have meant either the one or the other only or only both. At the back of his mind must have been the idea of economic, political and intellectual freedom. He himself interpreted it as follows: "It means: That is knowledge which is designed for salvation. On the principle that the greater includes the less, national independence or material freedom is included in the spiritual. The knowledge gained in educational institutions must therefore at least teach the way and lead to such freedom". Thus his idea of education for freedom admits of broader interpretation.

Gandhiji's Educational Experiments:

During his stay in South Africa for a considerable portion of his life, Gandhi was in a position to know the innumerable hardships of native Indians settled in South Africa. He knew fully well that they were exploited because of their ignorance. Moved by sympathy towards them, he started on a new venture, which in the long-run proved more or less an eye-opener to the native Indian settlers in South Africa. What was the new venture? He started a class to teach English to a handful of Indians—three at the beginning. He had no

misgivings regarding his capacity to teach. At the outset he undertook to teach English to three persons—two of them were Mussalmans—one a barber, another a clerk, and the third was a Hindu, a petty shop-keeper. Being more interested in social education, during his stay in Pretoria, in South Africa, he made a deep study of the social economic and political conditions of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. The hard conditions of the Indian settlers deepened his feeling for them and it gave him opportunities of learning public work and its importance. Here it was that the religious spirit within him became a true living force.

In the matter of religion he was greatly influenced by Ray Chandhai by his living contact, Tolstoy's 'The Kingdom of God is Within You' and Ruskin's 'Unto His Last', and the other important factors were his comparative knowledge of the various religions, drawn from the Bible, the Koran, the Bhagavat Gita, the Ramayana of Tulsidas and Edwin Arnold's 'Light of Asia'. Gandhi acknowledges his indebtedness to the above references in his autobiography. All the above mentioned seem to have awakened in him a religious quest—a quest for spiritual development and perfection which in its onward movement led him in the direction of making educational experiments as one of the means of attaining his cherished goal.



Conclusion :

“The generation into which I happen to have been born has not only been Hitler’s generation in the West and Stalin in Russia it has also been Gandhi’s in India; and it can already be forecast with some confidence that Gandhi’s effect on human history is going to be greater and more lasting than Stalin’s or Hitler’s.” - Arnold Toyn

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