



CONTRIBUTION OF MAHATMA GANDHI TO EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT & PRACTICE

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INTRODUCTION: Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi was a great leader, a practical philosopher and a socio political reformer of the modern India. The father of the nation, as he is called, was the apostle of peace and non-violence and a champion of freedom movement.

Key Words: Philosophy, Gandhi, Curriculum, Teaching Method, Discipline, Basic Education.

Life and Work of Gandhiji:

Mahatma Gandhi, by name of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, (born Oct. 2, 1869, Porbandar, India—died Jan. 30, 1948, Delhi), Prominent leader of Indian nationalism and prophet of non-violence in the 20th century. Gandhi grew up in a home steeped in religion, and he took for granted religious tolerance and the doctrine of ahimsa (non-injury to all living beings). He studied law in England from 1888 to 1891, and in 1893 he took a job with an Indian firm in South Africa. There he became an effective advocate for Indian rights.

In 1906 he first put into action satyagraha, his technique of nonviolent resistance. His success in South Africa gave him an international reputation, and in 1915 he returned to India and within a few years became the leader of a nationwide struggle for Indian home rule. By 1920 Gandhi commanded influence hitherto unattained by any political leader in India.

He refashioned the Indian National Congress into an effective political instrument of Indian nationalism and undertook major campaigns of nonviolent resistance in 1920–22, 1930–34 (including his momentous march to the sea to collect salt to protest a government monopoly), and 1940–42. He concentrated on educating rural India and promoting cottage industry.

India achieved dominion status in 1947, but the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan was a great disappointment to Gandhi, who had long worked for Hindu-Muslim unity. In September 1947 he ended rioting in Calcutta (Kolkata) by fasting. Known as the Mahatma (“Great-Souled”), Gandhi had won the affection and loyalty of millions. In January 1948 he was shot and killed by a young Hindu fanatic.

GANDHI’S GENERAL PHILOSOPHY: Gandhi did not claim any original philosophy. He was a practical philosopher and did not want to name his philosophy as Gandhism. He was a Mahatma or great soul and at the same time, he was a man of the people. Below we give a brief description of some of his philosophical doctrines –

(a) **His belief in God:** To Gandhiji, God is all pervasive reality, immanent in man and also in the world which he considers as his manifestation and creation. He says – “to me God is truth and love. God is ethics and morality. God is fearlessness. God is the source of light and life.”

(b) The Three Focal Points Truth, Ahimsa & Love:

Truth: According to Gandhiji, the realization of truth is the ultimate goal of human life.

Ahimsa: Gandhiji regarded Ahimsa as the only means to the realization of truth and God.

Love: Gandhiji Advocated that the only true religion of man was the religion of love. His love attained the form of Universal Love.

(c) **Brotherhood of Man:** Gandhiji was not an egoist seeker after truth. His motto was – “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” His dream was the establishment of a universal community of free persons without artificial barriers of caste, colour, creed, wealth and power. He had a firm faith in the concept of brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God.

(d) **Service of Humanity:** His greatest creed was service of God through service of humanity. To him, God is the Temple of humanity.” He devoted his entire life in the service of humanity. Like every great philosopher, Gandhiji also tried to translate his philosophy into practice.

GANDHIJI’S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY :

Meaning of Education: Gandhi was an idealist, a pragmatist and a naturalist. On the basis of such a background he gives the meaning of education in his own words – “By education, I mean an all round drawing out of the best in child and manbody, mind and spirit.” His conception of education stands for harmonious development of all the aspects of human personality – intellectual, physical, spiritual and so on.

Aims of Education and Gandhi: Gandhiji's concept of education has two fold aims as follows.

i. Immediate of Aims ii. Ultimate aim of Education Education

i. Immediate Aims of Education:

- a. **Vocational aim:** It must enable the individual to stand on one's own feet.
- b. **Cultural development:** Gandhiji emphasized culture – its preservation and enhancement.
The culture that is reflected in our dress, our manner of speech, our way of conduct and behaviour.
- c. **Character building:** Gandhiji regarded character as the expression of the whole personality.
Hence the end of all knowledge must be building up of character.
- d. **Cultivation of higher values:** Gandhiji laid greater stress on the cultivation of moral, spiritual, social, ethical and aesthetic values.

ii. Ultimate Aim of Education: According to Gandhi, the ultimate aim of education is self realization.

Curriculum and Gandhi : In order to achieve the objectives of education, Gandhiji prescribed productive craft as the medium of education. it is based upon the concept of 'learning by doing', 'learning while earning'. Moreover, Gandhi's emphasize on natural and physical environment of the child made the whole educative process effective. He introduced certain other distinctive features like mother-tongue as the medium of instruction, knowledge through activities and some basic subjects like social studies, mathematics, general science and so on. Through such a balanced curriculum, he wanted to bring a silent social revolution. Curriculum also includes basic craft which makes it unique and work-oriented.

Method of Teaching and Gandhi: Gandhi taught his own children for some time and thus experienced that the essence of good teaching is stimulated the energies of children so that learning may taken place in natural way leading them towards harmonious development.

In fact, basic education is a technique of teaching in itself. Its main contributions have been recognized in the field of science of pedagogy. In brief, Gandhiji recommended the following methods of teaching:-

- 1) Mother tongue to be the medium of instruction.
- 2) Productive craft as the basis of all education.
- 3) Teaching through creative and productive activities.
- 4) Learning by doing.
- 5) Lecture, questioning and discussion method.
- 6) Correlation the most valid technique of teaching.

Concept of Discipline and Gandhi : Gandhi believed in the discipline of mind, thought, feeling and action in the minutest details of our living. His discipline was based on self control. Self control refers to inner-discipline and self-discipline. His concept of discipline was however in tune with social discipline. Every individual is a productive citizen, a worker and a parent. Education was recognized as a potent means for generating the we-feeling among the individuals so as to make them useful and responsible citizen of their country.

Teacher and Gandhi : Gandhiji was a great teacher himself. He was a world teacher. He wanted right type of teachers dedicated to their profession and ready to serve the illiterate masses, teachers must be well-trained, proficient, men of knowledge and faith, zeal and enthusiasm, men of action and devotion, character and nationalistic feelings. Teachers are responsible for carving out the statues of their students. According to Gandhiji - "Teacher should be friend, philosopher and guide". He should be able to establish heart to heart contact with the students.

School and Gandhi: According to Gandhiji, a school is a place to live by making enquiries, discoveries and experimentations. It is a community centre, cradle for future citizenship and place for physical, intellectual, social, moral and spiritual development.

Gandhiji's view on women education: Gandhiji felt strongly for the emancipation of women. He said, "My greatest hope is in women. They want a helping hand to lift them out of the hall in which they have been kept." Education should be given to them according to their particular aptitudes and life demands. Gandhiji believed that women by means of their equipment and nature are best fitted to take up the work of educating small children.

Place of Religion in Education: Religion was an essential element in Gandhiji's life. "Life without religion Gandhiji's held is life without principle, life without principle is a ship without rudder, and just a ship without rudder will be tossed about from place to place and never to reach a destination. Gandhiji regarded religion as an abiding faith in the absolute values of truth, love and justice.

Mathma Gandhi's view of Basic Education:

His philosophy of Education: The significance of Education will be Education of the entire man. Gandhi has orchestrated the three significant ways of thinking, Idealism, Naturalism, and Pragmatism. He characterized instruction as an "overall drawing out of the best in the kid, and man-body, psyche and soul". His instruction stressed both the up, coming, and prominent objectives of life.

Features of Basic Education: Free and compulsory education: Gandhi advocated that within the age group 7 to 14, there should be free, compulsory and universal education. He wanted to combine the primary education with secondary education and called it, matriculation minus English was his aim of education.

1. The craft: The basic education aimed at providing education through the medium of craft or productive work. The basic craft which be agriculture or spinning and weaving or card board, wood and metal work, gardening, leather work.

2. Mother Tongue: Gandhi emphasized mother tongue to be the medium of instruction and the subject of study. Mother tongue would enable the children to express themselves effectively and clearly. It can acquaint the child with his heritage, ethical and moral values.

3. Mathematics: Mathematics was introduced in the basis system with a few to enable the students to solve numerical and grammatical problems, connected with craft and community life. In teaching of mathematics emphasis was laid on practical measuring and field work. Teaching of mathematics helped the students to develop their reasoning capacities.

4. Social studies: Social studies were a combination of some subject like history, geography, civics and economics. It was introduced to enable the students to understand and appreciate their own culture and also to understand nature and function of family, state and the nation and their relationship.

5. General science: Nature study, botany, zoology, chemistry, astronomy, hygiene, culture and knowledge of stars were included in general science.

6. Drawing and music: Drawing and music included in the curriculum to develop creativity in boys and girls.

7. Hindustani: Gandhi believed that Hindustani is the combination of Hindi and Urdu. Therefore, he desired to make it a compulsory subject in basic school and the Lingua Franca of India.

CONCLUSION: We may say that Gandhiji, successfully fused different philosophies of education and emerged as a naturalist, idealist and a pragmatist. As a true Indian, man of God, a practical philosopher and a man of the masses, he stood for freedom, self realization, spiritual development, learning by doing etc. With all these philosophical assumptions, Gandhiji envisaged his scheme of education known as Wardha Scheme, Nai Talim or Basic Education.

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