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RESEARCH ARTICLE

GANDHIJI'S VIEW ON EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Gandhiji views education as playing a vital role in the reconstruction of Indian society. According to him, education is defined as a technique of transmitting civilization. The etymological meaning of education is to bring out inside to outside, to make inner capabilities of a man to be fully expressed. Accordingly, the function of education is to draw out rather than to put in. Education is the art of developing and enhancing the cultivation of various physical, mental and moral powers of the learner. It is taken as a process, not as a product. It is a life-long process that starts from birth and continues till death. There are different types of education, formal and informal. Formal education is deliberately and consciously planned and its curriculum is carefully designed and goals are pre-determined. For instance, the education provided in the institutions like schools, colleges and universities is called formal education. But the education which is generally received by living and communicating with others is called informal education. Informal education may or may not be provided consciously or deliberately. When formal education has a fixed course of study, informal education has no such.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of education has been determined by social, economic, political, cultural and philosophical norms of society. According to *Rg Veda*, education is something which makes one self-reliant and selfless. However, our ancient Indian concept of education laid emphasis on higher knowledge, freedom from ignorance, salvation and self-realization. According to Vivekananda, education is the manifestation of divine perfection in man. Swami Dayanand says that education is an instrument for character formation and righteous living. R.N. Tagore holds that education enables man to find out the ultimate truth which emancipates us from the bondage of the dust and paves a way for universal brotherhood. But, according to Gandhiji, education is an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit. Gandhiji's view on education were influenced by his general philosophy of life, such as, belief in God, truth, *Ahimsa*, dignity of labour, justice and equality. According to him, education should aim at developing an all-round personality. He also laid equal emphasis on education of heart, which implies refinement of emotions, and awakening of deepest feelings of love, sympathy, fellowship and right ordering loyalties.

Education is a life-long process and it should help in cultivating the spirit of toleration, cooperation, public spirit and a sense of responsibility. Gandhiji's philosophy of education was greatly influenced by three personalities namely, Raychandbhai, Tolstoy and Ruskin by their books. Apart from the two books of Tolstoy and Ruskin, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, *Unto This Last* respectively, the impact of the personality of Raychandbhai was great. This has been admitted by him in his *Autobiography* that needs to be quoted here at length: He was a connoisseur of pearls and diamonds. No knotty business problem was too difficult for him. But all these things were not the centre round which his life revolved. That centre was the passion to see God face to face. Amongst the things on his business table there were invariably to be found some religious book and his diary. The moment he finished his business he opened the religious book or the diary. The man who, immediately on finishing his talk about weighty business transaction, began to write about the hidden things of the spirit could evidently not be a businessman at all, but a real seeker after Truth. And I saw him thus absorbed in godly pursuits in the midst of business, not once or twice, but very often. I never saw him lose his state of equipoise.

There was no business or other selfish tie that bound him to me, and yet I enjoyed the closest association with him. I have since met many a religious leader or teacher. I have tried to meet the heads of various faiths, and I must say that no one else has ever made on me the impression that Raychandbhai did. His words went straight home to me. In my moments of spiritual crisis, therefore, he was my refuge. Gandhiji was critical of the then existing system of education and remarked that it was wasteful and positively harmful. Gandhiji perceived that education without the use of one's hand and feet would atrophy the brain. He wanted that education, which is value-oriented based on the golden principle of simplicity. Simplicity is the life-style of his educational ideas. By simplicity he means that the life of the students to be akin to that of a *sannyasi*. Similarly, a student should follow the dictum of 'High thinking and simple living'. A student should derive pleasure from his studies. Gandhiji made a distinction between literacy and education. He believed that literacy is not education. Indian policy based on the principle of socialism, secularism, democracy, nationalism and internationalism requires an education based on the criterion of inculcating values in the youth for promoting equality, social justice, national cohesion and democratic leadership. For Gandhiji, 'character building' is an important aspect of education. He believed that one's character brings a profound impact on the minds of the people. Therefore, he wanted students as well as teachers to give more importance to character building. National progress depends on men having strong character. Of course character building is independent of literacy training. He was convinced that education which does not mould character is absolutely useless. Along with the development of character, Gandhiji also believed in spiritual development of man through education. Accordingly, the ultimate aim of education is realization of the Ultimate Reality or Knowledge of truth or God. Self-realization is the *summum bonum* of life and it is education which enables us to realize this objective. Gandhiji's contemporary great scientist Albert Einstein said, The most important human endeavor is the striving for morality in our actions. Our inner balance and even our very existence depend on it. Only morality in our actions can give beauty and dignity to life. To make this a living force and bring it to clear consciousness is perhaps the foremost task of education.¹

Culture of heart and development of character was the most important in the mind of Gandhiji. Culture is above intellectual knowledge which is valueless without character. True aim of education is not only to prepare a man for a profession, but to make him perform functions, other than the production and transmission of wealth. A man must be awakened to duty to society, nation and humanity at large. Looking into this aspect of education Swami Vivekananda said, "the end of all education, all training, should be man-making."²

According to Gandhiji, Education is the most powerful instrument of human and social transformation. However he had revolutionary ideas about educational goals and strategies. He tried to break certain set ideas thus:

- Literacy is neither the beginning nor the end of education.

- Mere intellectual knowledge is only one aspect of education; there are also other aspects like proper training of will and emotions and character building.
- Individual development is not like a watertight compartment. It goes side by side with the development of society. Hence, individualistic values of education is not only wrong but also a worn-out conception.
- We can neither deny the contribution of science nor can we shut our eyes towards the exploration of our own self.

The aim of Gandhian education was to create a *satyagrahi*, a truthful, non-violent person. Truth, non-violence, service of humanity and fearlessness were the goals and education was a means to these. Education is meant to develop skills in living and working and draw the best out of each individual. In emphasizing on the character building aspect of education, Manilal had written a letter to his son from Volksrust prison in 1909 saying, "education does not mean a knowledge of letters but it means character building."³ Gandhiji's educational principles can be seen in his *Hind Swaraj*, in which he enumerated programmes for social and political reconstruction of Indian society. Gandhiji envisioned true education coming about primarily through a particular pattern of life in a community and not merely through formal instruction in school. Schools were meant to prepare citizens of a new society – a non-violent society and teach children to live on the basis of cooperation, truth and *ahimsa*. The essential tenets of Gandhian system of education can be summed up as follows:

- Education must serve the nations' needs consistent with the philosophy of freedom, truth and non-violence.
- Equality of all religions and all men.
- Equal importance to intellectual training and manual work, which should be socially useful and productive.
- Mother tongue as the medium of instruction at all levels along with the compulsory teaching of Hindi.
- The curricula and other arrangements should aim at serving the need of the villagers.

Along with an importance to education, Gandhiji puts emphasis on manual labour. Mohit Chakrabarty quotes Gandhiji as saying, There is no point in developing the brain only. One has to develop one's brain through one's hands. If I were a poet, I would write a beautiful poem on the possibilities of the five fingers of this hand. Those who do not know how to use their hands get little profit out of education. They are like one who sings false notes without feeling the music. Books are never sufficiently interesting to hold the interest of the mind. The mind begins to wonder. Only manual work brings you back to reality.⁴ According to Gandhiji, education "aims at making us into civilized human beings conscious of our moral and social responsibilities." The concept of education and culture are intimately connected. From Gandhiji's writings it reveals that the complete man is a cultured man and a cultured man is an educated man. Gandhiji was eager to devise a system of education that was not only revolutionary, but also in keeping with the spirit of his celebrated spirit of *swaraj* and *satyagraha* – the spirit of India of his dreams. This is the theory of 'basic national education' or 'basic education'. Gandhiji's view of basic education has to be understood against the background of India's independence struggle, for "no system of education and its practice can be

properly appraised and appreciated unless it is understood and studied in connection with the ideas and ideals which inspire it.”⁵ The system of basic education was conceived by Gandhiji in a time in history when the spirit of India was groaning under the stress of alien rule and oppressed, particularly when the imposition of English Education was driving the Indian psyche away from villages, making the Indian educated youth alien to his parents and parental occupations. In this connection we would like to recall the statement of Thomas Babington Macaulay to see the real motive that was there behind the English system of education. Lord Macaulay said the following about India in 1835 in British Parliament. I have traveled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief. Such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such calibre, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage, and, therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native self-culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation.

The celebrated historian G.D. Trevelyan writes in *Life of Lord Macaulay*, “A new India was born in 1835”.⁶ What Alexander, Ashoka and the Western missionaries had failed to do was accomplished by Macaulay’s educational minutes, decreeing that India was to receive through English education, the language of the West. “The very foundations of her ancient civilization began to rock and sway. Pillar after pillar in the edifice came crashing down.” But Macaulay did a more harmful thing, which is not generally known. He adopted the ‘downward filtration method’ for educating the Indians. According to this method, the forward caste was given preference in schools. To put it in Macaulay’s words, But it is impossible for us with our limited means to educate all in English. We must at present do our best to form a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect. He was very happy over the success of his plan. He wrote to his father in a letter dated 12th October, 1836, Our English schools are flourishing wonderfully; we find it difficult to provide instruction to all. The effect of this education on Hindus is prodigious. No Hindu who has received an English education ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. It is my firm belief that if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respected classes 30 years hence. And this will be effected without our efforts to proselytize; I heartily rejoice in the prospect. B. Nivedita, in a lecture entitled “The Destruction of the Indian System of Education” delivered in IIT, Madras, 1998, remarks, “To gauge how much he succeeded in his mission, we only need to look into the history of the Indian educated classes since that time onwards.”⁷ Gandhiji was pained to see the Indian workers, either the village *kisan* or the industrial labourer – oppressed by poverty, unemployment, disease and death under the pressure of Industrial civilization and political bondage. Besides resolving to encounter this utter injustice by non-violent resistance, he wanted to enkindle the spirit of Indianness in his proposed system of education. It reflected the richness of Indian culture, that is, love of truth and dignity of labour.

The English education not only enslaved the Indian Youth but also create unemployment, expensive, wasteful and positively harmful. Therefore Gandhiji emphasized that education should be rural based and village directed. It should be imparted through the teaching of manual work, craft and dignity. Because, for Gandhiji, the true spirit of India lives in village and the corrupting influence of urbanized education cannot work there. Community life is stronger in the villages than the cities. For village people manual work is the way of life. Craft and cottage industries like spinning, weaving and carpentry constituted the main contents of basic education.

In giving us the concept of Basic Education, Gandhiji had three major objectives in his mind. Those are:

- He wanted education to be creative and productive. Education must provide ample opportunity for the child to give vent to his creative potentials.
- Basic education would promote a sense of social responsibility in the child.
- Education must be self-supportive.

However, Gandhiji recognized the importance of free thinking in child, which appears to be the common emphasis of idealism, naturalism and pragmatism. He was against the norm of the formal education where a child is treated as a mere raw stuff on which we could impose our views through our own domineering wills. As a result of this, children born healthy and happy are made to turn into sick semblances of the elders who inject them with their own views and make them corrupt as they are. Gandhiji reacted against it and says that children should be given scope for the development of free, creative and critical thinking to grow naturally and spontaneously so as to establish harmony with themselves and the nature. According to Bertrand Russell, education is the key to the new world. It constitutes the very foundation of any world that has been built so far or shall ever be built in future. The first brick of the foundation of a civilization is laid down by an appropriate educational system of a country. For example, the ancient Spartan socio-political system was designed by an educational system a rigorous military training and military discipline constituted the core. The Athenian free society and liberal life style was by product of a liberal system of education. The modern economic prosperity is the consequence of liberal system of education, in the field of science and technology. Hence any new society or socio-economic formulation shall have to proceed from on appropriate educational system. Bertrand Russell referred to four virtues, such as, vitality, courage, sensibility and intelligence essential for ideal character of a person. Gandhiji also talked about these virtues. In 1932 he said, “I would try to develop courage, strength, virtue, the ability to forget oneself in working towards great aims...” He said that these virtues can be attained only with the help of education.

In his treatise *On Education* Bertrand Russell said that education improves the character of man. When he thinks of ‘ideal character’, he counts four qualities that shall be simulated in students. Those are: (i) vitality, (ii) courage, (iii) sensitiveness and (iv) intelligence. But he had not given so much stress on the moral aspect of the student’s personality. His primary interest consists of intellectual training to the students. But Gandhiji emphasized on character building,

humanizing or man-making education. As he says, "Education is not an aim in itself, but rather an instrument and that type of education alone can be called real education, which helps us in the building of sound character."⁸ Thus we see that Gandhiji pleaded for proper co-ordination and harmony among the various faculties of body, mind and soul. Character formation is the corner stone of Gandhian concept of education. Gandhiji wanted that man can lead a virtuous life by promoting all-round and integrated development of all individuals and by that way promoting the welfare of the entire universe. This can be possible by education. Education is the cornerstone of the cultural edifice of a nation. It is through education that personal development and social transformation can be brought about. It is a factor in improving the quality of life of the people, in eradicating poverty and in accelerating economic growth. One of the major objectives of all national Governments is making provision for the growth of quality education.

Mahatma Gandhi laid great emphasis on primary education having relevance to the life and living of the masses particularly in rural areas. His aim was to prepare the people of India to fight for their independence from the British rule. He aimed at securing their responsibilities and to stand on their own feet economically. In this way, Gandhiji wanted Indian society to come out of darkness in which the foreign rulers kept it and to become a self-managing and self-sustaining entity. This could be achieved only when people are educated. Gandhiji devoted more time and energy in understanding the educational needs of the people and studying the ancient Indian system of education which had an integrated approach to the training of head, hand and heart. Finally, he settled a new model of education. He called it *Nai Talim* or new education, otherwise known as Basic Education. He started a number of institutions to train teachers and a series of schools in remote areas of the country to make primary education accessible to one and all at the cheapest possible rate and at the doorsteps of children. According to Gandhiji, the objective of education was the harmonious development of the individual, drawing out of the best in him. To him, the body is the means of earning a living, mind is the means of reasoning; but the soul is a place for building character. The learner needs to understand the importance of education for earning a living, for knowledge and for building of character.

Today, India needs an educational system that makes human beings better human beings (character building); that enables each and every person to earn his livelihood and meet his basic needs of food, shelter, clothing, education, health, security and self-esteem (building of skills), and that enables people to acquire the knowledge and mental equipment required for understanding the local, regional, national and global environment, so as to achieve highest distinctions in the chosen field of specialization. Gandhiji wanted to work and worked with this objective. In independent India, so many experiments in reforming the educational system have been done on the plea of catering to the current situation and needs save the Gandhian model, which is thought to have lost its relevance. But all such models have been imported from foreign countries. The exporters and imported materials have changed, but import remains and the importer remains. India does not become Bharat and our indigenous needs and indigenous way to cater to the needs have not been

appropriately attended to. The fall outs of the educational policy are writ large on the horizon and they need not be discussed in detail as ours is not a factual survey. The only thing that we would underscore is the dearth of moral values in academics that everybody is crying over. Our current educational system fails to develop the integrated personality of the child as conceived by Gandhiji and Russell. It is an examination-centric educational system wherein the job of the teacher is to fill the mind of the child with information, so that he/she can successfully get a certificate and with the certificate he can go to the job market, sell himself as a useful tool to produce goods and services. It fails to evolve a value-based education that brings out well-rounded individuals, as a good manager, engineer, technologist, scientist, worker and above all as a good human being who cares for the earth and its fellow human beings. To establish a value based educational system the following things are to be taken into consideration:

- To establish a solid ethical base for education as exemplified by Gandhiji.
- To make education practice based.
- To make education equitable and accessible to all.
- To develop a network of well furnished school all over the country
- To make teaching a responsible job, as it was in the olden times.

The background of Gandhian system of education was based on Indian civilization. According to Gandhiji, Indian civilization is the civilization of the future. Hence, his system of education was derived from India's past and moulded to meet the current need, and future challenges of Indian society. Elaborating his views on education in free India, he said, I say without fear of my figures being challenged successfully that today India is more illiterate that it was 50 or 100 years ago, because the British Administrators, when they came to India, instead of taking hold of things as they were, began to root them out. They scratched the soil and began to look in the root and left the root like that and the beautiful tree perished.⁹ For Gandhiji, "Education in the understanding of citizenship is a short term affairs if we are honest and earnest."¹⁰ Basic education links the children, whether of cities or the villages, to all that is best and lasting in India. He says, Literacy in itself is no education. Literacy is not the end of education, nor even the beginning. Literacy education should follow the education of the hand – the one gift that visibly distinguishes man from beast. Real education has to draw out the best from the boys and girls to be educated. True education must correspond to the surrounding circumstances. Democracy can function well only with the aid of right education. The function of *Nai-Talim* is not to teach an occupation, but through it to develop the whole man. By education Gandhiji understand an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man- body, mind and spirit. A balanced intellect presupposes a harmonious growth of body, mind and soul. Gandhiji is of the firm view that institutionalized education chokes man's initiative, worth, dignity and development. Hence educational process should be de-institutionalized so that man may attain liberty and try for equality and gain his dignity as a man. The dignity of man does not consist in material aggrandizement or in mental development or in political powers, but it consists in the growth of his creative and spiritual awareness based on moral values.

Education should contemplate the whole life. Mere memorizing and book reading is not education. Gandhiji had no faith in the so-called system of education, which produces men by learning without the backbone of character. Gandhiji's scheme of education has to be understood within the framework of his philosophy of truth and non-violence, which constituted the building blocks of character. Accordingly, true education is that which helps us to know our true self, our soul, our atman, God and truth. Every branch of knowledge should conform to the knowledge of the self and exploration of Truth. Gandhiji was disappointed with the prevailing system of education. He viewed the present system of education as a means of getting employment. Gandhiji's experiments in the field of education started in South Africa and that was how the remarkable Wardha Scheme of education known as *Nai Talim* or Basic education was evolved. The following are the conclusions Gandhiji arrived at regarding education in 1932.

- Young boys and girls should have co-education at least until they are eight years of age.
- Their education should mainly consist in manual training and drawing under the supervision of an educationist.
- The special aptitude of each child should be recognized in determining the kind of work he or she should do.
- The reasons for every process should be explained when the process is being carried out.
- General knowledge should be imparted as the child begins to understand things. Learning to read and write should come later.
- The child should first be taught to draw simple geometrical figures and when he has learnt to draw these with ease, he should be taught to write the alphabet. If this is done, he will write good hand from the very beginning.
- Reading should come before writing. The letters should be treated as pictures to be recognized and later on to be copied.
- A child taught thus will have acquired considerable knowledge, according to his capacity by the time he is eight.
- Nothing should be taught to a child by force.
- He should be interested in everything taught to him.
- Education should appear to the child like play. Play is an essential part of education.
- All education should be imparted through the mother tongue to begin with.
- The child should be taught Hindi as national language, before he learns letters.
- Religious education is indispensable and the child should get it by watching the teacher's conduct and by hearing him talk about it.
- Nine to sixteen constitute the second stage in child's education.
- It is desirable that boys and girls should have co-education during the second stage also as far as possible.
- Hindu children should now be taught Sanskrit and Muslim children Arabic.
- Manual training should be continued during the second stage. Literacy education should be allotted more time according to necessity.
- The boys during this stage should be taught their parents' vocation in such way that they will, by their own choice, obtain their livelihood by practicing the hereditary craft. This does not apply to the girls nor it should be compulsory.
- During this stage, the child should acquire a general knowledge of world history and geography, botany, astronomy, geometry and algebra.
- Each child should now be taught to sew and cook.
- Sixteen to twenty five is the third stage, during which every young person should have an education according to his or her wishes or circumstances.
- During the Second stage (9-16) education should be self-supporting; that is the child all the time that he is learning, is working upon some industry, the proceeds of which will meet the expenditure of the school.
- Production starts from the very beginning, but during the first stage it does not still catch up with the expenditure.
- Ideally speaking, the teachers should be paid not very high salaries but only a living wage, the spirit of service should inspire them. It is a despicable thing to take any Tom, Dick or Harry as teacher in primary stage. All teachers should be men and women of character.
- So long as the country is poor, big and expensive buildings are not necessary for educational institutions but they must be commodious, neat and clean.
- English should be taught only as one of several languages. As Hindi is the national language, English is to be used in dealing with other nation and international commerce.

Education is a very important tool that is used in the contemporary world to succeed. It is used to mitigate most of the challenges faced in life. The knowledge that is attained through education helps open doors to a lot of opportunities for better prospects in career growth. Education means to improve the physical, social and mental wellbeing, develops personality and improves skill level. Its aim is very vast and it enables a person, good person. Basic education is designed to mould the child from every aspect of his life. The best way to educate the child is to allow it to exercise his creative, genius and critical power of imagination, to allow it to find out its own world itself, is to inspire it to be self-dependent and to allow it to be critical in approach, is to direct it towards self-innovation and self-discovery. No one can deny the significance and relevance of basic education even today. Gandhiji's scheme of education touches upon various aspects of life. Some argue that *Nai Talim* (Basic education) was time specific and hence would not be relevant to twenty first century. But the point is that behind every model there are a set of premises. The goodness of a model or theory entirely depends on the premises underlying it. If the premises are faulty, the model becomes faulty and hence meaningless. But if the premises are right, the model remains useful or meaningful forever. Its true application would require examination of the time and space realities for the strategies to be adopted and policies to be formulated for the implementation of the strategies. In the Gandhian model of education, we have to look at the premises underlying it and the premises we derive from the model. Once we have done that, we can always look at the time-space reality and use the principles constructively to solve our problems.

Let us examine the premises underlying Basic Education model of Gandhiji:

- Primary education means character- building to begin with;
- Aim of education is to develop integrated personality of students, training their hands to learn skills, head to think and acquire knowledge to understand the environment in which they live and work, and heart to respect human dignity, have empathy with nature and love their fellow being.
- Education should follow the dictum of learning by doing and should be a lifelong process.
- Primary education should be accessible to all irrespective of community, caste or economic standing of parents.
- Educational infrastructure should be the first priority of any community or Government; it should not be iniquitous, nor should it be ostentatious;
- Teacher is the backbone of any educational system; teachers should bear highmoral character and should be knowledgeable; and
- Education is a means, not an end. End is the development of better human beings.

Writing in *Indian Opinion* in 1907, Gandhiji remarked,

Education is just a means. If it is not accompanied by truthfulness, firmness patience and other virtues, it remains sterile and sometimes does harm instead of good. The objective of education is not to be able to earn money, but to improve oneself and to serve the country. If this object is not realized, it must be taken that the money spend on education has been wasted.¹¹ At present we are facing a crisis in the field of education. Moral values are degraded, corruption has become a part of the system, and honesty is no more with the people. If it is thought of then it is a thing of the past and character, self-respect, etc. are no more seen as virtues. Violence is everywhere; people are desperately searching for peace and harmony. Man in the street is of the opinion that the more educated a person is, the more dangerous he becomes. The point is, where did we go wrong? Our civilization is one of the richest in the world; we had great people being born from time to time to show us the way. Mahatma Gandhi is the bright example for us. For decades we have done a great damage to our educational goal. We are in mistake and making the path to education a wrong one.

It is time for us to deliberate on what went wrong with our education system and what we ought to do now to bring changes in it. Different eminent scholars help us to understand Basic Educational philosophy better and chalk out a scheme that would make our educational system respond to emergent and emerging needs. *Nai Talim* or Basic education is based on the belief that every human being needs to make, needs to love and on the principle that the best, simplest and most natural way to wholeness of manhood is through active and useful work. *Nai Talim* is tested by its material consequences. Gandhiji takes everything which can solve the problems of the humanity at large. He placed education as the most potent means of alleviating the sufferings of the people. Joseph Mukalel in his paper "Education of the Masses: The Gandhian Perspective" observes that education in India does not lend itself to any formula because of the multifaceted

complexities and problems. Even though universalization of education has now become a major policy, our socio-economic problems are nowhere near solution. As formal education has today become highly specialized, it has excluded from its fold the masses, which form almost 80 percent of our population. The non-formal education can reach the larger masses of illiterate and uneducated population. Highlighting on the various aspects of Gandhian education, he argues that education is primarily the prerogative and privilege of the common people. Gandhiji focuses on rural India and how could rural reconstruction through appropriate education take place. Health-education, non-formal education, environmental education and population education are some of the important elements of Gandhian system of education. He concludes by saying that a future vision of education cannot dispense with the education of the masses since the real India still means the rural India. Mass education lies at the very base of Gandhian philosophy because education for Gandhiji cannot be defined except with reference to those who have been left behind in the mad race for money and power.

Rajammal and Rajam in their paper "Gandhian Philosophy of Higher education" emphasize that a realistic system of education should integrate the needs of the individual nation together with that of the humanity as a whole. It should ensure harmonious development of the body, mind and soul. A good system of higher education will provide the nation honest, cultured, self-negating and duty bound citizens. The goal of higher education should not be only to increase the amount of knowledge but also to encourage creatively, urge for discovery and innovation. Elaborating on the main conclusions with regard to the educational philosophy of Gandhiji, D.D. Nayar focuses on building character, citizenship training, education through non-violent occupation – the village crafts – cooperative work, fighting social evils, duties before rights and toleration and respect for others views as important ingredients of education for a non-violent society and world peace. Gandhiji gave a new meaning and content to cottage industries by making them the vehicle of education. Gandhiji's ideas on education are interrelated, interacting and mutually supportive. Such education can develop in the students the intellectual and emotional reflexes required to create and preserve the social order of Gandhiji's dream.

What is good education? According to Gandhiji, good education must draw out and develop the human powers of creative activity, unselfish cooperative living, intellectual curiosity and wonder. The growing human being has very simple, but deep needs. The needs change to develop his physical strength, his manual skill and his intelligence. He needs to serve and to love, and to find joy in his dealings with other man and with the world around him. Joy does not depend on material possessions; rather it depends on the free & full development of the whole man. According to Gandhiji, education is understood as the chief vehicle for the realization of truth and *Ahimsa* to dawn on man. Education alone can implant in man the awareness of his intense relation to the fellow human beings. Education is the process by which new light may be shed on the individual to widen the horizon of his personal relations with other men, provided that the education is on the right track. According to Gandhiji, the best way to reach out the Indian masses is through education. Gandhian education as envisaged within the framework of Gandhian

thoughts is primarily called value education. Along with the building of character, the culture of the heart constitutes the fundamental aim of education. Value education as understood in the present context, clearly envisages a training of character of the individual in particular and total value system of society in general. When academic education focuses on knowledge and professional training, value education aims at enabling the individual and society to build value-centred personal and social system.

Gandhian Philosophy of Higher Education: Education is an important element in economic development. It is an important factor for social and market returns and results in constant economic upliftment and social justice. According to Gunnar Myrdal, two important determinants of manpower are health and education. Education is not what a person learns but what he becomes. It must be viewed from the broader perspective. It must be taken in terms of inculcation of right values and attitudes towards life and work and producing in the individual a high level of moral and intellectual integrity. Education must help the individual in the actualization of his maximum potentialities. God, according to Gandhiji, is life, truth and light. He is the supreme love. God is truth because Truth or '*Satya*' is indestructible. So one's ultimate aim should be the realization of Truth or God. All man should be guided by this Truth. Truth can be identified at personal level with 'voice within', the voice of conscience. Gandhiji searched for truth not as an egoist. Rather, he wanted that Higher education should help to establish a "Universal community of free persons without official barriers of caste, colour, creed, wealth and power." His conception of education stands for harmonious development of all aspects of human personality intellectual, physical, spiritual and so on. For Gandhiji, the aim of higher education is self-supporting, cultural development, character building, all round development and cultivation of human values.

In order to achieve the objectives of education, Gandhiji prescribed productive craft as the medium of education. It is based upon the concept of 'learning by doing' and 'learning while earning'. Moreover, Gandhiji emphasized that the natural and physical environment of the child could make the whole educative process effective. If a child is set to some useful occupation like spinning, carpentry, agriculture etc. for his education and given a thorough knowledge, he would not only develop a fine healthy body but also develop a sound vigorous intellect. His intellectual education should include knowledge of mathematics and various science. If literature is added to it, it would give him all-round education, in which the intellect, the body and the spirit have full play and develop together into a natural, harmonious whole. Man is neither mere intellect nor the gross animal body nor the heart or soul alone. "A proper and harmonious combination of all these three is required for the making of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education."¹² The objective of Higher Education is not only to turn out good individuals, but also socially useful men and women who understand their place and duty in the society in which they live. Gandhiji considers this aspect as an essential part of education. This is to be given not theoretically but practically by an observation from the first year at school. This leads to learn, work and discipline. An intellect developed through the medium of socially useful manual labour must necessarily become an instrument of

service. Mere intellectual training ordinarily makes an individual individualistic. But education through work and activities brings the pupil in contact with other children in cooperation. This in turn brings out in his mind the social objective and develop a sense of cooperation and leadership. Higher Education must make its votaries fearless so that they will uphold what is right. According to Gandhiji, fearlessness is the first requisite of spirituality. Cowards can never be moral. Where there is fear, there is no religion. On the other hand fearlessness is the sine quo non for the growth of the other noble qualities. The brave are those armed with fearlessness. However, the 'New Education' advocated by Gandhiji is not only a new method of education, but also a new philosophy of life. It stands for the dignity of all aspects of human work. It recognizes that all wealth is the creation of human endeavour. It gives highest place to work in its daily activities. It not only aims at creating balance and harmonious individuals, but also a balance and harmonious society – a just social order based on truth and love. Gandhiji thought that women's education was very much necessary. While putting emphasis on women education Gandhiji says, "My greatest hope is women. They want a helping hand to lift them out of the hell in which they have been kept."⁹ He believed that women by means of their equipment and nature are best fitted to take up the work of educating small children. The National Policy on Education (1986) laid special emphasis on the removal of disparities and equalization of educational opportunities to those who have been denied equality so far. The national education system has played a positive role in the improvement of the women groups. Gandhiji considers illiteracy to be India's sin and shame. Therefore, he thought that efforts were necessary to impart values which should guide literacy work among men and women. Literacy should be related to the felt needs of women in the community, especially health, family planning employment, women's legal rights and provisions for safe-guarding women's interest and fighting social evils like child marriage, dowry, untouchability, etc. Of course, the involvement of the youth and highly educated students cannot be ignored for the improvement of the women. It would not out of place to mention that the Annual Report of the World Bank published in 1989, recommends that the surest way to lift India out of poverty is to educate and enhance the status of Indian women. Gandhiji remarked that the very objectives of education can be fulfilled if teachers possess virtues like knowledge, skill, enthusiasm, patriotism and special training. They should be inspired by social attitudes and be imbued with ideals of non-violence or *Ahimsa*. His philosophy of education combines the essential of the following three philosophical doctrines, naturalism, idealism and pragmatism. Naturalism considers the nature of the child as to how he learns and what are his essential needs. Gandhiji stresses on full development of child's nature through education. According to him, "children should be educated in an atmosphere of freedom" – freedom from super-imposed restrictions and interferences. As a naturalist, Gandhiji attempted to save education from the four walls of the class room and wished it to be given in the natural surroundings of the child. Like an idealistic thinker, Gandhiji stresses on the dignity of man. Other impacts of his idealism are the ultimate aim of self-realization, the ideal of service unto humanity, preservation of moral values, the emphasis on religious education and development of a harmonious personality.

Gandhiji believed that education can awaken the latent potentialities of both child and man. It might sound odd, but Gandhiji was pragmatically idealist. He held that absolute truth is to be realized through sustained experimentation and effort. Education should equip the child with knowledge and skills necessary to deal effectively with the situations of real life. One could say that there is a lot of similarity between craft centred activities and learning activities as described by the pragmatists in the project method. Gandhiji tried to relate knowledge to the life of the people, to the basic craft, like a project, is to be socialized activity which makes for all types of social relationship, social participation, division of labor and willing responsibilities to the community. Along with this, Gandhiji regarded education of the adult as a necessary prelude to the growth of the new generation in new values. He said,

The education includes the education of the whole society beginning with the children and going up to adults and old men and women. It has to be imparted through the practice of handicrafts, village sanitation and medical relief, preventive and curative.¹³ According to Gandhiji, since higher education is imparted through universities and deemed universities, it is relevant to know the structure of higher education. Higher education is the system in which the inputs are post secondary students and the outputs are the graduates and post-graduates who go into the labor market or even join the ranks of the frustrated unemployed educated young men and women. Universities are the greenhouses where various types of seeds grow into plants and are sent into the world. The greenhouses must be good and raise healthy plants. University system has to be satisfactory to the various elements of the society. In order to break the vicious circle of poverty and to create conditions of greater employment, income, food and shelter for the mass, skill oriented education is inevitable, which will ultimately merge and end with rural development. In order to achieve the objectives of rural development, universities and deemed universities are expected to aim at strengthening their activities in the field of specialization rather than make efforts towards growing into multi-faculty universities of the general type. Higher education should be research oriented and ought to have a grass roots level component focusing particularly on women, children and their economic activities. The goal of higher education should be not only increasing the amount of knowledge but creating possibility to discover and create men and women who are capable of doing new things.

Gandhiji wanted education to be within the reach of all, particularly the poorest in the society. The ultimate objective of education is to simultaneously develop the body, mind and spirit, the spectrum of society and culture and these structurally and functionally constitute an integrated whole. The objective of education should not be to create white-collar gentlemen but useful and self-dependent creative individuals to take Indian society and the country to lofty heights. Addressing the workers of Hindustani Talim Sangh at Sevagram in 1939 Gandhiji said: "I have given many programmes to the country during my lifetime. But I think basic education is my best gift to the nation". Gandhiji had written a series of articles in *Harijan*, strongly pleading for imparting education through crafts and creative labor. In his opinion, "an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child

provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect." A proper and all-round development of the mind can take place only when it proceeds *pari passu* with the education of the physical and spiritual faculties of the child. They constitute an indivisible whole. In supporting craft-centred education of a child he says that a child should begin by teaching it "a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training". However he made it clear that these handicrafts should not be taught mere mechanically, but in a scientific manner, so that the child could know "the why and wherefor of every process". The highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education. Handicrafts are to be taught not merely for productive work but for developing the intellect of the pupils.

In his opening address to the All India National Education conference held at Wardha in August, 1938, Gandhiji said: I am convinced that the present system of primary education is not only wasteful but is positively harmful. Most of the boys are lost to their parents to the occupation to which they are born. They pick up evil habits, affect urban ways and get a smattering of something which may be anything but education... But the scheme that I wish to place before you today is not the teaching of some handicrafts side by side with so-called liberal education. I want the whole process of education to be imparted through some handicraft or industry. It may be objected that in the middle-ages only handicrafts were taught to the students, but the occupational training then was far from serving an educational purpose. The crafts were fought only for the sake of crafts, without any attempt to develop the intellect as well... The remedy lies in imparting the whole art and science of a craft through practical training and there through imparting the whole education.¹⁴ At the end of the conference, the following resolution was passed:

- That in the opinion of this conference free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation - wide scale.
- That the medium of instruction be the mother tongue.
- That the conference endorses the proposal made by Mahatma Gandhi that the process of education throughout this period should centre around some form of

Manual and productive work, and that all other abilities to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the environment of the child.

- That the conference expects that this system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers.

Accordingly a Committee was also appointed where Dr Zakir Husain was the Chairman, Sri Aryanayankam was the Convener with Acharya Vinoba and many others as its active members. The report of the Zakir Husain committee was submitted to Mahatma Gandhi on 2nd December 1937. It attracted wide attention in the country and all the congress Governments of that time agreed to introduce this syllabus of Basic education with certain modifications to suit local circumstances.

Since all Education Ministers had participated in the deliberation of the Conference, they took personal interest in introducing Basic education in their areas with enthusiasm. As per the decision, training colleges were started in various states for reorienting the teachers in the new system of work-oriented education. According to Gandhiji, the boy under the scheme of basic education does not merely go to school to learn a craft. He goes there to receive his primary education, to train his mind through the craft. The object of basic education is the physical, intellectual and moral development of the children through the medium of a handicraft. Here emphasis is laid on the principle of spending every minute of one's life useful. Acharya Vinoba Bhave was one of the important architects of the scheme of Basic education incorporated in Zakir Husain Committee report. With his detailed knowledge of the art and science of spinning and weaving he was able to lend perceptible substance to *Nai Talim* as envisaged by Gandhiji. Vinoba made several cogent points about Basic education. In one of his speeches he observed: On the completion of his education, a student ought to have that kind of confidence in his own powers. This is what matters, not a supply of miscellaneous information. The purpose of education is to train men to get information which they need for themselves. This is my determination of education:

Education means the attainment of self-sufficiency in learning. Vinoba laid stress on the ideological aspect of *Nai Talim*:

People have got into the habit of thinking of Basic Education as if it were one method or system of education among others, like the Montessori Method or the 'Project Method'. But it is not a matter of method or technique: Basic Education stands for a new outlook, a new approach. The fundamental of all the world's conflict is that knowledge has been separated from work. They have been separated in thought by a faulty psychology; they have been separated in life by a faulty sociology; they have been assigned different market values by a faulty economics.¹⁵ This shows that knowledge and action are intimately related to one another. Gandhiji's *Nai Talim* was not meant for the village alone, although he was primarily concerned with the provision of free and compulsory elementary education to all children in the rural areas. So he stresses both on village and city education. The villages should not have a feeling that only their children are being provided with work-oriented education, while students in the urban areas are continuing with the traditional system. During that period, Basic education was introduced by the Congress Government in the village areas and the rural population gained an impression that an inferior type of education was being doled out to their children. This proved to be one of the main causes of the unpopularity of the Wardha Scheme. Some steps were taken in Delhi and Punjab to establish Basic schools in the cities too. Even so, it must be frankly admitted that no serious effort was made at any time to make *Nai Talim* universal, in both cities and villages. Gandhiji wanted that each Basic School to have a farm and a workshop attached to it. To him, all developmental activities of an area should be properly linked with the educational processes in schools. He said that Basic education is meant for life and through life. The home, the village or the city and the community should form the nucleus of a Basic school which should correlate the academic knowledge of various subjects with the physical and social environment. Thus, Basic Education is essentially meant

for life. Its aim is to create a new social order free from exploitation and violence. Gandhiji said, "it aims at creating eventually a social order free from exploitation and violence. That is why productive, creative and socially useful work in which all boys and girls may participate irrespective of any distinction of caste or creed or class, is placed at the very centre of the Basic Education."¹⁶ The fundamental objective of Basic Education is the development of the child's total personality, productive efficiency, etc.

Work-Experience: It appears to be relevant to mention here about the Kothari Commission of 1966 which coined a new phrase 'work-experience', it is defined as "participation in productive work in school, in home, workshop, farm, factory or any other productive situation". The Commission said that all good and purposeful education should consist of at least four basic elements: Literacy, numeracy (study of mathematics and natural sciences), work experience and social service. It had emphasized that "Work-experience involving participation in some form of productive work under conditions approximating to those found in real life situation should be introduced as an integral part of education at all stages." Even after the recommendations of the Kothari Education Commission with regard to 'work-experience', it has not implemented till now. In Feb, 1970, the Ministry of Education convened a seminar on "Gandhian values in Education", which was held at Sevagram. The findings of the seminar were:

The Ultimate objective which Gandhiji had in view was the evolution of a non-exploitative, non-violent society conducive to the welfare of all. To this end, it is essential to emphasize three fundamental values in education, such as,

- Dignity of manual labour through the use of work as a part of the educational programme.
- A sense of social awareness and social responsibility through the involvement of students and teachers in meaningful programmes of community service; and
- The promotion of a secular outlook or *Sarvadharmā Samabhava* thought and understanding of the fundamental unity of all religions.

It was recommended that suitable programmes should be developed to realize these values and students should be involved in their planning and implementation.¹⁴ It was decided, moreover, that a minimum programme of action should be introduced in all educational institutions. It was resolved that Pilot projects in selected districts, at least one in each state should be launched so that these programmes could be launched successfully. It was also agreed that these fundamental values in education should be introduced both in rural and urban areas. The Ministry of Education was decided to set up a special 'cell' for following-up these recommendations in a systematic manner. According to Gandhiji, students should not take active participation in politics. While highlighting on this point, Gandhiji said that students must not take part in party politics; they are students, searchers, not politicians. He advised, Students may hear all parties, as they read all sorts of books, but their business is to assimilate the truth of all and reject the balance. That is the only worthy attitude that they can take. Power politics should be unknown to the student world.¹⁷ Students should not spend

their energies in current party politics. Rather they should concentrate on the integrated development of their body, mind and spirit. This conviction of Gandhiji appears to be more valid and relevant in present time because of the participation of students in present-day politics as to how in the name of doing politics students are spoiling their life. Unhappily, political parties in the country today are exploiting the student community without any scruples for gaining their selfish objectives. As a result of this, a number of educational institutions (Colleges and Universities) in the country are being involved in violent agitation. Gandhiji was convinced that both teachers and students should eschew politics almost religiously in order to safeguard the future of India. Of course, students are free to study different political ideologies and programmes with passionate objectivity. They would also be fully entitled to join political parties of their own choice after the completion of education. As one responsible citizen they are to do good as per the advice of Gandhiji. Otherwise, instead of proving to be the bulwark of our secular and socialist democracy, the Indian youth would go down in history as the wreckers of the hard-won *Swaraj* of his ancient nation.

The role of teachers: Starting from the pre-*vedic* period teachers are placed in the higher position in society. They play an important role in our educational system. Without sympathetic efforts to improve their quality, it would be highly impossible to make our educational system strong. Gandhiji was very much anxious to raise the social status of the teaching profession. He wanted the society "to measure the value of the teachers not on the basis of their salaries but on their performance of their *Dharma* which was in the nature of a *yajna*." The teachers are the persons to mould the character of the younger generation. A teacher takes every kind of care for his student. The teachers are the architects of a nation, in the real sense of the term. They take so much strain to train the students for fulfilling their obligation to the society and nation. It is the responsibility of the state to raise their social status and enable them to be free from daily financial worries. Both teachers and students are complementary to each other. Teachers should bear all responsibilities in changing the life style of the students and try to make them good. On the other hand, students should show respect to their teachers. Then only a healthy educational system can be established in the society. When some teachers complained about their students to Gandhiji during his austere and difficult trek in Noakhali on the eve of Independence, Gandhiji remarked, "When you feel within yourself that you are right but everything around you is wrong, the conclusion you should draw for yourself is that everything is all right but there is something wrong with you." Gandhiji believed that education entirely depends on the works and quality of teachers. He believed that instead of spending huge amount of money in brick and mortar, it would be much better to spend a required amount to raise the salaries of the teachers at primary and secondary levels. It would be wiser to spend less on buildings and much more on equipments and good teachers to fulfill the mission of education. The standard of an educational institution should not be judged merely by its building, by its infra-structure development as it is being done to-day. It is imperative to change our sense of values at least in the sphere of learning and pay greater importance to teachers rather than to stone and cement. Gandhiji said,

"A University never needs a pile of majestic buildings and treasures of gold and silver. What it does need most of all is the intelligent backing of public opinion."¹⁸

Education through mother tongue: Regarding the medium of instruction and education, Gandhiji was convinced that different subject should be taught to students in their own mother-tongue or in the regional language. Unlike the linguists Gandhiji puts emphasis on the supremacy of local language. In the course of his forward to 'My Book, Medium of Instruction' published in 1942, Gandhiji wrote: I have no doubt whatsoever that if those who have the education of the youth in their hands will but make up their minds, they will discover that the mother-tongue is as natural for the development of man's mind as mother's milk is for the development of the infant's body...I, therefore, regard it as a sin against the motherland to inflict upon her children a tongue other than their mothers' for their mutual development.

Gandhiji was not against English language as a medium for international contacts. But he was totally opposed to the use of the English language as the medium of instruction, even at the higher stages of education. However, he pleaded for the study of national language, Hindi or Hindustani, English as a language may be used in graduation stage. The English language must not stand as a barrier for the cultural unity of the nation. Fortunately, the Government of India, in their recent Policy Resolution on education, have now taken a definite decision in favour of the regional languages as the medium of instruction even in the Universities. It is hope that this decision will be implemented by our educational institutions with earnestness and in a well-planned manner. In doing so, let us remember the words of Gandhiji:

The medium of instruction should be altered at once, and, at any cost, the provincial language be given their rightful place. I would prefer temporary chaos in Higher Education to the criminal waste that is daily accumulating.¹⁹ Gandhiji said that there was a need to improve all our languages. India should adopt Hindi as the universal language for the country with the option of writing it in Persian or Nagari characters. Further, the English books that are indeed valuable need to be translated into different Indian languages. He says that "My head begins to turn as I think of religious education. Our religious teachers are hypocritical and selfish; they will have to be approached. The Mullas, the Dasturs and the Brahmins hold the key in their hands, but if they will not have good sense, the energy that we have derived from English education will have to be devoted to religious education. This is not every difficult."²⁰ Gandhiji was convinced that excessive emphasis on English education would enslave the nation.

Culture: Gandhiji was of the view that the physical, mental and moral faculties of the young boys and girls (students) could be fully developed only if academic knowledge can be combined with some kind of productive activity. This combining of 'mind-culture' with 'hand-culture' was the core of Basic education. Gandhiji prescribed a constructive programme for students, including Swadeshi, through the use of *Khadi* and village industries, learning the national language (Hindi), promotion of national unity, first aid to the injured and sanitation work in the neighbouring villages. He also wanted students to show sympathetic behavior to their women

fellow students. Gandhiji advocated the abolition of all economic and legal disabilities from which women in India suffer. Gandhiji observed that “man” has always desired power and he enjoyed it, and similarly “the daughters and sons should be treated on a footing of perfect equality.”

While putting emphasis on women education, he also paid special attention for the emancipation of women in India by drawing them into the freedom movement. He was trying to remove various social and economic obstacles which stood in the way of the progress of the women. Although women occupied a high social status in ancient India, in the course of time they have suffered a lot, as they are not getting social and economic justice from the society. It is mainly due to Gandhiji's untiring efforts in this direction that women in free India occupy high positions in national life. Because of this contribution of Gandhiji, at present women in India are in high position. However the women should not merely imitate men. Because she has to win the race. She has to prove that she is a complement of man. Gandhiji said, “Woman who knows and fulfils her duty realises her dignified status. She is the queen, not the slave, of the household, over which she presides.”²¹

There are different aspects of education. The general aim of education is that the child should be able to earn his living after finishing his education. Food, clothes and shelter are our minimum needs and unless we are able to satisfy them, then our education is meaningless. Against this bread and butter aspect of education, its cultural aspect emphasizes on the knowledge aspect. Apart from these, Gandhiji advocates on the complete development or perfection of nature. The moral aim of education is the formation of character or development of character. But Gandhiji also says that education aims at liberating men from the darkness of ignorance. One of the most important aims of education is to train the small child for service of mankind. According to this aim, education should liberate the individual learner. But the highest aim of education, according to Gandhiji is the realization of God or Truth. It can be said that Gandhiji's socio-politico-economic order and educational systems are closely related to each other. It is noticed that every society evolves its own system of education aims at preparing the individuals for a particular end. Gandhiji believed that an ideal socio-political-economic order entirely depends on a sound educational system. Gandhiji's philosophy of education is a complete programme of social reconstruction which appropriately addresses to the needs of the individual and society in the context of social problems of Indian society. The ultimate aim of one's life should be self-realization i.e; utmost development of heart, hand and head (3H). This goal can be achieved only through the medium of serving humanity, living nearer and midst of society. Gandhiji could not find any conflict between the interest of the individual and the society. There should be a mutual help and support between one and all.

In Chapter-VI I would like to show that although Gandhiji's Philosophy appears to be an old one, it is in no way outdated. Even in this age of science and technology everybody feel the relevance of Gandhian doctrines. It is an attempt to show the future vision of Gandhian doctrines.

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