



ISSN: 2395-6429

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CURRENT
MEDICAL AND PHARMACEUTICAL
RESEARCH

IJCMPR

Available Online at <http://www.journalcmpr.com>

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/23956429.ijcmpr20170032>

RESEARCH ARTICLE

UNDERSTANDING VIEWS OF GANDHIJI ON EDUCATION

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 25th January, 2017
Received in revised form 28th
February, 2017
Accepted 5th March, 2017
Published online 28th April, 2017

Key words:

Value based education, craft centered
education, and result oriented
education.

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, Gandhi ji's views about education are discussed. The highlights of his contributions to education are critically evaluated. Gandhiji's model was not only holistic and practical, it was highly decentralized. Views of Gandhiji about meaning of education, medium of instruction, value based education, craft centered education and about teacher are discussed in detail. To tackle the problematic challenge of India is facing today, Mahatma Gandhi's views can be of great support. In this reference, he has given us his golden words that there is a need of result-oriented education.

INTRODUCTION

India's culture and civilization are rare features in the course of world history. Today, along with modernization, it is very much a part of our living culture, at every level of the society, as well as a documented testimony to the greatest strength of education, which catapulted the Indian Civilization to its zenith. Perhaps few other cultures and civilizations have produced such courageous, saintly and visionary role models such as Radhakrishnan, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda, Mira Bai, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Sant Kabir, Sant Ram Das, Mahatma Gandhi, to name a few.

Gandhiji is more known in the domain of politics and social reforms than in the field of education. Yet, he is one of the greatest teachers of mankind for all the times to come. His contributions to the domain of education are not less than his contributions to the development of political thinking and social reforms.

As a political and spiritual leader of India, Mahatma Gandhi was naturally concerned with education which is one of central problems of politics. Education is said to have two legs i.e. 'Philosophy and Psychology'. Philosophy answers the questions of 'what' and 'why' while psychology of 'how' and 'when'. Gandhiji's thoughts on education form the dynamic side of his general philosophy. Gandhi's ideas were gradually perfected as a result of his South African experiences. Throughout his life, the ideas he formed in these first few years in South Africa were to be developed to fit various changed circumstances in the fight for Indian independence.

Gandhiji's Philosophy of Education

Based on his wisdom and successful experiments with education in South Africa, he put forth a Basic Education Plan which had the merit of achieving one aim of peace and freedom, for all mankind even years after today. Also, recognizing the futility of a centralized plan and control in implementing programmes, he also outlined a comprehensive but decentralized model to be implemented by the village Republics.

It was Gandhiji, who in 1937 first questioned the futility of the British education system. After two years of work on Basic Education, a Conference was organized in Jamianagar, Delhi, in the year 1941. Various reports on the working of basic schools run by the governments, local bodies, and by private enterprise throughout the country were almost unanimous in their assesment that general standards of health and behaviour as well as intellectual attainment were very encouraging. Compared to the English Medium Schools, the Children in Basic Schools were more active, cheerful, and self-reliant, with well-developed power of self-expression. They were found to be acquiring habits of co-operative work and social prejudices were breaking down.

M.S. Patel in his book 'True Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhiji' says that Gandhiji's educational philosophy is original in the sense that he arrived at it through personal experiences without drawing on the accumulated experiences of others. It may not be original in the sense that the like of it was never preached by anybody in the past, but it

should be noted that its presentation and adaptation on a nation wide scale are undoubtedly novel and original." In the words of Acharya Vinoba Bhave, "It may not be a new thing but it has been presented in a new light". Gandhiji himself says: 'I do know that the aim in the middle ages or any age was never to develop the whole man through crafts. The idea is original.'

Gandhiji's model was not only holistic and practical, it was highly decentralized and integrated, with a demonstrated capacity to motivate the entire community and place responsibility and accountability at the community level versus the state. To highlight just a few of his contributions:

Meaning of Education

By education, Gandhiji means an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man- mind, body and spirit. Education does not mean mere literacy. Literacy in itself is not education. Education must be concrete and interconnected, not abstract or given in isolated sections. Concrete education allows the learner to manipulate problems or sets of problems and study their relationships, character and artistic sense. It allows the mind, heart, hand and eyes to work simultaneously in a correlated manner, resulting in a harmonious and well-balanced personality. Education must be imparted in the child's mother tongue and organically connected with the child's Social and Cultural environment.

According to Gandhiji, "An education which does not teach us to discriminate between good and bad, to assimilate the one and eschew the other, is a misnomer." Basic education links the children, whether of cities or the villages, to all that is best and lasting in India. The function of *Nayee-Talim* is not to teach an occupation, but through it to develop the whole man. The emphasis laid on the principle of spending every minute of one's life usefully is the best education for citizenship.

Medium of Instruction

Gandhiji's scheme as presented to the nation in 1937 also had three similar elements. He was convinced that the medium of instruction in schools and colleges must be the mother tongue or the language of the area. He also insisted that the language of communication between people of various regions ought to be that which most people understood or could easily learn. In other words, it should be an effective tool for community relationships. For most of its needs, physical as well as spiritual, human society depended on Nature. *Nayee talim*, as envisaged by Gandhiji, gave top priority to our relationship with Nature. According to Tagore Nature was the most important source of knowledge, human creativity and livelihood. The highest education is that which does not merely impart information but puts life in harmony with all existence.

Productive Basic Crafts

To focus on three most suited crafts for children by age for developing intelligence and general knowledge. The three basic crafts are the main centre of correlation for the "core subjects" of language, mathematics, general science and social science.

Aims of education

If education is the foundation of all growth and progress, then aims, goals and objectives give direction to educational outcomes through the curricular content, syllabus and evaluations. As we study Gandhiji's addresses and writings,

we feel that he has given two sets of aims i.e. Immediate aims and Ultimate aims.

Among Immediate aims comes Bread and Butter aim, the Cultural aim, Development of Values, All Round Development of child.

Bread and Butter aim

Gandhiji wanted students to learn while he earns and to earn while he learns.

In the Harijan of September 11, 1937, Gandhiji remarked: "This education ought to be for them (people) a kind of insurance against unemployment. The child at the age of 14 years –after he had finished 7 years-is to be discharged as an earning unit..."

Cultural aim

He put emphasis on gaining knowledge of Indian culture- the culture that is reflected in our dress, manner of speech, behaviour and conduct.

The Complete Development

The complete development includes the education of 3H's- Hand, Heart and Head, rather than the education of 3R's- Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. The development of mind and body according to Gandhiji must go hand in hand that will give us the whole man.

Development of Values

Moral and ethical knowledge is the first point on which Mahatma Gandhi's concept of value education is based. Any education system that lacks these two cannot be termed as good. The reason behind such a thought is that, without morality and without ethics, no student, in a real sense, can be considered to be healthy in mental and physical terms because for it, self-control and good character is essential. A person who is not a moralist and who does not differentiate between right and wrong cannot rise to the essential level of a true student.

Aims of education according to Gandhiji should help to cultivate higher values in life such as moral, aesthetic, social and spiritual values and to practise self restraint, self realisation, self insight and self analysis. Gandhiji gave much importance to character development with the cultivation of such values as courage, patience, purity, service of man kind, righteousness etc.

About Teachers

Gandhiji thought that only right type of teachers can help in achieving the objectives of education. He said, "A teacher who establishes rapport with the taught, becomes one with them, learns more from them than he teaches them. He who learns nothing from his disciples is, in my opinion, worthless. Whenever I talk with someone I learn from him. I take from him more than I give him. In this way, a true teacher regards himself as a student of his students. If you will teach your pupils with this attitude, you will benefit much from them."

Shortcomings

Gandhiji's philosophy of education is sound psychologically, sociologically and biologically. In evaluating Gandhiji's educational philosophy following shortcomings are there:

The theory of self-supporting education has gained a controversy as due to this aspect the teachers may ignore the cultural and artistic activities which are the important means of self expression and personality development. The expenditure on craft work is very high and products of the children may not compete with the finished goods in the market.

The craft centered education may produce only weavers and carpenters rather than the complete development of the personality of the child.

The child may be tied to a specific vocation at a premature age (before the aptitude and interests of the child are ascertained). This may restrict the normal development of the child.

It is not at all possible to teach all the subjects through the basic craft. It seems un-natural and impracticable.

In this era of science and technology, this philosophy may hinder the industrial progress.

Text-books play an insignificant role in the basic education system. But in this era of knowledge explosion it is not at all possible to ignore text books.

Neglect of English language is another shortcoming of basic scheme of education in this era especially when the world is becoming a village and we talk about globalization. The real difficulty is that people have no idea of what education truly is. We assess the value of education in the same manner as we assess the value of land or of shares in the stock-exchange market.

We want to provide only such education as would enable the student to earn more. We hardly give any thought to the improvement of the character of the educated. The girls, we say, do not have to earn; so why should they be educated? As long as such ideas persist there is no hope of our ever knowing the true value of education. (M. K. Gandhi True Education on the NCTE site)

Education is the soul of a society. A soul without morality and ethics can do no good for humans, and Gandhi too believed that education without morality and ethics has no worth; it is incomplete and aimless. This indeed is Gandhi's viewpoint pertaining to value education which should be applied in a wider perspective. Its 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 per the demand of time.

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