



Gandhiji commendable contribution to the field of Education

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Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi's educational philosophy was deeply connected with his broader philosophy of life, which emphasized truth, non-violence, fearlessness, self-discipline, social responsibility, and moral development. He strongly criticized the colonial system of education in India for being detached from Indian social realities, local culture, family life, and the economic needs of the people. Gandhi believed that true national education should be accessible to all, imparted through the mother tongue, and closely related to the learner's home environment and everyday life. He emphasized the importance of competent teachers with high moral character and advocated free education under the control of the people. His concept of Basic Education, later known as Nai Talim, sought to integrate intellectual development with productive work, practical skills, ethical values, and social awareness. The Wardha Scheme of Education of 1937 represented an important attempt to translate Gandhian educational ideas into an indigenous system suitable for Indian conditions. Gandhi considered education not merely a means of earning a livelihood but a process of developing the whole personality and preparing individuals for responsible participation in society. His educational thought continues to offer significant insights into value-based, mother-tongue-centred, self-reliant, and life-oriented education.

Keywords: Mahatma Gandhi, Educational Philosophy, Basic Education, Nai Talim, Mother Tongue, Wardha Scheme, Value-Based Education

Mohan Dass Karam Chand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869 at porbandar, Kathiawar, Gujarat. His father was the Diwan of Rojkot. Gandhi's mother was a very courteous and kind hearted lady. Gandhiji was married with Kasturba at the age of 13 years. He passed the Matriculation Examination as an ordinary student. In the same year he was sent to England by sea voyage for studying Law where he spent three years and nine months as a student. On 10th June 1891. Gandhiji passed the Law Examination and returned to India as a Barrister. He practiced law for some time, but did not do well here. In 1893 Gandhiji went to south Africa as a legal adviser where he resisted for twenty years the inhuman treatment of the British Government against the Indian subjects in non-violent way. After his return from South Africa in

1915, he started a non-violent struggle against the British rule in India.

True National Education:

Our teachers must be men of high moral character. Conditions must be created to enable the poorest Indian to receive the best possible education. There must be a happy union of literary knowledge and Dharma. Education must be related to the conditions of life in our country. And the heavy burden on the minds of our young men resulting from use of an alien language as the medium of instruction must be removed. Unless we reshape our education so as to fulfil the foregoing the level of the life of our people cannot be raised.

True national education should be imparted through the language of each province. The teacher must be men of high ability. The school should be located at a place where students would get clean drinking water, pure air and a peaceful atmosphere. The surroundings must be perfectly healthy. The scheme of education must provide for securing to the students knowledge of the main occupations and religions of India.

Except the first five years of a child's life, the rest of his education is given through a foreign language. Besides, in the first five years, which are in some respects the most useful and of the greatest importance, education is usually imparted by the most ordinary type of teachers. Then begins English. At this stage the boys pass as if into a different world altogether. The education which is given to them has no relation to the life at home. The boys who till then were quite happy to do their lessons sitting on the ground now have benches. At home, even today, the prevailing custom in most homes is to sit on the floor. Until then, the boy, if he was a Hindu, was content to wear a dhoti, a kurta and the angarakha and, if a Muslim, to wear the pajamas instead of the dhoti, but now he uses a coat and trousers. Until then, he could do with the homely kalam, but now he has a pen with a steel nib. Thus, many significant changes take place in his outer living and a wide gulf divides the home and the school. Gradually, but definitely, this change begins to enter his inner life too. How are these changes in the outer life and the inner mental make-up of the boy going to affect his home and the way his people live at home? His parents have no idea at all as to what sort of education the boy is getting and their faith in that education is negligible.

Parents only know that it will help the boy to earn money. And this satisfies them. If this situation lasts long, we might all become foreigners. What is worse even the Swaraj for which we are struggling may become foreign in character when we finally get it, with the result that the very burden under which we are crushed today may continue even after Swaraj. There is only one way to escape this danger. It is to change and overhaul our system of education. In the national education to be evolved:

1. Education must be imparted through the mother-tongue.
2. There must be accord between the education a child receives at 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 men of good character right from the first class.
5. Education must be free.
6. Overall control must be in the hands of the people.

Education must be imparted through the mother-tongue. It is a pity that we are required to prove this self-evident truth. If we had not been dazzled by the lure of English, there should have been no need to prove this most obvious truth. The advocates of English say:

1. It is through English that an awakening has been created in the country.

2. English literature is so rich and vast that to give it up would be a great misfortune. It is not possible to translate it all into our language.
3. We can achieve unity only through English. To try to encourage and promote the different languages of India would amount to disrupting this unity and retarding the growing feeling that we are one nation.
4. English is the language of the rulers.

These are the main arguments of the advocates of English. They have many other things to say, but they have no more substance or importance than is included in the above. To say that all the awakening we see in the country has been brought about through English is only a half-truth. The fact is that all the education in the country is being imparted through English. And because the Hindus are not absolute blockheads they have imbibed and utilized the good they found in it. And yet the overall result which this education has yielded has been disappointing everybody admits that the present system of education suffers from some grave defects. We have not received from it the results which we are entitled to expect of an education which has now lasted for more than fifty years. Why in it so? If it had been imparted from the beginning through the mother-tongue it would have produced much good by this time. What only a few English-knowing people know at present would have spread and reached crores of our people-who would have shown the spirit and the strength which is now shown only by the English-knowing handful. At present, our young men, when they pass out of the college, appear to be devoid of all energy and just wander about in search of jobs. Instead, if they had been educated through the mother-tongue, then having been spared the strain of cramming, they would have been stronger both in body and mind and would have therefore rejected Government service as something inferior. No one suggests that English literature should be given up. We should have translated what is precious in it into our different languages. Japan and South Africa have done it. In Japan, they taught German and French to some who then translated good books from German and French into Japanese. It is not that German has nothing to borrow from English. Even so, not all Germans learn English. No German receives his education through English. Only a few Germans learn English and then translate into German whatever they think will be of value to their nation, and thus serve their mother-tongue. We should do the same.

As to the assumption that we have received a sense of unity by using English, the fact is that we become sharply aware of the illusion of our separateness from one another only after this alien language was introduced into our country. Though it may be admitted that once we had seen through that illusion we strove to throw it off and regain our national solidarity. We observe that in many countries the oneness of the people is not always due to the oneness of the language. There are two languages in South Africa. But the people are striving to achieve unity because their interests are the same. Similar is the case with Canada. In England, Scotland and Wales they still speak three different languages. Mr. Lloyd George is making great efforts to revive Welsh, the language of Wales. And, yet, in all the three parts of Great Britain there is a strong feeling that they are one nation. Development of the regional languages of our country will produce social, political and economic awakening amongst our people. They will have a better appreciation of their condition and position in the picture of the wider whole of the country. They will know that though belonging to different provinces they are sailing in the same boat. Thus they will forget differences of language, appreciate the unity of their interests and be ready to fight for it, and protect it from dangers. Besides, the better educated amongst us will have to learn Hindi-as the common medium of speech. The effort required to learn Hindi is as nothing

compared to that needed to learn English. That English in the language of the rulers proves nothing beyond the fact that some of us have to master this alien tongue. I do not dislike English: I am only pleading that it be put in its proper place. Then, we can truly appreciate its merits, and derive such benefit as we can. It cannot, however, continue to be the medium of our education: nor can it be the language of inter-provincial communication. In our schools and colleges we must provide for imparting even the highest education through the mother-tongue.

Philosophy of Life:

Gandhiji's philosophy of life is based upon the philosophy of Idealism. He believed in God implicitly. According to him, though individuals have different bodies, yet the same soul pervades in all of us. This soul is a part of that bigger entity which we call as God. Raheem or Christ. Gandhiji advocated that as the source of all the rays of the sun is the sun absolute and one whole, in the same way though the persons are different and innumerable, yet the same soul pervades in all of them. In short, Gandhiji experienced and realized Unity in Diversity. His philosophy of life has four elements namely-(1) Truth, (2) Non-Violence, (3) Fearlessness and (4) Satyagraha. We discuss these elements in some details as under:

(1) Truth:

Gandhiji's aim of life was to realize God. He firmly believed that this creation is mortal. Only God is immortal. Hence, the ultimate aim of life should be to realize God. According to him, truth is the only way to realize God. To Gandhiji truth is the supreme principle. In it other principles namely Beauty and Goodness become imbedded. To Gandhiji, there is no difference between Truth and God. According to him if some body uses truth in his mind, words and deeds and uses it together with Ahinsa sincerely and constantly, he will be able to realize God someday. In this way, according to Gandhiji Truth does not mean truthfulness of words or speech only but its field is very wide. This principle of Truth should be employed in all fields of life. Hence, Gandhiji devoted all his life to search for Truth.

(2) Non-Violence:

Non-Violence or Ahinsa is the second main tenet of Gandhiji's philosophy of life. Gandhiji was of firm view that devotion to truth can only be practiced through devotion and strict adherence to Ahinsa. To him Truth and Ahinsa are the two sides of the same coin. One cannot exist without the other. Gandhiji has insisted that the supreme aim of life is to realize God and the only effective way to realize that is to practice Ahinsa by thoughts, word and deeds. Gandhiji has explained the meaning of Ahinsa as-"Ahinsa in complete absence of ill-will against all that lives. In its dynamic condition, it means conscious suffering. Non-violence, in its active form, good-will towards all life. It is pure love.

(3) Fearlessness:

Gandhiji's Ahinsa was not negative tendency. It was positive capacity which included two other attributes namely-(1) Fearlessness and (2) Satyagraha. Thus, fearlessness in the third element in Gandhiji's philosophy of life Gandhiji has emphasized that without fearlessness, it is practically impossible to practice Truth and Ahinsa. A coward person cannot adhere to these principles of Truth and Ahinsa. Explaining his concept to fearlessness Gandhiji has written-"Fearlessness connotes freedom from all external fear-fear of disease, bodily injury and death, or dispossession of losing one's nearest and dearest, of losing reputation or giving offence, and so on."

(4) Satyagraha:

Gandhiji explained Satyagraha as hold fast to death. This principle is based on

truth and love. Herein the opponent is not given any pain, mental or physical, but he is made rather persuaded to accept truth by the effect of one's own experiencing pain or loss. It is to achieve change of heart by self-suffering of the adherence of truth and non-violence. In the words of Gandhiji "So the Doctrine came to mean vindication of truth, not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's self."

Wardha commission (Basic Education) 1937

The Wardha scheme of Education also known as 'Basic education' popularly occupies a unique place in the field of elementary education in India. This scheme was the first attempt to develop an indigenous scheme of education in British India by Mahatma Gandhiji. As a nationalist leader he fully realized that the British system of education could not serve the socio-economic need of the country. At Round Table Conference in London (1931) he pointed out the ineffectiveness of the system of primary education in India and the alarming low percentage of literacy among Indian people. He held the policy of the British Government responsible for this painful situation in the field of mass education. Gandhiji said, "I am convinced that the present system of education is not only wasteful but positively harmful" The Government of India Act, 1935 came into force in 1937. According to the Act, Congress Ministries were formed in seven provinces in India. Prior to this Congress had been strongly pleading for free, compulsory and universal education. The conference then appointed a committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. Zakir Hussain to prepare a detailed education plan and syllabus on the lines of the above resolutions. Besides Dr. Zakir Hussain, the committee consisted of nine members. The conference of 1945 at Sewagram characterized Basic Education as "education for life" The conference considered it as a radical and important revolution in social and economic structure of the Indian society. i.e. creating a new way of life" Since then Basic education came to be known as 'Nai Talim'.

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