

**GANDHIAN IDEA OF EDUCATION**Dr. Meena Soni¹, Vishakha Singhania²¹(Lecturer in Hindi, Women's College, Jharsuguda.)²(Lecturer in English, Sovan Memorial Panchayat College, Kirmira)

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ABSTRACT

True education refers to the union of the mind, body and spirit, devotion to one's duty with the attitude of service, drawing best out of oneself. Mahatma Gandhi's radical views, ideologies and his educational experiments shook the country out of the dust and ignorance imposed by the prevailing educational system of the time. Nai Taleem, focus on mother tongue and vernaculars, craft-centered learning, free and basic education for primary children, inclusion of manual labour together brought around a silent social revolution and steered Indians towards freedom.

Keywords: *Nai Taleem, Mother Tongue, Vernaculars, Craft-Centered Learning, Manual Labour, Service.*

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GANDHIAN IDEA OF EDUCATION

Father of the Nation! Born on 2nd October, 1869, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is a name that sets millions of hearts thumping to the beat of freedom – a name the utterance of which summons us to look beyond the mundane into the real, into that which really matters – the truth of existence. His philosophies and ideologies set one into a deep knowingness, leading

one directly to the vast treasures of the inner riches of the Self.

According to Gandhi true education is that which helps us to know the Atman, our true Self, God and Truth. We carry on numerous activities with that aim in view. In an activity carried on as education, a proper understanding of its meaning – devotion to duty and the spirit of service are necessary.



The Russian writer, LeoTolstoy said, "The only purpose of education is freedom; the only method is experience."

Mahatma Gandhi, greatly influenced by Tolstoy deeply resonated with his ideologies. Gandhi's views on education together with his principles of Satyagraha (Truth) and Ahimsa (Nonviolence) with a firm belief in God and dignity of labor brought around a revolution in the Indian educational scenario, steering us towards independence.

"Literacy in itself is no education. Literacy is not the end of education or even the beginning. By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man-body, mind and spirit," said Gandhi.

Gandhi never gave excessive importance only to the knowledge of letters. In his book, "Towards New Education," he suggested that literary training by itself did not add an inch to one's moral height and that character building was independent of literary training. He always looked at education as an important means to develop the body and the mind.

THE SHACKLES OF ENGLISH EDUCATION

Deeply dissatisfied by the educational foundation laid by Lord Macaulay, around the early nineteenth century, Gandhi felt that English education had further entangled the Indians in chains of mental slavery, estranging us from our own surroundings, acting as a complete kill-joy to the pride in the environment and even presenting our civilization as imbecile, barbarous, superstitious and practically useless. English education fostered feelings of denationalization and was making us foreigners to our own rich traditions and culture.

Gandhi was completely against the idea that knowledge of the English language was necessary for imbibing ideas of liberty, and developing accuracy of thought. English education, he felt, was dwarfing the Indian mind, body and soul. India did not need an education system that produced mechanical dummies to suit the British needs. What we needed was identifying with the aspirations of the masses igniting fearless young minds in pursuit of truth and bold experiments, and sincerity of spirit and soul. "Had I been without a sense of self-respect and satisfied myself with having for my children the education that other children could not get, I should

have deprived them of the object- lesson in liberty and self-respect that I gave them at the cost of the literary training. And where a choice has to be made between liberty and learning, who will not say that the former has to be preferred a thousand times to the latter?"

When Gandhi landed in Durban, South Africa in January, 1987, with his sister's son and two of his own sons, he chose not to send them to schools for European children and took to the task of teaching them himself with the aid of a few teachers. Gandhi believed that character building should be the basic objective of any meaningful education and its goal should be to create an awareness of the deep lying innate potential within.

He strongly advocated the imparting of instructions in vernacular language such that school was an extension of home and there was no gulf between the impressions at home and at school.

ADVOCATED THE USE OF MOTHER TONGUE AND VERNACULARS

Mahatma Gandhi opined that our language was the reflection of ourselves. What use was our existence if we could not express our best thoughts in our own language? If Indians had received education through our vernaculars, India would be brilliantly different today. He said, "I must cling to my mother tongue as to my mother's breast, in spite of its shortcomings. It alone can give me the life-giving milk."

Gandhi shared his own experiences as he grew up. Up to the age of 12, all knowledge he received was in Gujarati. When he entered High School for three years, Gujarati was still the medium of learning. The real challenge began in the fourth year when everything had to be learned in English – Geometry, Algebra, Chemistry, Astronomy, History and Geography. The poor articulation of the teachers, improper comprehension and rote learning led to chaos. The grasp of the subjects diminished and a foreign medium created a barrier between him and his family.

According to Gandhi, "India has to flourish in her own climate and scenery and her own literature, even though all the three may be inferior to the English climate, scenery and literature. We and our children must build on our own heritage. If we



borrow another we impoverish our own. We can never grow on foreign victuals. I want the nation to have the treasures contained in that language, and for that matter the other languages of the world, through its own vernaculars.”

WARDHA SCHEME OF EDUCATION, 1937

Gandhi had published an article in the *Harijan* on July 31, 1937. Based upon this article, an all India National Education Conference was held on October 22 and 23, 1937. The conference is called Wardha Educational Conference and it was presided by Gandhi himself.

The resolutions passed at the Wardha Conference were as follows:

- i) Free and compulsory education to be provided for 7 years at a nationwide scale.
- ii) Mother tongue should be the medium of instruction.
- iii) Throughout this period of 7 years, the education should be around some forms of manual and productive work and for this purpose a handicraft must be chosen, based upon the environment of the child.
- iv) This system would generate the remuneration of the teachers.

Following Wardha Conference, a committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Zakir Hussain was appointed to formulate the scheme of basic education. The aim of the basic education was to develop the qualities of the ideal citizenship and more aspect should be given to the Indian culture than the literacy.

NAI TALEEM AS THE SPEARHEAD FOR A SILENT SOCIAL REVOLUTION

Nai Taleem was a principle which stated that knowledge and work are not separate Gandhi suggested, “The brain must be educated through the hand.” He voiced, “An education which does not teach us to discriminate between good and bad, to assimilate the one and eschew the other is a misnomer.”

Mahatma Gandhi promoted an educational curriculum with the same name. (Basic education for All) based on this pedagogical principle. It conceptualized in a way that would involve harmonious development of the body, mind and soul

with the involvement of craft and industry as a medium of education including skills such as spinning, weaving, leather work, pottery, basket-making and book binding. Learning of a craft at the centre of a teaching program would foster self-sufficiency and autonomy thus encouraging self-financing.

He believed that along with literary and vocational training, training mannerisms in children, object lessons in practical sanitation and hygiene were also very important.

To promote an all round development and truly educating the intellect proper exercise and training of the bodily organs was a must. Education of heart along with physical and spiritual faculties was equally important.

“In any curriculum of the future, spinning must be a compulsory subject. Just as we cannot live without breathing and without eating, so is it impossible for us to attain economic independence and banish pauperism from this ancient land without reviving and without reviving home-spinning. I hold the spinning wheel to be as much a necessity in every household as the hearth. No other scheme that can be devised will ever solve the problem of the deepening poverty or the people. How then can spinning be introduced in every home? I have already suggested the introduction of spinning and systematic production of yarn in every national school. Once our boys and girls have learnt the art they can easily carry it to their homes.” By making spinning and other craft as a necessary part of the educational curriculum, the Swadeshi movement would be rolled into inertia bringing about self-reliance and autonomy as direct by-products. It would mean an increased reliance on our own strength.

He firmly believed, “Only the self-reliant man can progress towards success in any task. This is true of a country as of a man.”

ROLE OF A TEACHER

Gandhi believed that a heart could only be educated by the touch of a genuine teacher. It was of utmost importance for the teachers to be men and women of faith and character first. Teaching should be born out of a deep passion to teach and to deliver.



"A teacher who establishes rapport with the taught, becomes one with them, learns more from them than he teaches them. He who learns nothing from his disciples is, in my opinion, worthless. Whenever I talk with someone I learn from him. I take from him more than I give him."

Villages were an important constituent of the Indian set-up. Multiplicity of textbooks would result in deprivation of knowledge to villagers he felt. He said that the text books were more important for the teachers than the students and it was the duty of the teacher to prepare for each class from the text book. He believed that preliminary instructions imparted vocally would bring around a better degree of comprehension in students. Literature taught by way of recreation would have far reaching effects.

Gandhi said that there was no school equal to a decent home and no teacher equal to a virtuous parent.

TOLSTOY FARM

The Tolstoy Farm, in South Africa, named such by Herman Kallenbach, Gandhi's associate was founded in 1910 and dissolved in 1913. It proved to be an ideal laboratory for Gandhi's educational experiments. "Tolstoy Farm was a family in which I occupied the place of the father," wrote Gandhi, and that I should so far as possible shoulder the responsibility for the training of the young."

The routine of the children on the farm included attending classes and contributing to the maintenance of the farm. Literary education was supplemented with vocational training, compulsory for each child, encouraging each child to become self-sufficient. Their ages ranging from six to sixteen, the children had on an average eight hours of manual training per day, and one or, at the most two hours of book learning. An added dimension of the Tolstoy Farm was the decision to hold co-educational classes, and indeed to encourage the boys and girls to do everything together.

The activities which the young contributed their energies to at Tolstoy Farm included general labouring, cooking, scavenging, sandal-making, simple carpentry and messenger work. But Gandhi did not recommend manual activities merely because they were materially productive or remunerative. In addition to productive crafts, Gandhi realized how

important manual work of a purely constructive nature was to maintain and develop community life. The contribution of work such as sweeping, scavenging and water fetching was seen to be invaluable to the psychological, social and moral well-being of an integrated community. Through manual labour Gandhi wanted to instill social service in children from the early formative years.

He laid stress on service as an important part of education and said "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

EDUCATION FOR ADULTS, WOMEN AND HARIJANS

Gandhi encouraged adult education to eradicate mass illiteracy in India. The literacy campaign – knowledge of the alphabet along with useful knowledge would be beneficial for the masses. Gandhi said that it was important to essential to eradicate illiteracy in women. One should keep in mind the different needs and functions of men and women and accordingly train them. Education was the most powerful weapon which could uplift the Harijans.

For an outer as well as inner transformation it was important that the students stopped aping the West and started to think for themselves. He urged Indian students across all strata to have faith in our own civilization. "Every morning we do our worship and prayer, recite the verses composed by our forbears, but we do not understand their significance. Our faith is turning in another direction."

CONCLUSION

Bitter incidents like being thrown off a train at Pietermaritzburg in South Africa in 1893 for riding a first class, stirred Gandhi's soul and he vowed to raise his voice against such atrocities and help himself and his brethren. Gandhi realized that at the core of true education lay unity and freedom and he devoted his life to achieve this.

Gandhi's soul echoed, "Real education consists in drawing the best out of yourself. What better book can there be than the book of humanity? What better education can there be than to go, day in and day out, to Harijan quarters and to regard Harijans as members of one human family? It would be an uplifting, ennobling study. Mine is no narrow



creed. It is one of realizing the essential brotherhood of man."

Gandhi's ideologies have had far reaching effects and are relevant in our contemporary times too. The essence of his teachings are applicable even today and can be easily moulded to suit the need of our times.

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