



## Gandhiji's Philosophy of Education

Dr V. Raj Laxmi, Lecturer Sir C R R College of Education, Eluru.

G V S Ravindra Babu Lecturer MBA dept. Sir C R R College, Eluru

**Abstract:** Gandhiji always had a great appreciation for the self-sufficient past of the Indian villages, and this 'self-sufficiency' became one of the fundamental features of his 'Basic Education'. The object of basic education is the physical, intellectual and moral development of the children through the medium of handicrafts. The freedom of India is not only freedom from the British rule but also freedom from all sorts of evil and bondage. He believed that education is neither the knowledge of letters nor is it for earning livelihood but for character building. He said, "To think of education as a means of earning a living betrays an unworthy disposition of mind. The body is the means of earning a living while the school is the place for building character;" he further says that "Self-respect and character are above means of livelihood or a career". He also considered nurturing all human virtues such as kindness to all, service of humanity, fearlessness, quest for truth, self-control, humility and so on, are indispensable parts of character building.

**Key words:** British rule, freedom, humanity, fearlessness, quest for truth

### Introduction

According to Gandhiji, an individual become free only when he is self-reliant and has the capacity for self-rule. He believed that the British concept of education and development, which served only to alienate Indian citizens from their society, their culture and their age old self sufficient village traditions. He criticized the British education system for only filling the minds of students with information and not educating their minds and care for their spirits. Gandhiji insisted the introduction of the handicrafts into the school curriculum which will bring silent revolution in the field of education.

"By Education, I mean an all -round drawing of the best in child and in man body, mind and spirit". M. K. Gandhi.

Gandhiji's philosophy of education Nai Talim or Basic Education was a result of his scientific research of

theories of economics, politics, child development and the successful experiments of his ideas on education in South Africa and in India. Through his Basic Education, Gandhiji aimed at a holistic education of individuals, making India self-reliant, creation of peaceful communities all over India based on non-violence and political freedom of India from the British. His views on education were greatly influenced by the self -sufficient village system of ancient India. Despite the many foreign invasions, propagation of new religions and changes in ruling dynasties, Indian civilization maintained its continuity in its essential and fundamental institutions. One of the main reasons for this was that social life in India was always organized around its villages. The villages were sustained and supported by agriculture and cottage industries - a self-sufficient village economy. Gandhiji always had a great



appreciation for the self-sufficient past of the Indian villages, and this 'self-sufficiency' became one of the fundamental features of his 'Basic Education'. The object of Basic education is the physical, intellectual and moral development of children through the medium of a handicraft.

Gandhiji's extensive travel through villages of rural India and his insights into the socio-political, economic and cultural realities of the British India were influencing factor that formed Gandhi's philosophy of education. He says true education should also train students to be fighters for freedom. For him liberation means freedom from all manner of servitude. The freedom of India is not only freedom from the British rule but also freedom from all sorts of evil and bondage. The knowledge acquired in the pursuit of this ideal alone constitute true education. He believed that education is neither the knowledge of letters nor is it for earning livelihood but for character building. He said, "To think of education as a means of earning a living betrays an unworthy disposition of mind. The body is the means of earning a living while the school is the place for building character;" he further says that "Self-respect and character are above means of livelihood or a career". He also considered nurturing all human virtues such as kindness to all, service of humanity, fearlessness, quest for truth, self control, humility and so on, are indispensable parts of character building. He was of the opinion that Education which does not mould character is absolutely worthless.

Basic Education teaches children how to put their minds and senses to good use. He says a child can

make good progress in education only when he can understand the difference between truth and untruth, worth and worthlessness and chooses the good and the true, while rejecting the bad and the untrue. Gandhiji says one who has undergone his Basic Education will have a clear intellect, his body will be a ready servant of his will, his mind will be stored with the knowledge of the fundamental truths of nature and his passion will be trained to follow his will.

He criticized British education for producing 'colonial citizens' who would work for the perpetuation of British rule in India. Addressing the students of Banaras University, Gandhiji said "it is my firm conviction the main reason why the present regime goes on and continues to perpetuate the atrocities it does, is that we have come under the spell of its education. He not only blamed British education for India's enslavement, but also felt the need to sacrifice the same for India's freedom. According to him true education should teach us to follow truth and cultivate devotion for our country, but the British not only denied India its political freedom which in its right but also made its citizen slaves of British education and the western materialistic culture.

He rejected the British education system on the ground that it created only other dependent individuals- means for the imperialist control of India- while true education in his view should make self-reliant and free citizens. According to him, "an individual become free only when he is self-reliant and has the capacity for self-rule". He believed that the British concept of education and development, which served only to alienate Indian



citizens from their society, their culture and their age old self sufficient village traditions. He criticized the British education system also for only filling the minds of students with information and not educating their minds and care for their spirits. Gandhiji rejected the British education for it was not holistic in its approach and cared only for the intellect.

### **Principles of Basic Education:**

#### **1. Education for Liberation:**

According to Gandhiji, "Knowledge includes all training that is useful for the service of mankind and liberation means from all manner of servitude even in the present life. He believed that education must show the way to the attainment of spiritual liberation. Basic Education liberates a student from his existential needs by making himself reliant through empowering him with certain crafts. He believed that liberation from existential dependence would pave the way for essential or spiritual liberation.

#### **2. Social Revolution through Craft Centred Education:**

He viewed Basic Education as an effective means for silent social revolution. He insisted that introduction of the handcrafts into the school curriculum will bring silent revolution in the field of education. He dreamt of setting up a non-violent social order through this silent revolution and also through forming cooperative yet independent enlightened free individuals through his Basic Education plan in independent India.

He emphasized that the whole of education should be imparted through some handicrafts or industry. The

students will also learn hand-eye coordination; improve concentration balance and physical intelligence. The fruit of this education is that an individual becomes self-reliant and confident in himself/herself; He replaced the textbooks with handicrafts and made them essential means of learning.

He believed his basic education will help to develop values such as respect for manual labor, sense of cooperation, and feeling of being mutually helpful, economic, self-reliance, team spirit and sincerity in children. Moreover he was confident that craft centred education will enable the individuals to beyond the class and caste in Indian society and would lead to communal harmony.

#### **3. Education through Mother Tongue:**

He believed that the foundation of education should lead through one's mother tongue. He was of the opinion that if the children get instruction in the language other than their own languages commit suicide. It robs them of their birthright. A foreign medium means an undue strain upon the children: it robs them of all originality. It stunts their growth and isolates them from their home. Gandhiji was not against teaching English at school as a foreign language, but he was against using English as the only medium of education at schools.

#### **4. Craft-Centred Education for Educative Value:**

Through Basic Education, Gandhiji aimed at imparting knowledge and instilling skills (academic education) to the students through craft-centered education and the development of positive attitudes (attitudinal education)



toward work and manual laborers and a spirit of readiness in shouldering social responsibilities. For him handicrafts were not merely a means to productive work, but also a means for developing the intellect. He was convinced of the correlation between the intellect and manual training – “training in arts and crafts offers full scope for the development of the intellect.

#### **5. Craft- Centred Education for Self-supportive Value:**

“Self –Supportive” is one of the central characteristics of Gandhiji’s Basic Education, from his experience of travelling through Indian villages was has convinced him that formal schooling was too expensive and impossible to achieve the primary education for the millions of poor children in India. He claims that his Basic Education through crafts forms a whole man. “Vocation should serve a double purpose – to enable the pupils to pay for their labor and at the same time to develop the whole man or woman in him or her through the vocation learnt at school.

#### **Reasons for the failure:**

- The self-supporting aspect of Basic Education received severe criticism in the academic circle. Teachers, social leaders and educational administrators had shown an indifferent attitude towards it. It was argued that the scheme turns the school into a small scale industry.
- Too much emphasis on craft had led the neglect of liberal education.
- A single craft cannot be the basis of the whole educational process.
- Correlation of the subjects through craft may appear to be sometimes time consuming.

- Basic education is often regarded as inferior type of education meant for the poor villagers.
- It can in no way help in the progress of modern scientific and technological development of the society which was the need of the day.
- Lack of finance and absence of sound administrative policy was also responsible for the failure of Basic Education.

#### **Conclusion:**

The most innovative aspect of Gandhiji’s Basic education was the introduction of productive handicrafts in the school curriculum. Making crafts the axis of both teaching and learning, radically departed from both the British and Indian educational traditions. Productive handicrafts in the Indian tradition had been associated with the low caste people in social hierarchy. In fact, in India the low caste people were denied education for centuries. Despite the many positive aspects of Gandhiji’s Nai-Talim , The concept is almost dead today. Even the schools established for the propagation of the Gandhian philosophy of education do not follow Nai-Talim today. Today when the government of India boasts of its economic development even amidst the global financial depression it is shameful to see thousands of schools in Indian villages struggling to meet even the basic needs of a school a\such as proper classrooms, library, laboratory, toilets and even sufficient number of teachers. India still has the largest number of illiterates in the world. It is saddening to see the self sufficient and peaceful independent India of Gandhiji’s dream far from reality. On the contrary, the independent modern India today is still struggling with age old problems like



high unemployment, social and communal unrest, high infant mortality, illiteracy etc. Higher education is still a dream for millions of poor children in India.

Even after seventy five years of independence, the Government of India with its state – funded education system neither could reach a hundred percent literacy rate, nor could it succeed in ensuring employment to all. The irony of the modern education system is that even after graduating from a university, most students are not fit for any profession Present day India is still far from attaining the goal of the self-reliant and independent India that Mahatma Gandhi envisioned. Gandhian educational ideas that are founded on eternal principles will retain their fundamental relevance, as long as education remains unaffordable, unproductive and non-liberating.

**References:**

1. Naye Talim: Retrospect and Prospect by Chandan Sengupta
2. Mahatma Gandhi's views on education: With Special Reference to Nai-Talim or Basic Education by Thomas Njaralamkulath Varkey, The Journal of Sophia Asian Studies No. 29(2011).
3. Acharlu K.S(1966) Basic Education- a retrospect.
4. village swaraj by M.K. Gandhi.