



EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF MAHATMA GANDHI

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Education means, “To nourish” “To bring up” and “To raise” This means educating a child, nourishing or bringing out a child in accordance with norms, ends or aids. It also implies to lead out or to draw out. This means educating a child or drawing out what is ingrained in child or to lead out of darkness into light. Ancient Indian thinkers viewed education as idealistic or spiritualistic where as the modern Indian thinkers regard education from the practical standpoint. In Rig Veda education has been understood as something that makes man self-reliant and selfless. In the Upanishadic thought education has been regarded, as a means to attain salvation. Sankaracharya considers education as realization of the self.

Plato gave utmost importance to education. According to him education plays a vital role, which helps to serve the ruler, and it gives right direction to secure a harmonious state. Plato stated that if citizens are well educated they will be able to know the difficulties that surround them and find solutions.

In the Plato’s Republic education has assumed great importance. In the words of Rousseau the Book of Plato’s Republic was the greatest work on education ever written. ¹

Education is a continues process which goes on whether school keeps or not. People learn any thing before they enter into the school followed by continuity outside the schoolroom. They keep on learning even if the formal education comes to an end.

Even during the hours of formal schooling, the students learn much outside, which doesn’t constitute a part of the planned curriculum. The student secures a great deal of education from the church, political discussion and also from Magazines, Newspapers, Radio, and Television, which are employed ‘as a means of educating’.

Education is a dynamic process that contributes to the natural harmonious development of individual powers, which are inherent and innate. It contributes to the complete human development resulting in the desirable behavioral change and ultimately



prepares for a better life. Education is a process of development at different stages of human beings from infancy to the matured state. It is a process by where human being adopts himself gradually in various ways of use – physical, spiritual and environmental.

A newly born infant is a helpless human being. He has no knowledge of social customs and traditions; He does not have an idea to achieve an ideal or values. In the passage of time does she grow older with the influence of the informal and formal process of education. By this way he develops in the physical mental and emotional spheres and his feelings have also been developed gradually.

Philosophy is varied in meaning and in scope. The word Philo means love or fond of and Sophia means wisdom. Thus Philosophy means love of wisdom or pursuit of knowledge. Plato used the term in a general way in his book ‘The Republic’. He applied it to those who see the absolute, eternal and immutable and also to those who love the truth in each thing.

The philosophy of education has undergone and continues to undergo some profound changes. In the past an author could discuss the philosophy of education with reference to the idealists and pragmatists. Although there is need for extending the boundaries of philosophy of education, the appearances of the problems associated with the philosophy of education are sporadic.

The Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Education defines education in the following words.

The Philosophy of education may be either the philosophy of the process of education or the philosophy of the process of education or the philosophy of the discipline of education. That is, it may be part of the discipline in the sense of being concerned with the aims, forms, methods or results of educating or being educated or it may be inter meta disciplinary in the sense of being concerned with the concepts, aims and methods of the discipline.²

In the modern times there have been some Philosophers who reject all metaphysical statements completely as nonsense for they believe the statements as unverifiable but they are more likely to think of ethical statements as imperative.

In the twentieth century philosophy of education tended to be developed in



schools of education in the context of what is known as foundations of education linking with other parts of the discipline of education namely educational history, psychology sociology rather than with other aspects of philosophy.

Philosophy of education has been defined as an attempt to find answers to questions, which are termed as ultimate. A Philosopher dealing with education is desirous of learning what is knowable and what he has to do with education. He is interested in the nature of reality, sources of value and the aspects such as aims, curriculum and method may mean for education.

Philosophy of education helps to think clearly, carefully, rigorously and systematically relating to educational problems and concepts. It is clarifying and liberating.

It tends to make people to be more conscious of important issues helping them to evaluate. It serves to free them from the tyranny of conventional thought. When the Philosophy of education fails to perform to achieve the desirable ends expected of, it merely remains as an intellectual exercise.³

Philosophy has been defined in ways implying a certain totality, generality, and ultimateness of both subject matter and method. With regard to subject matter philosophy is an attempt to comprehend which is to gather the varied details of the world and of life into a single inclusive whole which shall either be a unity or as in the dualistic systems shall reduce the plural details to a small number of ultimate principles, on the side of the attitude of the philosopher and of those who accept his conclusions, there is the endeavor to attain as unified and complete an out look upon experience as possible. This word is expressed in the word. Philosophy, which means love of wisdom. When philosophy is taken into consideration, it is assumed that it signifies the acquisition of knowledge, which influences the conduct of life.⁴

There is need to think about the meaning functions and aims of education. There are interconnected, interrelated and closely inter woven.

Education enables the child to think for himself to give regard work, to have good fellowship to develop taste and sense of eternal realities. The purpose of education is to discover aptitudes and to train them to be of social use. Education enables a person to make a choice of values. Education makes a distinction between the desirable and the undesirable and enables an individual to choose the desirable. Selection of



desirable from the undesirable requires knowledge and insight, which could be achieved through the right type of education. Education must necessarily make the pupil to suit the environment.

Education is a social process and it is possible in a social environment. In the modern days the concept of education as a social function has not changed. The methods to be followed have changed. In the modern times the society unlike in the primitive days is complex. So it was very simple for the society to transmit its experiences to the new generation. The society to day being very complex cannot transmit its knowledge and skills to the rising generation.

THE AIMS OF EDUCATION

The human society owes its existence because of education. There is need to know about the goals, aims or objectives of education. Without determining the aims of education, it is not possible to plan the curriculum and the methods to be followed to impart that curriculum. Aim enables to act with a purpose and meaning. Education gives right direction to that activity. In the absence of the aims in education, progress cannot be achieved. A study of the history of education reveals that hundreds of aims have been given at different times and different places by the different thinkers of education. No two persons think alike since their psychic structure varies.

So Plato aims at the state controlled compulsory education. His scheme of education can be categorized under two parts, the elementary education inclusive of training for young persons up to the age of twenty culminating in the beginning of military service and the higher education intended for the selected persons of both sexes who are the members of the ruling classes between the age of twenty and thirty five. The state directed scheme of education, which is compulsory, is an important innovation of Athenian practice.

The aim of education is to enable individuals to continue their education. The object and reward of learning is continued capacity for growth.

Character building has first place in Gandhian education. Character is similar to foundation. A building built on sand collapses where as a building erected on a strong foundation lasts for long time. Gandhi holds that the school must be an extension of home. There must be agreement between the impressions, which a child gathers at home and at school to achieve the best results. The alien type of education produces



a gulf between the educated classes and the masses.⁵

Gandhi does not think it necessary to consider whether the adoption of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction would have any adverse effect on the knowledge of English or not. It is necessary of the foreign language. He further states that it is unnecessary to create and encourage a liking for it.

Gandhi states that English cannot and ought not to become the National language. In this connection Gandhi refers to the requirement of a national language.

HE SAYS THAT

1. It should be easy to learn for government officials.
2. It should be capable of serving as medium of religious, economic and political intercourse through out India.
3. It should be the speech of the majority of the inhabitants of India.
4. Every body should find it easy to learn.
5. In choosing such a language considerations of temporary or passing interest should not count. ⁶

Gandhi states that English language does not fulfill any of these requirements. To think that English language can become Indian national language is a sign of weakness.

Gandhi stated that the teachers teaching have to lead an exemplary life with high moral character. Conditions have to be created so as to enable the poorest Indian to receive the best possible education. There must be a union of literary knowledge and Dharma. The type of education imported to the people must necessarily be related to the conditions of life in India. Imposing heavy burden on the minds of young people resulting from the use of a foreign language, as the medium of instruction must be removed. There is need to reshape and redesign education in order to raise the level of the people. True natural education should be imparted through the language followed by each province. The teachers imparting education must be men of high ability. The surroundings of the school have to be clean healthy and conducive to promote good education with basic amenities such as good drinking water, pure air and peaceful atmosphere.



The scheme of education must provide knowledge so as to secure the main occupations and religions with good understanding of the country.

Gandhi felt the need to overhaul education system. He thought of National education and proposed the following methods to be evolved.

1. Education must be imparted through the mother tongue
2. There must be accord between the education a child receives at the school and the environment of the home
3. It must be so planned as to meet the needs of the majority of the people.
4. The teachers in primary classes must be competent of good character right from the first class.
5. Education must be free
6. Over all control must be in the hands of the people.⁷

MOTHER TONGUE:

Education must be imparted through mother tongue. People have been lured by English language. Those who advocate English language state that it is through English that an awakening has been created in the country. English literature is vast and widely used. Giving up the use of English is a misfortune. It is not possible to translate it into other languages. Unity could be achieved only through English. Encouragement for the promotion of different languages of India is tantamount to disrupt the unity and retard the growing feeling of unity that they are of one nation. These are the main arguments of the advocates of English.

Education should not be made dependent on money. As the sun gives light to all the rich and the poor and rain falls on all so also learning must be made available to all.⁸

GANDHI SAYS THAT

The end of all education should surely be service and if a student gets an opportunity of rendering service even whilst he is studying, he should consider it as a rare opportunity and treat it not really as a suspension of his education but rather to complement.⁹



Gandhi holds that a curriculum of religious instruction should include a study of the tenets of faiths apart from their own. The students have to be trained in such a manner so as to cultivate the habit of understanding and appreciating the doctrines of various great religions of the world in a spirit of reverence and broad-minded tolerance.

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Gandhi states that the study of other religious besides one's own gives a grasp of the rock bottom unity of all religions. This study could afford a glimpse also of that universal and absolute. Truth, which lies beyond the 'Dust of creeds and faiths'.¹¹

On the other hand Gandhi does not believe that the state can concern itself or cope with religious education. He states that religious education must be the sole concern of religious associations. He does not like the idea of mixing up religion with ethics for the reason all the fundamental ethics is common to all religions. So teaching of fundamental ethics is undoubtedly a function of the state.¹² In the even that the government feels the need of the religious instruction to be included in education, it is imperative that the religious instruction offered should be of the best type; says Gandhi.¹³ The aim of all religious teaching has to make men more tolerant and broad minded.

BASIC EDUCATION

Mahatma Gandhi stood for the educational system, which is literary and productive, But the existing system of education is completely separated from the life activities of the child with moral degradation. In order to abolish the evils that have beset the society and to achieve the ideal society economically self reliant peaceful and orderly and to uphold moral and spiritual life and to reduce the disparities and inequalities in the society he put for ward a new scheme of education known as basic education which has its basis on morality and human values.

This education whether confined to children or adults males or females will find its way to the homes of the pupils.

Must learn an inter-provincial language

This language can only be Hindustani written in Nagar or Urdu script.¹⁴

Gandhi's basic idea was to make education self supporting through craft, agriculture and other productive work there by by-passing potentially the need for government funding support.¹⁵



A committee constituted by educationists was headed by Dr. Zakir Hussein in order to work out the details of the curriculum. The report of the committee received in the year 1938 was placed before Indian National Congress, which was accepted. The first basic school was established at Sevagram near Wardha in 1938 under Gandhi's personal supervision but the proposal of basic education was opposed by congress leaders and industrialists. They showed great reluctance in moving from a colonially derived system of basic education. They objected to the emphasis on vocation condemning it as child labor. Instead they offered a broad based curriculum for elementary education and expansion of facilities for technical education. ¹⁶

The system of basic education proposed by Gandhi leads to the development of the mind, body and soul whereas the ordinary system of education cares only for the mind. ¹⁷

Literacy for him is not the end of education and it is not even the beginning of education. It is only a means to educate the people but literacy is not education. Gandhi wishes that a child's education should begin with the teaching of a useful handicraft. This enables the child to produce from the moment the child begins his training. This helps every school to be self-supporting. Under such a system of education, the highest envelopment of mind and soul becomes possible. Every handicraft needs to be taught not in a mechanical manner alone but scientifically. The child has to be in a position to know every process of it. The proposal introduced by Gandhi is of a revolutionary type, which saves immense labor. It is economical on the other hand. ¹⁸

Gandhi holds that an intellect which is developed through the medium of socially useful labor will be an instrument for service and it will not easily be led astray or fall into a devious path. ¹⁹

Gandhi looks upon education as an integral whole and also as an instrument of social revolution lifting the human life continually to something better culturally, socially, morally and spiritually.

Gandhi has named his educational programme as Nai Talim, which implies new education under which education has become life centered, instead of textbook centered. Nai Talim has been defined as education for life, through life and through out life. Nai Talim has been divided into pre-basic, basic, post-basic, university and social education. Pre-basic is the nursery school part, basic is elementary education



for a period of eight years, between 7 and 15 years of age. Post-basic is High school education and social education has become adult education.²⁰

Gandhi has taken up basic education for boys and girls between 7 and 15 years of age for a period of 8 years. In the view of Gandhi basic education is the birth right of every child in India. No child could remain without it if Indian humanity is to make progress.²¹

Basic education or Nai Talim (new system of education) as Gandhi calls it is revolutionary in its conception. It is based on the theory that it is the activity known as 'the thinking hand' which more than anything else has guided the evolution of man and society. In this system of whole education, man can be imparted through the medium of a basic handicraft. Its goal is to build up 'a non-violent, non-exploiting social order in which the ideals of freedom, equality, and brotherhood can be fully and universally realized.'²² This type of education is life centered but not textbook centered.²³

Gandhi holds that craft, art, health and education should all be integrated into one scheme. Nai Talim is a beautiful blend of all the four and covers the whole education of the individual from the time of conception to the moment of death. He regards craft and industry as the medium of education.²⁴ He is of the opinion that if right kind of teachers are given, children will be taught the dignity of labor and learn to regard it as an integral part and as a means of their intellectual growth. He mainly suggests that handicrafts are to be taught not merely for productive work but for developing the intellect of the pupils. This helps them to be self-supporting.²⁵

Education is popularly and correctly described as education through handicrafts but it is part by true. The root of the new education goes much deeper. It lies in the application of truth and love in every human activity. The notion of education through handicrafts rises from the contemplation of truth and love, which permeates every activity of the human life. True education should be made easily accessible to all. It should be of much use to every villager in his daily life. Such type of education does not depend on books.²⁶ The teacher's earning in this new education stands as the art of living. Therefore, both the teacher and the taught have to produce in the very act of teaching and learning, which enriches life from the very beginning.²⁷

Gandhi is of the opinion that the commencement of training by teaching the alphabet and writing hampers the intellectual growth of the pupils. He proposes on the



other hand to teach the alphabet when the pupils acquire elementary knowledge of history, geography and the art of spinning. Through these their intelligence should be developed.

The teacher has to handle correlation carefully and precisely. He has also to enable learning by children to be an expiating and joyful process by handling correlation also as an artist.

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