



GANDHIAN CONCEPTION OF VALUE EDUCATION

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Meaning of Value Education

Gandhi's views on value education plays a pivotal part in the reconstruction of any society is as valid in his life time and will continue to be so in the Twenty-first century. In this chapter, I would like to elaborate his ideas on education because of its significant role in nation building education has been defined as a technique of transmitting civilization. The word education means to bring out the inside to outside. Function of education is to draw out rather than to put in. Education means the art of developing and enhancing the cultivation of various physical, mental and moral powers of the learner. So, education is a continuous process or long process starts from birth and continues till death.¹

According to Gandhi, education is all round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. Gandhi's views on education were influenced by his general philosophy of life, like belief in God, truth, ahimsa, dignity of labour, a new social order having justice and equality. Gandhi gives equal stress on education of heart i.e., refinement of emotions, and awakening of deepest feelings of love, sympathy, fellowship and right ordering of loyalties. Education should help in cultivating the spirit of toleration, co-operation, public spirit and a sense of responsibility.

Gandhi accepts Husley's definition of education – "That man, I think has had a liberal education who has been so trained in youth that his body is ready to servant of his will and does with case and pleasure all the work that as a mechanism it is capable of; whose intellect is clear with all parts of equal strength and in smooth order. Whose mind is stored with knowledge of the fundamental truths of nature...whose passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience...who has learnt to hate all vileness and to respect others as himself?"²

Being a man of action rather than a theorist, his theory of education is also by and large objective and experimental rather than subjective and speculative. In fact there is no difference in theory and practice. For Gandhi, character building aspect of education was very important. The ultimate goal of education, according to Gandhi is self-realization of the ultimate reality, knowledge of truth or God. Gandhi's view of education is the true development of head, heart and souls are necessary for a satisfactory system of education.³



Nature of Value Education

Education was very close to the heart and most powerful instrument of human and social transformation. To Gandhi, education is a process from pregnancy to death. The nature of value education is mainly based on the understanding of the thought, the cultivation of thought; the development of the virtues, habit formation, the development of skills etc.⁴ The true education must correspond to the surrounding circumstances or it is not a healthy growth. The literacy education should follow the education of the hand-the one gift that visibly distinguishes man from beast. The notion of education through handicraft rises from the contemplation of truth and love permeating life's activities.⁵ According to Gandhi, the education is not limited to gain literary knowledge; education cannot be restricted to the knowledge of letters of alphabet or the study of literature. In addition to the literary knowledge, education includes the moral, physical and mental development of a person. The nature of education has to develop a person in all respects in order to enable him to become self-reliant. A man cannot make an all-round progress or cannot be self-dependent on the basis of any of the qualities of intellect, and physical or spiritual development. If individual should have moral enlistment, physical or intellectual development becomes a self-dependant and has all-round development.⁶ For Gandhi, education is a definite strategy of moral and spiritual awakening. It is an askesis –a *brata*- a renewal of human personality through persistent self askance and self-purity in order to serve humanity to the one's abilities. According to Gandhi, education not only a means to an end but a continual striving for re-orienting humanity to be heightened in divinity.⁷ The Gandhian principle of education encompasses that principle of inner consciousness. The broadness of mind and the vastness of outlook for which education truly stands are perhaps best attained only when work is turned into worship.⁸

Scope of Value Education

The scope of Gandhian conception of value education is that the literary knowledge is a fine instrument for education and enfoldment, but it certainly does not constitute education. For him true education is something different, which must equally develop the body, mind and spirit, the three constituents of man. 'Spirit' is more vital, because of which both body and mind function. Education is that which leads to *moksa* of the spirit, that is, which reveals the qualities of spirit.⁹ Gandhi says that the educational system to aim at the highest development of the individual and at the raising of man to a high moral and spiritual order as well as his becoming a useful member of society.¹⁰ Gandhi did not talk about giving moral education in educational institutions despite the fact that morals lay at the very foundation of his system and all his concepts had moral foundations.¹¹ Gandhi stressed that the educational system must be one in which "the highest development of mind and soul is possible."¹² Gandhi considered that apart from the literary, physical and vocational training, the spiritual training to be a very essential part of the education. Teachers imparting spiritual training should be absolutely perfect and ideal in their conduct and character. Just as



physical training was to be imparted through physical exercise, the intellectual through intellectual exercise, even so the training of the spirit was possible only through the exercise of the spirit. Gandhi opposed to the concept of loading the minds of the pupils with texts books.¹³

Role of Value Education

The role of Gandhian conception of value education was discussed in many ways.

1. The present system of education does not meet the requirements of the country in any shape or form. English, having been made the medium of instruction in all the higher branches of learning has created a permanent bar between the highly educated and the uneducated. Money spent on primary education is a waste of expenditure, what little is taught is soon forgotten and has little or no value in terms of the village or cities.
2. The course of primary education should be extended at least to seven years and should give general knowledge gained to the matriculation standard less English and plus a vocation.
3. For the all-round development of boys and girls, all training should be given through a profit-yielding vocation. By learning of this vocational training- to enable the pupil to pay for his tuition through the products of his labor, and the same time to develop the whole man or woman in him or her through the vocation learnt at school.¹⁴
4. According to Gandhi, national education is viable not only for the young but also for higher education as well. He wanted to relate education to Indian social, economic and political life and it is to be relevant in case of higher education too.

The medium of a foreign language through which higher education has been imparted in India has caused incalculable intellectual and moral injury to the nation. According to him, higher education should not be under government control and colleges and universities should be left to private enterprises. Under this scheme there would be more and better libraries, laboratories and research institutes.¹⁵

Gandhian Philosophy of Education is against the British system of education in India. Education is realizing the relative truths of life, but it is not something to be cultivated only in the four walls of educational institutions. His philosophy of education is the outcome of his Indian cultural heritage, his experiences regarding men and materials, and, above all, it is the outpouring of his own inmost being to educate mankind properly so that life may be worth living. It becomes an awareness of one's proper belongings to human society and its corresponding obligations. His educational philosophy is not suit a particular section of the society. It is to build a society to which everybody contributes at his/her best.¹⁶ His ideas of education did not emerge as sudden, but it took long years of sustained thoughts and experiences in social eco-



conomic and political fields. His views on education have made a revolutionary contribution to the educational thought and entitle him to be termed as a great educationalist. His philosophy of education has been greatly influenced by three great personalities like, Raychand Bhai by his living contact. Tolstoy and Ruskin by their books, '*The Kingdom of God is Within You*' and '*Unto This Last*'. Teachings of Tolstoy and Ruskin made Gandhi to perceive that education without the use of one's hand and feet would atrophy the brain.

According to Indian Philosophical view point, Gandhiji equates that knowing the Self, the *Atmam*, with knowing the true nature of Reality, *Sat* and with knowing God, or Truth, *Satya*. For him self-realization is God realization, which is turn to the realization of Truth. The whole purpose of life is to know the Self, knowing the Truth, and realizing God. This is also the goal of true education, 'which helps us to know the *atman*, our true self, God, and Truth'. The equal development of the body, mind and heart are considers as the ultimate goal of education. True education is that which cultivates the soul or the spirit, and leads ultimately to the full and complete development of man's body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the primary goal of true education: it is the cultivation of character and the development of the spirit; it sis the education of the heart not the head.¹⁷

Gandhi's value education was based on the golden principle of simplicity. In fact, simplicity was not only for his educational ideas but also of his life-style. He wanted students to lead a simple life and do all their work by themselves like, washing their clothes, cooking their food etc. By the simplicity in education, the children should train in self-help and self-reliance.¹⁸

Gandhi made a distinction between literacy and education. He believed that literacy in itself was not education. It was neither the beginning nor the end of education. It is only one of the means whereby the humans can be educated. By the way of good character only the students get good education. Therefore, he wanted students as well as teachers to give more importance to character building. He considers schools and colleges as factories for making character. That's his educational curriculum has the attributes of character building.

For the concept of ideal character, the famous writer like Bertrant Russel, has referred four virtues, essential for an ideal character viz. vitality, courage, sensitivity and intelligence. Gandhi also talked about these virtues in 1932. When he said, "I would try to develop courage, strength, virtue, the ability to forget oneself in working towards great aims..." He believed that these virtues can be inculcated with the help of education. He also stresses that spiritual development of man through education.¹⁹ He says that value education producing not only good individual but socially useful citizens who understand their social responsibilities as an integral element of society.²⁰ Gandhi's concept of value education is based on the critique of Modern Western Civilization and reassertion of Ancient system of Gurukul education.²¹



Educational Thought of Gandhi

A holistic system and thought of education can be gleaned from the writings of Gandhi. Most of his writings are drawn from his speeches and he was responding to the Contemporary issues most of the time. Gandhi accepted the Upanishadic dictum *Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye*- education is that which liberates-one of the most important aims of education. Education here does not mean mere spiritual knowledge nor does liberation signify only spiritual liberation after death. Knowledge includes all training that is useful for the service of mankind and liberation means freedom from all manner of servility even in the present life.²²

Gandhi considers that the highest goal of education is God realization as the eternal philosophy. "Thus is true education which leads to freedom...that education which delays our freedom is to be shunned, it is satanic, and it is sinful."²³

Following are the aims and objectives of education:

- Self-realization or God realization remained the highest ideal of education for Gandhi.
- Gandhi emphasized the terrestrial goals of education. This included training of body and mind, respect for labor, ability to earn bread, accepting social responsibilities, knowledge's of hygiene and sanitation etc.
- Gandhi aimed at a system of education, which would inculcate nationalist, spirit and remove the slavish and colonial mentality.²⁴

Gandhi's Different aspects of Education

By emphasizing of importance of character building Gandhi says "...real education consists not in packing the brain with so many facts and figures, not in passing examinations by reading numerous books but in developing character". Character building, modification of behaviour, refinement and development of personality are the important aims of education accepted by Gandhi.²⁵

Social aspects of Education

The system of education should ignore this vital aspect is incomplete, ineffective, and incapable of creating conditions of a good society. The education gives to integrate individuals as integral members of society and to develop human personality. His aim is to bring not only individual perfection but he wanted to bring about a new social order based on Truth and Non-violence. The good educational system should train a proper citizen. The wrong system of education that fails to arm boys and girls against social or other evils. In Gandhian system of education a harmonious balance is reached between the individual and the social aim of education.²⁶

Cultural aspects of Education

Gandhi had great regard for cultural aspects of education in one of his speeches



to the students. Gandhi observed: "I attach for more importance to the cultural aspect of education than to the literary. Culture is the foundation, the primary thing, which the girls ought to get from here. It should show in the smallest detail of your conduct and personal behaviour, how you sit, how you talk, how you dress, etc., so that anybody might be able to see at a glance that you are the product of this institution. Inner culture must be reflected in four speeches, the way in which you treat your visitors and behave towards one another and your teachers and class."²⁷

Self-supporting aspect of Education

In this, self-supporting aspect of education, real education means economic self-sufficiency. Gandhi suggested that in our country eighty-five percent of the population is agrarian, so that every student should have practical knowledge of agriculture and hand weaving. By these, the problem of unemployment will be reduced. The introduction of craft in education was extension of his theory of 'Bread and Labour'. A student who had trained with the knowledge of agriculture or craft will never feel helpless in battling with the world and never go without employment. The art of rearing children and the laws of hygiene and sanitation are forming a part of education.²⁸ Mahatma Gandhi's view-point pertaining to Value Education if applied in a wider perspective. It's worth lies in the fact that education should necessarily be helpful in employment and its foundations should be laid on morality and ethics. We all who are concerned with it need to think over it deeply. We have to apply Mahatma Gandhi's ideas according to present circumstances of our country and also as the demand of time. I can again say that Mahatma Gandhi's unique and refined views about value education are not only important but are worth applying not only in India but also in the rest of the world.

¹Janardan Pandey, (1998), *Gandhi and 21st century*, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, pp. 219-220

²Dashrath Singh, (1995), *Perspective in Gandhian Thought*, New Delhi, Common Wealth Publishers, pp. 34-35

³Janardan Pandey, (1998), *Gandhi and 21st century*, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, pp. 221-223

⁴Govindbhai Raval, *The Gandhian Vision of Education*, http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/vision_edu.htm, p. 2

⁵Articles On & By Gandhi, *Gandhi's views on education*, http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/vision_edu.htm, pp.1-2

⁶Ravindra Kumar, *Mahatma Gandhi And Higher Education : A Critical Analysis*, http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/vision_edu.htm, p.1

⁷Ramakant Shukla, (2002), *Gandhian Philosophy of Education*, Jaipur, Sublime Publications, p. 283

⁸*Ibid*; p.299.



⁹Himanshu Bourai, (2004), *Gandhian Philosophy and the New world Order*, Delhi, Abhijeet Publications, p. 114

¹⁰*Ibid*; p. 131

¹¹*Ibid*; p. 138

¹²*Ibid*; p. 130

¹³Pani, S.P., Pattnaik, S.K., (2006), *Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Gandhi on Education*, New Delhi, Anmol Publications PVT. LTD., p. 195

¹⁴*Ibid*; pp. 198-199

¹⁵*Ibid*; pp. 190-191

¹⁶Ramakant Shukla, (2002), *Gandhian Philosophy of Education, Jaipur*, Sublime Publications, p. 1

¹⁷Glyn Richards, (2001), *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, p. 12

¹⁸Janardan Pandey, (1998), *Gandhi and 21st century*, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, p. 221

¹⁹*Ibid*; p. 222.

²⁰*Ibid*; p. 223.

²¹Dashrath Singh, (1995), *Perspectives in Gandhian Thought*, New Delhi, Common Wealth Publishers, p. 32.

²²Pani, S.P., Pattnaik, S.K., (2006), *Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Gandhi on Education*, New Delhi, Anmol Publications PVT. LTD., p. 173

²³*Ibid*; p. 174

²⁴*Ibid*; p. 179

²⁵*Ibid*; p. 175

²⁶*Ibid*; p. 176-177

²⁷*Ibid*; p. 177

²⁸*Ibid*; p. 177-178