



GANDHIAN IDEAS ON EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The present education system is failed to provide employment to the youth masses. We have achieve mass education but failed to give employment based education. We have adopted English education system based on Macaulay and Sir Charles Wood's Educational Dispatch of 1854. It has so many disadvantages and hence there is an urgent need to discuss and suggest some changes in current education system. Hence this article tries to put some shortcomings in the present education system. This article examines how Gandhian ideas on education are relevant today and also suggests some to improve the education system in India.

Finally concluded with the remark that, If Gandhism is to be materialized in modern times, the existing system of education needs to be totally changed.

KEYWORDS: Basic Education, Nai Talim , Mass Education, Life oriented Education.

INTRODUCTION

The individual goals of education are knowledge, value and skill formation while the collective goals are employability, socioeconomic development, better quality of life, peace and social harmony, national character and prosperity. Hence for getting skilled jobs one is to be educated and trained in a particular area and direction of knowledge. It is a high time to judge the educational system from various angles of practical significance and hence the objectives of this research paper are:

1. To understand the shortcomings of present education system
2. To study the Gandhian ideas on education
3. To suggest the Gandhian measures to improve the education system in India

The quality of education provided by the government system remains in question. While it remains the largest provider of elementary education in the country forming 80% of all recognized schools, it suffers from shortages of teachers, infrastructural gaps and several habitations continue to lack schools altogether. Between the class education and mass education we have neglected the masses, especially the need of rural areas. In fact, education today has become something of status symbol- a privilege. It promises job for few people only. Our education system is expanding in one direction and job scenario and opportunities in another. The present education system is failed to provide employment to the youth masses. In short we have achieve mass education but failed to give employment based education.

Most of the developing counties of today were in the past colonies of one or other of the European powers and at the time of independence they inherited a burden of mass illiteracy. Education in India was designed neither to develop the mind nor to help achieve economic progress but simply to maintain the stability of the British Raj. "The principal



stated by Macaulay was endorsed by Lord Bentinck and his council, who decided accordingly that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed in English Education alone.”ⁱ

The same spirit underlies Sir Charles Wood’s Educational Dispatch of 1854 which is credited with having laid the basis of modern system of education in India and which led among other things to the founding of the three ‘Presidency’ Universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in 1857. By the turn of the century it came to be generally recognized that village children were, in effect, not receiving any education at all, a fact recorded by the statistics on literacy, which for the population of British India, was less than 5 percent in 1901.

Mahatma Gandhi stressed that, “education should not be limited to gain literary knowledge, but should include the moral, physical and mental development of a person. The programme of education for school children that Gandhi proposed came to be known as Nayee Talim (New Education) and is also described by some as Basic education. It was based on three basic principles: It would be given entirely through the mother tongue, it would have a vocational rather than a literacy orientation and it would be financially self-supporting. Mahatma Gandhi had talked about self sufficiency of colleges and universities i.e. higher education should be self-financed. Gandhi suggested ‘user pays’ approach to the financing of higher education.”ⁱⁱ

Gandhi was also aware of the high cost of education. Therefore, he wanted to make education self-supporting. By self-supporting it must be able to meet the current expenses of education. Gandhi said, Nai Talim without the self-supporting basis would, therefore, be like a lifeless body. Self supporting does not mean that all capital expenditure on land, building and equipment are to be covered by the proceeds of the pupil's labour. "Education should not only serve as an insurance against unemployment but also make workers more efficient in their respective occupation and avoids unnecessary cut throat competition.”ⁱⁱⁱ

By the same token private industrial houses should be for training of the engineering graduates they required. Medical colleges should be attached to certified hospitals and funded by voluntary contributions from the wealthy. Agricultural colleges should be financially self supporting and their graduates should serve their apprenticeships on the farm rather than have to gain all their experience after graduation and at the expense of their employer.

Gandhi writes: “Under my scheme there will be more and better libraries, more and better laboratories, more and better research institutes. Under it we would have an army of chemists, engineers and other experts who will be real servants of the nation. And all these experts will speak not a foreign language but the language of the people”.^{iv}

Gandhi attached far more importance to the cultural side of education than to the literary. Addressing the girl students he said, "Culture is the foundation. It should show itself in the smallest details of your conduct and personal behaviour... Inner culture must be reflected in your speech, the way in which you treat visitors and guests, and behave towards one another and your teachers and elders.”^v

Gandhi, unlike the western educationists, was not in favor of unlimited liberty of students. He believed in restricting their liberty because no training is possible without discipline and restrictions. Gandhi wanted to make students Brahmacharies and Tapaswis.



Gandhi was convinced that, “the only useful medium of instruction can be the mother-tongue because a foreign language deprives them of the spiritual and social heritage of the nation, and renders them to that extent unfit for the service of the country.”^{vi}

The educational philosophy initiated by Mahatma Gandhi in India is best known as the *Nai Talim*. The whole idea of Basic Education is education in and through village handicrafts. Gandhi firmly held that if work was the best medium of education, then there was in the villages such a rich variety of multiprocessor work that the whole range of it could be utilized for a full-fledged programme of Adult Education in and through village industries. The modest beginning of *Nai Talim* (Basic Education) was a small article in the *Harijan* where Mahatma Gandhi, while discussing the economics of prohibition, said, “As a nation we are so backward in education that we cannot hope to fulfill our obligations to the nation in this respect in the given time during this generation, if the programme is to depend on money. I have, therefore, made bold, even at the risk of losing my reputation for constructive ability, to suggest that education should be self-supporting. By education, I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit.”^{vii}

Gandhi himself was fully conscious of the revolutionary character of his proposal. He writes in *Harijan* as, “My plan to impart primary education through the medium of village handicrafts like spinning and carding, etc., is thus conceived as the spearhead of a silent social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequences. It will provide a healthy and moral basis of relationship between the village and the city and thus go a long way towards eradicating some of the worst evils of the present social insecurity and poisoned relationship between the classes. It will check the progressive decay of our villages, and lay the foundation of a just social order in which there is no unnatural division between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ and everybody is assured of a living wage and the right to freedom. And all this would be accomplished without the horrors of bloody class-war or a colossal capital expenditure such as would be involved in the mechanization of a vast continent like India. Nor would it entail a helpless dependence on foreign imported machinery or technical skill. Lastly, by obviating the necessity for highly specialized talent, it would place the destiny of the masses, as it were, in their own hands”.

According to Mahatma Gandhi the following things must be included in the system of National Education:

1. Instruction through mother tongue.
2. Coordination between education and the atmosphere at home.
3. Education should cater to the needs of many.
4. Emphasis on character of teacher right from first standard.
5. Primary and basic Education should be free to all.
6. Peoples' control (watch) on education.

"Education should help in the all-round harmonious development of the students. This all round development is possible only when literary education is supplemented with the development of body and soul. Gandhi attached far more importance to the cultural side of education than to the literary. Addressing the girl students he said, "Culture is the foundation. It should show itself in the smallest details of your conduct and personal behaviour... Inner culture



must be reflected in your speech, the way in which you treat visitors and guests, and behave towards one another and your teachers and elders.”^{viii}

He claims, “I have given many things to India but this system of education together with its techniques is, I feel the best of them. I do not think I will have anything better to offer to the country.” He said that basic education ‘is based on truth and non-violence in individual and collective life. Education is that which gives true freedom, untruth and violence lead to bondage and can have no place in education.’^{ix}

CONCLUSION

The burning issues regarding the future of human society could be effectively met with Gandhian Thought. Among the important issues of human life Gandhiji had specifically emphasized education. Gandhiji stressed on ‘**life-oriented education**’. If Gandhism is to be materialized in modern times, the existing system of education needs to be totally changed. There being no link between education and planning of the students' future, there is no thought involved about his progress in life; only he makes progress in a few subjects (of his syllabus). The prevalent system of education in our country gives prominence to memory but not creativity. No professional and industrial instruction is imparted. The problem of 'educated unemployment' has become more serious than that of the 'unemployment of illiterates.' This is tragedy of prevalent education system. That is why Gandhi had laid the foundation of Basic-Education. According to Gandhi education is not an end; it is a means. The education that would make us men and women of character is true education. Mere literacy does not at all raise the moral height of man.

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