

A Comprehensive Study of Gandhian Philosophy of Education

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DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.9.12.2019.p9689
<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.9.12.2019.p9689>

Abstract- Mahatma Gandhi is one of the most influential philosopher as well as social reformer in the contemporary Indian philosophy. His earlier life was influenced by his mother's religious outlook and this has encouraged him to practice truthfulness, honesty, non-violence for the duration of the whole life. Gandhi is well known in the domain of politics and social reform than in the field of education. Nevertheless, he is one of the greatest teachers of mankind for all times to come "a prophet of its spiritual regeneration. As an ideal educationalist, he tries to reform the existing educational system on the basis of traditional spiritual outlook with the overall development from education which is related to modern age. His philosophical thinking was not fashioned in our academic manner. It was the result of his own daily living, own experience that reflects his own philosophy of life. The basic aim of education is to make a man self-dependent, productive, development of man as well as society. Gandhi emphasised that education is an important means to bring about any social revolution and reform. He also focused on vocational training as well as moral education for the every human being.

Index Terms- Gandhi, Philosophy, Education, Spiritual, Values, Society, Physical, Development and Vocational training etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi is one of the great thinker, philosopher, and social reformer in Indian history of philosophy. Besides, he is also a great educationist in his own right. He firmly believes that Indian education is unequal to the task of societal change and development. In such a process the need of hour to de-emphasise the material aspects of life on the one hand and on the other, to re-emphasise the spiritual aspects of life, is of great significance. Gandhi is not an educational philosopher in the true sense of the term. He does not conceive of well-knit concept or theory of education, but during the course of a crowded life he made many observations on many facts of education. The objective of proposed research paper an attempt is made try to understand the meaning of Gandhian philosophy of education and its relevance in the present context. While prepared this research paper is purely based on the secondary sources of data.

Philosophy of education pursues an enquiry forms a theory about education its nature and cause, while doing so it tries to make an analysis of the whole field. Philosophy of education can be regarded as the criticism of the general theory of education. In modern times there is need of philosophy of education. Education aims at imparting knowledge, knowledge requires a global outlook

and a synthesis of various types of information and experiences. Philosophy of education played a major role in bringing about revolutionary change and development. In the words of Fichte, "the out of education would never attain complete cleanness itself without philosophy.

"Philosophy of education must be based upon an adequate knowledge of the fundamental facts of the science the formation of aims and purposes towards which educational activity should be directed and the evolution of essential principles and practices and their organization into a scheme of educational programme. The need for such a well considered philosophy of education cannot be over emphasized for its absence makes one either a mechanical fall over of routine or the victim of ill advised and futile innovations."

The concept of philosophy of education is one of the most divisive subjects today in the 21st century. Now in the present age our country as it enters a very competitive global environment. The issue which are paramount concern for all of us are the quality and relevance of education with specific reference to the incessantly changing socio-economic milieu. To build the reserves to meet the challenges of the time and respond to them in a purposeful way is one of the supreme roles of education.

Education has very great role to play for the desired social change which a country needs. Our present system of education is a lopsided affair which consists mainly in the training of the mind. The training of the soul as well as the heart is necessary because it can lead to a refinement of emotions and impulses, it can awaken our deepest feeling of love, constitute non-violence. There is unseen apprehension that modern humanity not guided by ethical values and ideal, may utilise efficient knowledge to destroy its own civilization. There is need of ethical and spiritual values. The prevalent system of education which has behind it, the materialistic philosophy of life, therefore quite alien to our spiritual culture. The need for preservation and inculcation of moral values of human life is keenly felt with as growing sense of urgency all over the world. The great philosopher like Bertrand Russell and Prof. Sarok of Harvard University after Second World War, pointed out that modern civilization cannot survive unless it is inspired by ethical and spiritual values. People all over the world going through 'Values crisis' due to the explosion of science and technology, a clear cut cleavage between science and humanities, population explosion, mans endless quest for effortless material comforts, the manipulating controls exerted by super complex.

Gandhi's philosophy of basic education is comprehensively enough because he looks upon education as an instrument of socio-economic progress, material advancement, political

evolution and moral development for individuals in the society. According to Gandhi, "That which liberates is education". Liberation is of two kinds viz. one form consists in securing the freedom of the country from foreign rule which may be temporary, and the other is the eternal liberation. The system of education which delays our freedom is satanic, sinful and is to be shunned. To him, education means "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 women can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education."² Gandhi's concept of basic education stresses the fourfold development in human personality, namely, body, mind, heart, and spirit. True education stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of the individual. To Gandhi, the clear implication is that meaningful education must not overlook any area of human development.

For the education, Gandhi could prepare only 'self-supporting Primary Education' for the children between the age group of 7 to 14 years. This scheme is known as "Basic Education". It is based on tenets of Truth and Ahimsa. It is aimed at teaching the art of living, to the children and making them useful citizens, equipping them with the qualities of earning their livelihood. Gandhiji himself explained this scheme in his paper 'Harijan' in its issue of May, 8th, 1937. In his concept of basic education basically emphasises some important aspects. These aspects we find that basic education intended at the development of the body, mind, heart and soul. Craft-centred education is one of the important aspects in Gandhi's basic education. He wanted children to learn agriculture or some other craft such as carpentry, blacksmith or some such thing through which he/she could earn his livelihood. He also more emphasises the useful subjects like science, history, geography, ethics, economics, etc. to be taught to children. He also allowed the teaching of literature but not as a necessary or compulsory subject. According to Gandhi, the basic education was intended as at 'a new orientation of subjects so as to eliminate narrow, exclusive, competitive nationalism and to emphasise the ideal of the united world. The basic education of Gandhi was guided by the ideal of self-sufficiency. He himself asserted that "This does not mean that basic education will be self-supporting from the very start. But taking the entire period of 7 years, covered by the basic education by the income and expenditure must balance each other. Otherwise it would mean that even at the end of their training, the basic education will not be fitted for life. That is the negation of the basic education. Nai Talim without the self-supporting basis would, therefore, be like a lifeless body."³

Generally, for Gandhi, the aim of education seems to be vocational. The educational pattern is incompatible with that in home and the knowledge acquired cannot be applied to our daily life. With the mother-tongue as the medium of instruction the same knowledge imparted in twelve years can be imparted in seven years. English as the medium of instruction, impoverishes our languages and creates a gulf between us and our families. We have not coined the correct technical terms in our languages for various scientific terms, neither do we fully understand the English terms. By the time we complete our college education, we lose our mental and physical strength. Gandhi asserts that he is not against Government schools or education, but he is 'against the stamp'. Secondly, there is a lack of character in teachers, and pupils have

no intimate contact with them. There is wastage of time over certain subjects. And lastly, these schools become symbols of our slavery. Gandhi is against expensive education when millions are dying of starvation. "Expansion of the mind will come from hard experience, not necessarily in the college or the school room."⁴

Gandhi has also suggested three remedies to the existing system of education. The rich ought to contribute money towards buildings and equipment, the educated Indians ought to place their education at the disposal of the community free of charge, and the parents should take real interest in their children's education. In this connection, Gandhi, praises the Roman Catholic community in which those who engage in teaching render free services, accepting only what is necessary for their maintenance. These mature teachers remain unmarried in order to devote all their time to the single job of teaching.

Gandhi praises the ancient Indian system of education as the real education in which the village teacher in the elementary stage imparts to the students the necessary knowledge for their occupation. Those who opted for higher education studied *arthasastra* or the science of wealth and ethics as well as religion or *dharma-sastra*. Education was not controlled by the state and the *Brahmins* who were in charge of education formulated the system with the welfare of the people as the aim and based it on restraint and celibacy. Due to such a system of education Indian civilization had outlived so many vicissitudes, and Indians have the inner force that enables them to reject any other culture imposed by the rulers. It is also possible for Indians if they follow this tradition of the sages to transmit this message of love. In the words of Gandhi, "The practical knowledge boys in Indian possess is not due to the education they receive in schools, but is due to the unique Indian way of life. It is due to the meritorious deeds of our ancestors that we find healthy standards of behaviour, thrift, etc., around us, in spite of the repeated inroads of modern growing selfishness."⁵

Education must aim at building character which can be done only through religion. But before a child learns about liberation or moksa, he must be allowed to a certain extent to have attachment to his body and the world around him in order to understand their transitory nature as well as to realise that his body has been given not for self-indulgence but for liberation. Similarly, the child must be mature enough to learn the doctrine of ahimsa or perfect love. Education of the heart is possible only by the personal influence of the teachers. Thus the primary school teachers must be patriotic and should not be those who are unable to find any other job. Since childhood is the most important period in which knowledge acquired is never forgotten. Primary education must be given by "well educated and experienced teachers of high character, in surroundings which would reflect some regard for the beauty of nature and safeguard the health of the pupils, we should see good results in a short time.

Gandhi is of the firm opinion that students must have a clear understanding of their national role in a developing country, but, at the same time he is totally against student participation in the active politics. This is on the consideration that students are used as tools by vested who so use them. To Gandhi, power politics and students responsibilities did not conform with the role he envisages for the student community of the country. To him, what students are taught and what they learn in the temples of learning are of greater concern than anything else. Probably he feels that if

students are given the right type of training through a good system of education, then they will be in a position to develop their personalities and play a significant part in nation-building activities.

The Gandhian concept of basic education in its totality is conceived schematically in terms of its components like theory, content, programmes, methods and goals. Gandhi's theory of education is firmly rooted in some of the highest values which constitute the basic philosophy of his life. The moral imperatives of truth and non-violence are the main concerns throughout his life. He believes that truth can be realised only through non-violence. Gandhi equates truth with God. Truth and non-violence are inter-changeable terms to Gandhi. He lays great emphasis on the necessity of training students for manual work under the supervision of teachers. He takes the position that education is the sum total of all the techniques and processes through which individuals develop abilities, attitudes, aptitudes, as positive values for the development of a progressive society. Gandhi opines that education involves a proper emphasis on right feelings, perceptions, insights and creative fashion.

Gandhi's concept of basic education aims at the all round development of human personality. He does not neglect the bread and butter aspects of education. But his primary emphasis is on the three H's (Head, Heart and Hand) rather than the 3 R's (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic). According to Gandhi, the true developments of the mind and the heart with a corresponding illumination of the soul are necessary for a satisfactory system of education. During his life time he severely criticised the prevailing educational system as 'wasteful and positively harmful'. He said that modern education means that "body are lost to the parents and to the occupation" to which they are born, they pick up evil habits, affect urban ways and get a smattering of something which may be anything but education. What then should be the form of primary education? I think that the remedy lies in educating them by means of vocational and manual training.

Gandhi says that his ideas about education are very exacting and wants the teachers to meet once a week to exchange ideas to facilitate innovations. Secondly, intelligent students should be consulted and their suggestions should be invited regarding the methods of teaching. The students' health is the collective responsibility of the teachers, the main responsibility rests with the teachers of hygiene.⁶ In the words of Dr. Patel, "Gandhiji's philosophy of education is naturalistic in its setting or idealistic in its aim and pragmatic in its method and programme of work. All these tendencies are not separate in his philosophy. These fuse into a unity, giving rise to a theory of education which would suit the need of the day and satisfy the loftiest aspiration of the human soul". Gandhiji's philosophy of education has the basic aspects namely psychological, physical development, sociological and economic aspects. From the psychological point of view it balances the intellectual and practical elements of experience and may be made an instrument of educating the body and the mind in co-ordination. From the sociological point of view it will conduce to a true sense of the dignity of labour and of human solidarity,

which have the value from the ethical and moral point. It develops the co-operation, brotherhood and service which would help for a peaceful life in society. From the economic point of view, the Gandhian scheme of education gives greater reality to the educational process by making economically self-sufficient and developing in the children the qualities of self-reliance and independence.

II. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion we can say that the Gandhian philosophy of education is the ideal one, economical at the same time very practicable and universal in its application. It is the best system for imparting general education. As Gandhi himself points out, provision should be made to cater to the needs of special aptitudes. We have found some vital aspects in his philosophy of education namely psychological, physical development, sociological and economic aspects. Moreover, basic education is co-operative because it tries to integrate the individual with the society in a spirit of co-operation. It is also non-violent in its implications. The physical, mental and spiritual growth of individuals is sought to be achieved through non-violent means. Basic education also places truth on a high pedestal. In this noble task of education the absolute standard of truth and goodness may serve worthy causes. These are primary virtues of basic education.⁷ Now, in modern times the Gandhian basic education can act as a powerful instrument for development of a better citizenship. Gandhi's philosophy of education must be put into practice so that human spirit can flourish in its supreme manifestation.

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