



MAHATMA GANDHI'S CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION AND ITS RELEVANCE IN THE PRESENT DAY

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ABSTRACT



The purpose of this paper is to elevate and examine Gandhian ideology and philosophy particularly on education and its relevance. Education is the back bone of society and is largely responsible for its upliftment. Gandhiji was a critic of traditional education and viewed that "By education, I mean an all-round drawing of the best in child and man in body, mind and spirit." The real difficulty is that people have no idea of what education truly is. We assess the value of education in the same manner as we assess the value of land or of shares in the stock- exchange market. We want to provide only such education as would enable the student learn more. We hardly give any thought to the improvement of the character of the educated. The main examination of this paper is about Gandhi's Basic Philosophy of education, Aims and Goals, Scheme of Education, Implementation strategy, free primary education, women education and upliftment of all. Gandhiji's proposal intended to make the educational system stand on its head. The social philosophy and the curriculum of what he called is the basic education.

Keywords: *Basic Education, Implementation Strategy, Women Education, Upliftment.*

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EARLY LIFE

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in 1869 in Porbander on the West Coast of India. He had a reasonably conventional middle class Indian upbringing. His father Karamchand was the senior official (dewan or prime minister) of a small Indian state (Porbandar) before moving on to be the chief karbhari (adviser) in the principality of Rajkot. Gandhi went to school, did not particularly excel at anything but learned the things that were expected of him. He married in 1882, aged 13. His wife Kasturbai Makanji,

who was also 13, was the daughter of a local merchant and was chosen for him. At the end of his formal schooling he decided that he wanted to be a lawyer. To do this he had to go to England to enroll at the Inner Temple. He was called to the bar in the summer of 1891. On his return to India, he found that he could not make a successful career as a lawyer so he moved to South Africa in 1893.

AN OPEN-MINDED TRUTH- SEEKER

Mahatma Gandhi's contribution to numerous spheres of life is so great that it is not



possible for an ordinary person like me to talk about him without reverence. In spite of this, I am trying to say a few things about him with as much objectivity as possible. We have the right to criticize Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of Gandhi regarding educations and humanism. Before putting across the point that Gandhiji was an extremely open-minded seeker of truth, we would like to emphasize one thing. At times it is difficult for even great men to appear as they are before the society. Mahatma Gandhi is a clear exception to this. This quality gives Gandhiji a unique dimension which can attract the new generation. With this background, it was absolutely appropriate for Gandhiji to call his autobiography "Experiments with Truth". He had the open mind and heart fit for a seeker of truth, proof of which is available in the extremely measured language of the preface of his autobiography: "I have gone through deep self-introspection, searched myself through and through, and examined and analyzed every psychological situation".

ORDINARY MAN WITH EXTRAORDINARY QUALITIES

The present scenario of disarray in world affairs creates a need for revision of Gandhian philosophy for new generations. Gandhi is not an academic philosopher. At the most he was interested in human affairs in all respects. Gandhi was well aware of both Indian philosophy and western thought. He was deeply influenced by Tolstoy, Ruskin, Emerson and Thoreau. Gandhi's period during the South Africa also had deep impact on his thought. His theory was taken from Tolstoy, Ruskin, Emerson and Thoreau and practically implemented in South Africa and India. During the freedom struggle also, the Bhagavat Gita had deep influence on him. Humanism implied dignity of man and his privileged positioning the world. The humanists emphasized the elegance of writing and speech as well as morality which stressed the uniqueness of man, his feelings and his potential. Humanism emerged as a broader intellectual influence, focusing attention on the nature, achievement and potential of humanity rather than on the power and mystery of divinity. Thus humanism was a conceptual and secular shift from religion to the potential of humanity. It also meant the study of the texts of antiquity with

renewed interest. Humanism thus meant an educational and a cultural interest based on the study of classics. Humanism was a basic source of inspiration for all cultural changes of the Renaissance, greatly influencing literature, history, painting, sculpture and political ideas. The intellectual interest of the humanists were primarily literary, rhetorical, and ethical and they typically wrote poems, orations, letters, plays, historical works of scholarship and a very wide range of moral treatises.

THE BASIC PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

1. True education is an all-round development of the faculties, best attained through action. It bases itself on the fact that knowledge and understanding development in relation to problems set right by action. Information thrust on the mind only burdens the memory and causes intellectual indigestion, casting learning into oblivion.
2. Education must be concrete and interconnected, not abstract or given in isolated sections. Concrete education allows the learner to manipulate problems or sets of problems and study their relationships, character, and artistic sense. It allows the mind, heart, hand, and eyes to work simultaneously in a correlated manner, resulting in a harmonious and well-balanced personality.
3. Education must be imparted in the child's mother tongue and originally connected with the child's social and cultural environment.

AIMS AND GOALS

All boys and girls in India should grow up to seek truth and peace.

1. All children should grow up as citizens in a new social order, based on co-operative work and with the understanding of their rights, responsibilities and obligations in such a society.
2. Every individual child should have full opportunity for the balanced and harmonious development of all his/her faculties and should acquire capacity for self-reliance in every aspect of a clean,



healthy and cultured life, together with an understanding of the social, political and moral implications of such a life.

3. Each individual must develop scientific attitude of mind.

GANDHI'S SCHEME OF EDUCATION

(a) **Adult Education**- involvement of educated parents (with productive skills) and the community for a happy, healthy, clean and self-reliant life. An educated adult's participation is closely connected to the success of pre-school, primary and secondary education.

(b) **Pre-School Education** - for children under-7, both boys and girls, to develop their faculties conducted by school teachers in cooperation with the parents and the community. It includes physical nurture, medical care, personal cleanliness and health, self help, social training, creative activities in work and prays for the acquisition of basic concept, speech training, development of mathematical sense, nature study, art and music and spiritual development.

(c) **Primary education** – education for self-sufficiency, of eight years duration for children in the age group 7-15, with the same subjects and curricula contents for both boys and girls, irrespective of their caste or class.

(d) **Secondary Education** – education through self-sufficiency or vocational education of four years duration, with the same curricular contents for adolescent boys and girls in the age group of 15-18, irrespective of their caste or class. It must provide for a great range of productive activities to support the community and provide the basis for sound and well-organized knowledge.

(e) **Tertiary Education** – It should either lead to the responsibilities of adult family life or some form of professional training in the university.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

(a) The panchayat samitis and local bodies along with the teachers must decide the objectives, curriculum and syllabus. However, it must be according to age and developmental norms, as well as gender sensitive.

(b) The curriculum materials and activities must be indigenous, inexpensive using common objects of ordinary Indian life and people.

(c) The text books must be written by renowned teachers themselves from the child's view point both from the level of concepts and languages.

(d) Practical and theoretical trainings should be given to the teachers, on the needs of the villages, in the villages itself. Use the same teachers for adult education as it saves on planning and capital outlay.

(e) The latest instructional technologies must be utilized for imparting training.

GANDHI'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION

These were the words he used. "When I was working in the university in Kerala and I saw the different types of disturbance occurring on campuses. I used to say the literally we have taken life out of education. Everybody doubts the purpose of education. Education is for life, life in its entirety and then education through life. This is not happening at all today. Education is only being provided through our so-called lectures and in the laboratory. Education throughout life is not happening at all. Of course, we are trying to supplement this education by using artificial means. Education throughout life: As teachers, we can say that once we get the qualifications, once we get our degree, we stop our education and do away with further study. I think nowadays we have several different types of education whatever adjective we put before the word education, it is a different discipline altogether. This definition of Mahatma Gandhi would comprise everything that can be conceived under education. Education for life, education through life, and education throughout life. That the concept of life has been taken away from education is precisely the reason for the dehumanizing, alienating aspect of education".

Gandhi's proposal intended to make the education system stand in its head. The social philosophy and the curriculum of what he called "basic education" thus favoured the child belonging to the lowest stratum of society. In such a way it implied a programme of social transformation. It sought to alter the symbolic meaning of 'education' and to change the established structure of opportunities for education.

WOMEN AND PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Gandhiji advocated that there should be no distinction in equality of status between men and



women in society. He vehemently opposed PURDAH SYSTEM and widow hood. He wanted to free women from social freedom. As a result, the number of girl students considerably rose in various educational institutions inside the country. Thus Gandhiji emphasized the need of women education to improve the society at large. Gandhiji's idea on education is a novel one. His idea of vocational education was so unique that even now-a-days it is being promoted by the government of India. He 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 which will make the backbone of a country strong.

CONCLUSION

The right to autonomy that Gandhi's educational plan assigns to the teacher in the context of the school's daily curriculum is consistent with the libertarian principles that he shared with Tolstoy. Gandhi wanted to free the Indian teacher from inference from outside, particularly government or state bureaucracy. Under colonial rule, the teacher had a prescribed job to do that was based on what the authorities wanted the children to learn. Textbooks were mandatory so that Gandhi found that 'the living word of the teacher has very little value. A teacher who teaches from textbooks does not impart originality to his pupils.' Gandhi's plan, on the other hand, implied the end of the teacher's subservience to the prescribed textbook and the curriculum. It presented a concept of learning that simply could not be fully implemented with the help of textbooks. Of equal, if not more important, was the freedom it gave the teacher in matters of curriculum. It denied the state of power to decide what the teachers taught and what they did in the classroom. It gave autonomy to the teacher but it was, above all, a libertarian approach to schooling that transferred power from the state to the village.

"An education which does not teach us to discriminate between good and bad, to assimilate the one and eschew the other, is a misnomer."

"Education should be so revolutionized as to answer the wants of the poorest villager, instead of answering those of an imperial exploiter."

"Education in the understanding of citizenship is a short-term affair if we are the honest and earnest. Basic education links the children, whether of cities or the villages, to all that is best and lasting in India."

Gandhi's basic education was, therefore, an embodiment of his perception of an ideal society consisting of small, self-reliant communities with his ideal citizen being an industrious, self-respecting and generous individual living in a small cooperative community.

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