

MAHATMA GANDHI'S THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION

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Introduction:

Gandhi's greatest contribution is that he emphasized on the importance of Indian education. He argued that colonial education created a sense of inferiority in the minds of Indians. He wanted an education that could help Indians recover their sense of dignity and self-respect. Gandhi's proposal intended to stand the education system on 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.

Aims of Education:

The aim of Basic Education is Development of total personality of child. In his views higher education be made self-supporting. He laid emphasis on the training of Hand, Heart and Head. He said, "Physical Exercise, handicrafts are essential in a school Education helps in cultivation of absolute Purity of heart. He regarded every student as a Brahmachari. In his opinion higher-education should be self-supporting. He laid more stress on environment than books. Gandhiji was totally agreed with Froebel that the aim of education is full of many underdeveloped abilities and it is for education to develop these. He also felt that the child should learn through actual work. In his opinion the role of teachers are to motivate the child and the child should be curious enough to know, what's happening around them. He didn't want Education to differentiate between boys and girls. He laid focus on co-education in schools. He insisted on the importance of manual skills. He stressed on students should participate in the work done in school. He felt work and play are important for education.

Role of Early Education:

Gandhiji agreed with the Opinion of Modern Psychologists that early education has a tremendous impact on later development He said that impression of early childhood has a tremendous impact on later development. In early childhood the children learn a lot from parents. The impressions of parents are very beneficial.

His theory was there should be learning. Students learn through doing. He wanted to use education as the medium of establishing in the country a non-violent social system from all kinds of exploitation would be absent. He wanted individual should become independent during his education, he should learn some skills which would enable him to find employment immediately. He was agreed with Rousseau, who insisting upon the total freedom in teaching methods.

Gandhiji's concepts of Education:

Gandhiji concepts of Education is known as Basic Education, which aims the following: Formation of good character, To be ideal citizen, To have democratic ideals, Self-Reliance, All round development, Complete Development, Character formation etc. He attached the greatest importance to inclusion of Moral

and Religious Education in the curriculum of Schools and Colleges. He wanted to raise Social Status of the teachers, So that their qualities would be improved. In his opinion the standard of an educational institution should not be judged by the building but by quality of teachers it appoints. Gandhiji advised that the only way of putting an end of exploitation is for every individual to do his own work. He suggested students should themselves do their work and all work connected to school. They should give importance to manual labour. Gandhiji remarked a teacher who always complaint about the behaviour of the students, should take the responsibilities on their own shoulders. Gandhiji's views are clear and very supportive in Modern Education. The daily time -table of a school consists of periods such as Yoga, Exercise, and Game for physical development of a child. Prayers and assembly activities help in Mental Development of a child. Reading, Writing and solving sums help in Mental Development of a child.

Gandhi's Scheme of Education:

In the Gandhian constructive program, the most important element is Nai Talim or the new education, which in the words of Acharya Kriplani, "... is the coping stone of Gandhi's social and political edifice." Gandhiji regarded his scheme of education as spearheading the silent social revolution and expected it to provide a healthy relationship between the city and the village, which would go a long way in eradicating the poisoned relationship between the classes. This view was affirmed by various other scholars and thinkers in the field of education.

Zakir Hussain once commented on Gandhi's views on education. He wrote, ". Gandhi socially considered the introduction of such practical productive work in education to be participated in by all." The children of the nation will tend to break down the existing barriers of prejudice between manual and intellectual workers and harmful elites to both. Such is the social significance of the so-called new educational concept of Gandhi, but it does not entail any sacrifice of the individual goal of education or its social goal. Gandhi laid the foundation of a scheme of national education that was suited to our needs, requirements, genius, and aspirations for the future.

Main Tenets of Gandhiji's Educational Philosophy:

1. Free Compulsory Education: Gandhi wanted that within the ages 7 and 14 there should be free, compulsory and universal primary education. His conception of primary education was up to Matriculation minus the English.

2. Craft-Centred Education: Craft is to be the centre of education. Gandhi believed that the highest development of mind and the soul was possible only through handicraft. The education of the child should begin with a useful and productive craft. Craft should form the nucleus of all instruction. But handicraft should not be taught mechanically but scientifically. The craft should aim at developing the intellect of the pupils. With the introduction of a useful craft as the centre of all instruction every school can be made self-supporting. By teaching craft, Gandhiji's object was not to produce craftsmen but he wanted to exploit the craft for educative purposes. The teaching of all subjects, Gandhi said, should be inspired by craft. The whole process of education should be imparted through it. The brain must be educated through the hand.

3. Self-Supporting Aspect of Education: Gandhi was of the opinion that the question of higher education can be postponed for some time, but the problem of

primary education of the masses cannot be postponed for a minute. The program of primary education cannot be suspended for want of money. Cores of children could not wait until the Government found the necessary finances. He, therefore, suggested that education should be self-supporting. The sale proceeds of the products of the children would meet the expenses of the school including the salaries of the teachers. Gandhiji sincerely believed that handicraft — besides developing the personality of the child — would make education self-supporting provided the states would take over the manufactures. Of course, his self-supporting aspect was criticised on moral and academic grounds. The teachers should not depend on the students for their livelihood. There may be enormous wastage of craft materials. The students may neglect academic activities. Gandhiji was conscious of these possibilities. But, at the same time, he was conscious that, especially in India and other Third World countries, money is scarce and colossal illiteracy has to be broken.

4. Mother-Tongue as the Medium of Instruction: One of the glaring defects in the existing system of education was that education was being imparted through the medium of a foreign language — English. This hindered the development of understanding and precision of thought or clarity of ideas.

So Gandhiji emphasized mother-tongue both as a subject of study and a medium of instruction. This is quite natural and academically sound. It enlarges the capacity to understand and to express effectively. It develops clarity of thinking and receptivity to new ideas.

5. Creed of Non-Violence: A unique feature of Gandhiji's educational philosophy was the application of the principle of non-violence in the training of the child as a prospective citizen of the world. The scheme of Basic Education (BuniyadiShiksha) is imbued with the cardinal creed of non-violence and idea of co-operative living. It is based on truth and non-violence in individual and collective life. Untruth and violence lead to bondage and can have no place in education. His scheme of education intended to bring an age from which "class and communal hatred is eliminated and exploitation is eschewed." Gandhiji remarked: "We cannot, will not think of exploitation and we have no alternative but this plan of education which is based on non-violence."

6. Dignity of Labour: Gandhiji's scheme of education emphasizes on dignity of manual labour through active participation in productive work. Manual labour is not at all disgraceful it rather enlarges the heart and enriches the personality.

7. Emphasis on Practice rather than Theory: Basic Education is based on the principle of activity centring round a productive and useful craft. It is activity-centred education. Here the child is not a passive, recipient of knowledge but active participant in the learning process. It fosters learning by doing. Gandhiji had realistic and pragmatic view of education. Gandhiji laid stress on imparting knowledge and acquisition of productive efficiency and practical skills through a craft. He followed the principle of practice preceding theory. Most of the time in the time-table would be given to acquisition of practical skills and productive efficiency.

8. Social Awareness and Service: Important aspect of the educational philosophy of Gandhiji is service and development of social awareness. Service includes love for the motherland. "The end of all education should surely be service." said

Gandhiji. Social awareness and responsibility can be developed through the involvement of students in programmes of community service. Gandhiji had a synthetic view of life, education and culture. He synthesized all the three basic philosophies of education into his philosophy of education — Naturalism, Idealism and Pragmatism. Like a Naturalist, Gandhiji emphasized self-discipline among children.

Conclusion:

Gandhiji was a great educationist, realized that the social, moral and economic progress of a country ultimately depends on Education. In his opinion the highest aim of education is the Self -Realization. Gandhiji used to say, "The end of all knowledge must be building up of character. "In Gandhi's opinion character building is the most important among students. Gandhiji believed Basic Education is Education for life and through life. The aim of Education is creating a social order free from exploitation and violence.

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