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# Relevance of Gandhian Thought of Education in Present Day Context

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**Abstract:** Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi, better known as Mahatma Gandhi was a freedom fighter, social reformer and a well known educationist of India. Gandhi said, "An all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man—body, mind and spirit." So, he emphasised the holistic or all round development of a human being. He not only thought for the spiritual change in man but also given importance on social transformation. His educational thought is alive in every part of education.

Gandhi prescribed an education scheme known as "Nayi Talim" (Basic Education) in which every child should be educated and trained for the realization of his ethical goal in life and also the goal of a just social order. Gandhiji has given a scientific argument for the educational system. He says that the goal of education is the development of spiritual character strength. Education is the body's response to the mind. Even today, educational psychologists have identified the teacher as a means of integral development of the individual. He spoke of teaching through the mother tongue. He spoke of harmony between the school and home environment and making education unpaid. All of these are currently in force. Now the government is trying to get all children into school through universal education, which was once Gandhiji's goal.

The present paper will highlight the thought of Mahatma Gandhi on education which has an impact on every strata of life anywhere in this world. It's relevance is realized by everybody to build a holistic education system for child and man.

**Index terms:** Gandhian thought, education, character, non violence, adult education, mother tongue, craft education.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi was not only a statesman and freedom fighter; he was a great pedagogue who gave 'The Wardha Education Scheme' or 'Basic Education System', which can be called the first model of the national education system, which was work-centered, value-based and mass-oriented. It is the first model of vocationalization of education in India. His education scheme provides for close integration between school and community to make the child more social and cooperative. This scheme was the first attempt to develop an indigenous scheme of education in British India.

For Gandhiji, that education is the true education that helps to achieve the goals of life. Learning is, knowing what is worth knowing. True knowledge, then, is self-knowledge.

But Gandhiji's philosophy of education is not simply a philosophy of education that aims at the spiritual salvation of man, but is aware of the material dimensions of life. Gandhiji said, "By education I mean bringing out the best in the body, mind and spirit of the child and man."

For Gandhiji, education is a means for the elevation not only of the individual but of the whole society. Like Gandhiji he wanted to establish a social order based on socio-economic justice in which "There will be no beggars or beggars, neither tall nor short, neither millionaire entrepreneurs nor half-starving employees."

Gandhiji's main goal was that education should enhance the comprehensive development of the individual's personality along with some vocational training to meet the economic needs of members of society. Gandhiji believed that every man has an equal right to the necessities of life, but he also has a corresponding duty to do some manual work with his body. In order to cultivate these new values among the members of the society and satisfy their economic needs and make them self-sufficient, he emphasized crafts.

The main characteristics of Gandhi's educational thought were based on the values of Truth, non-violence, bread and work, non-stealing, non-possession, brahmacharya or chastity, swadeshi, untouchability, worship and prayer, fasting and service to humanity. Education does not mean for Gandhiji only a knowledge of the letters, but it means the formation of character. Currently, both the state government and the Center are spending money on education where Gandhi's thought on education has a reflection. It can be women's education, adult education, religious education or vocational education.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are mentioned below:

- 1) To study the educational contribution of Mahatma Gandhi and to spread them to the ongoing generation.
- 2) To explore the impact of Gandhian educational thought on the present generation.
- 3) To analyze the relevance of Gandhi's education system in the present day situation.

## III. METHODOLOGY

To reach the objective of this study, a comprehensive and historical approach has been used. For this, primary and secondary sources were used. Primary sources such as Mahatma Gandhi's collected works, Gandhi's speeches, and Gandhi's articles in different newspapers and magazines were used. In addition to the secondary sources available in the form of books, national and international magazines, magazines have been analyzed and evaluated in the research process.

## IV. BASIC EDUCATION ACCORDING TO MAHATMA GANDHI

Gandhiji has attempted to explore a system of education which is called basic education. This system of education conforms with his philosophy of life and values. According to Gandhian thought of education, the important features of basic education may be listed below.

### A. Complete Development

Gandhiji repeatedly emphasized that education should offer the child an opportunity for the all-round development of her personality. He said that "true education is that which brings out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of children." During his lifetime, he severely criticized the current education system as a useless and pointless exercise for children.

### B. Free and Compulsory Education for all.

Gandhiji wanted basic education to be free and compulsory for all boys and girls between the ages of seven and fourteen. According to Gandhiji, "I firmly believe in the principle of free and compulsory primary education for India. According to Gandhiji, education should be free and compulsory for all boys and girls between the ages of 7 and 14. At the primary level, education must be provided in the mother tongue of the student. Free universal primary education should be provided for all children in the village. This will strengthen the backbone of a country. This concept was implemented in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

### C. Occupation-focused Education

Local crafts were the medium or means of basic education. The craft was the main subject, through which the knowledge of the other subjects was communicated. The craft was the mediator between the child and the practical world. Gandhiji emphasized craft-focused education which was of great importance in the Indian scene. In the Indian scenario, crafts would make education self-sufficient, as it is not possible to educate all citizens and provide them with government jobs. Therefore, vocational-focused education would help provide employment opportunities to all citizens and make them self-sufficient. According to Gandhiji, the method of training the mind through the crafts of the people from the beginning would develop a disciplined mind. Such practical productive work in education would break down the existing barriers of discrimination between manual and intellectual workers. The scheme would increase productive capacity and also use their leisure profitably.

### D. The Mother tongue as a Medium of Instruction

One of the obvious shortcomings of the existing education system is that education is delivered through a foreign language. So Gandhiji emphasized the mother tongue both as a subject of study and as a medium of instruction. This is quite natural and academically sound. Expands the ability to understand and express new concepts in the field of education. It also develops clarity of thought.

### E. Development of Creativity and Critical Thinking

Gandhiji emphasized the principle of "learning by doing" which stimulates the individual's mind to think creatively and critically. His great emphasis on work culture for students from the earliest stage was to enable them to start producing while they were learning. So the main goal of his basic education was to use his head, heart and hand instead of just concentrating on reading or writing. According to Gandhiji, "By education I mean bringing out the best in the child and man: body, mind and spirit." Literacy could not be the main objective of education.

#### *F. Emphasis on Collaborative Learning*

True education is a lifelong process that helps cultivate the spirit of cooperation, tolerance, collaboration, and a sense of responsibility. All these qualities are necessary for the development of the human personality that can create a nice balance between individuals and the social goal of education. Gandhiji always emphasized collaborative learning. Crafting helps a child gain collaborative learning skills and realize the value of honest work.

#### *G. Emphasis on Moral Education*

Gandhiji thought that peace is essential to human life and can be achieved through education. Peace can only be achieved through morality and ethics. According to him, education should be based on ethics and morals. Gandhiji advised all students to regard morality and honesty as essential parts of his education.

#### *H. Emphasis on Character Building*

Education is the most powerful weapon to build the genuine character of a student. The goal of education must be the formation of character. Character formation includes a student's moral, intellectual, and social behavior in all circumstances. A student should develop personality, compassion, kindness, impartiality, and a spirit of dedication by virtue of education.

#### *I. Development of Self-Reliance and Patriotism*

The main objective of basic education was to achieve a comprehensive development of children and create a sense of patriotism through the practice of crafts. Gandhiji wanted the basic education system to be self-sufficient with each child learning a trade or occupational skill to earn a living. He wanted education to secure employment. He said: "My Nai Talim does not depend on money. Operating expenses must come from the educational process itself. Whatever the criticisms, I know that the only education is the one that is 'self-sufficient'. He also said: "Teachers earn what they take. It represents the art of living. Therefore, both the teacher and the student have to produce in the very act of teaching and learning. It enriches life from the beginning. It frees the nation from the job search."

#### *Development of Faith in Truth and Non-Violence*

A unique feature of Gandhiji's educational philosophy was the application of the principle of non-violence in the formation of the child as a future citizen of the world. The Basic Education scheme is imbued with the cardinal creed of non-violence and the idea of cooperative life. It is based on truth and non-violence. He thought that lying and violence lead to slavery and cannot have a place in education. His education scheme was intended to bring about an era from which "class and communal hatred is eliminated and exploitation avoided." Gandhiji commented: "We cannot, we will not think of exploitation and we have no alternative but this plan of education which is based on non-violence."

#### *J. Social Services Awareness*

Another important aspect of Gandhiji's educational philosophy is service and the development of social consciousness. Service includes love of country. "The end of all education should surely be service," said Gandhiji. Social awareness and responsibility can be developed through student participation in community service programs. Students must participate in different community services to develop responsibility and awareness of social services. Education must be based on the social good, well-being for all, and must elevate the human aspect.

#### *K. Cleanliness and Untouchability*

Students must be sensitized to the merits and demerits of cleanliness and the evils of untouchability. Gandhiji had opposed untouchability and the caste system from the beginning and had worked tirelessly to eradicate it. He was arguing that the Brahmins and the Untouchables were equal in his eyes. He was publicly rejecting the notion of high and low caste sentiment. At the age of twelve, Gandhiji did not agree with his mother's warnings not to touch an untouchable who used to clean the latrines in his house. He went to great lengths to break the centuries-old caste system and remove the mark of untouchability from Hinduism.

#### *L. Child-centered Education*

Gandhiji focuses on child-centered education. He believed that the child brings his own experience to school and they have to be reconstructed. There is plenty of room for the child to display her creative abilities and develop originality. He wanted children to cultivate purity in thought, word, and deed along with the pursuit of knowledge. This concept is the central point of the modern educational system throughout the world.

### *M. Self-Discipline*

Gandhiji believed that discipline should not be imposed from the outside. There must be self-discipline or an inner drive of the individual to obey the laws and regulations prescribed by the group, community or society. He wanted children to have enough freedom so that they could develop and grow. But they accept that discipline and training will be essential if they want to fully develop their powers. No school can function without discipline. He opposed corporal punishment. This concept is also relevant to the modern educational system.

## **V. RELEVANCE OF GANDHIAN THOUGHT OF EDUCATION IN PRESENT DAY CONTEXT**

### *A. Work oriented*

He was of the opinion that through education we should be able to bring out the best in the child's body, mind and spirit. He further said that literacy in itself is not education. According to him, education should be a kind of insurance against unemployment. For that he focused on crafts and education by industry.

If we look at the current scenario, we all feel that there is a need for this type of education because, if we look around us, we will see many unemployed and underemployed youth moving here and there. Therefore, a filling of dissatisfaction and depression grows in youth. For work, youth have to look to other countries. For example, in the Punjab state of India, there are about 80% of families whose members work abroad and send money to their families residing in India. So, the government has to take care of education so that it is work-oriented. In the national education policy of 2020, more importance was attached to the vocationalization of education, which we can say that we follow the idea of educational thought of Gandhi.

### *B. Character Building as a Goal*

In his educational philosophy much importance was given to character building compared to literacy because character includes purity of soul, ideas, activities and non-violence. When we look at the headlines in the US, UK media, we realize that the frequency of violence occurring in schools in these countries is increasing day by day and educators in these countries are very concerned today. We also feel that the character of society is declining and needs to be raised. Today, even political parties are resorting to violence to raise their issues, which is a serious threat to democracy. After industrialization and rising cost of living, now men and women work to meet their daily needs. Sometimes they have to be late for their offices and on the way from the office to home they are always frightened by the emergence of antisocial elements. These antisocial elements are the result of the impurity of the soul and ideas. Now a days, companies also require people who are honest, strong and helpful on the job. So here the need is to make the curriculum in the school according to Gandhi's views and teach them Bhagwat Geeta, Upanishad, spirituality, meditation so that later purity of souls and ideas can be achieved and they can advance in the path of non-violence and truth.

### *C. Social Development*

According to Gandhi's thought, education should not be just to impart knowledge, but should focus on the social development of the child. The child must learn how to live in the society and obey the norms of the society.

Now the world is going through a phase of social mobility. Because there is social unrest in the society and only responsible individuals can help maintain the harmony of the society, otherwise social unrest might occur. It could damage the democratic system that Gandhiji had always promoted. Discipline and responsibility cannot be imposed from the outside but must come from within. When you follow this in life, your life will be more beautiful and you will enjoy healthy relationships with your parents, sister, brother, wife, neighbours, friends, classmates, colleagues, junior, senior, etc.

### *D. Women's Education*

Gandhiji was in favour of the education of women. Gandhiji strongly emphasized the emancipation of women. He opposed pardah, child marriage, untouchability, and the extreme oppression of Hindu widows and sati.

The same has been recommended by the Kothari Commission and the New Education Policy. The Indian government is working in this direction and the situation of women's education is on a better platform as compared to earlier times. Nowadays, the government is trying to give reservations in jobs, politics, etc. for the betterment of women. In the 2020 National Education Policy, special importance was given to women.

NEP 2020 aims to address the issue of gender inequity in teacher recruitment in rural areas. The policy hopes to adopt new methods that ensure that merit and qualifications are taken into account and that women teachers are provided with appropriate forums for recruitment.

#### *E. Relevance of Nonviolence*

Nonviolence is a key component of Gandhian educational thought, which was the great weapon used by Gandhiji during the Indian freedom movement against the British Raj.

Gandhiji believed that nonviolence and tolerance require a high level of courage and patience. In a world that is moving through phases of warfare marked by violence and terrorism, there is a significant requirement of Gandhi's idea of nonviolence more and more today than in days gone by. The International Day of Non-Violence is celebrated on October 2, the anniversary of the birth of the hero of the Indian Independence movement, Mahatma Gandhi. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), in a resolution adopted on June 15, 2007, established the commemoration as an occasion to spread the message of non-violence through education and public awareness. The resolution reaffirms the universal relevance of the principle of non-violence and the desire to ensure a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding and non-violence.

#### *F. Emphasis on Democratic Values*

Gandhi's thought on education emphasized the development of democratic values in the child. According to Gandhi, an adequate development of civic sense and adjustment with the environment would make children worth citizens of the country.

Gandhiji's ideas on education seem to be very relevant in the current conditions of society. Gandhiji's vision of education is really relevant to the contemporary situation. The Kothari Commission reported: "The current education system designed to meet the needs of an imperial administration within the constraints set by a feudal and traditional society will require radical changes to meet the purposes of a modernizing democratic and socialist society. In fact, what is needed is a reevaluation of education that in turn launches the long-awaited social, economic and cultural revolution".

#### *G. Idea of 'Vasudhaiva kutumbkam'*

When the whole world is in tune with globalization, Gandhiji's goal of 'Vasudhaiva kutumbkam' can be realized by such a universal education scheme. In the Basic Education scheme no differentiation has been made between boys and girls. Not only that, he thought for universalization and internationalism where all countries will cooperate with each other.

Due to the ever-increasing development at the global level, despite the existence of independent nation-states, today we have before us an advanced state of interdependence.

This state will still go higher. It doesn't matter if it is considered a compulsion of the nations of the world, but moving forward together is inevitable now. Working together is necessary for all citizens of the world. In such a situation, the Mahatma's suggestions and opinions expressed by him from time to time, which are full of internationalism, prove their adaptability and significance. It will be better and beneficial if the nations of the world, having Gandhi's views and suggestions at the core, come forward to work in a state of harmony according to the demands of time and space instead of working in a state of compulsion. If you collectively create a conducive atmosphere, everyone in the world will do well.

At the beginning we discussed India's commitment to internationalism. Mahatma Gandhi had wanted India to stand for the establishment of a world order dedicated to peace and prosperity. He also wanted India to fulfil this gigantic task considering it to be her responsibility. It is possible because India due to its unique values, exemplary culture and commitment to non-violence is capable of doing it. Therefore, India should step forward for the establishment of true and real internationalism, and in doing so should make itself an ideal for others in the world.

#### *H. Adult Education*

Gandhiji realized very early that it was by awakening and reorienting the adult mind that society could be organized on a new and healthy basis.

The UNESCO seminar on adult education held in Mysore in November 1949 discussed the definition of adult education. After that, the following conclusion was reached: adult education means the minimum basic education of every adult over 18 years of age, but the benefit of this type of education could be modified and extended to adolescents under that age.

The central government approved the 'New India Literacy Programme' for fiscal years 2022-27 which will now cover all aspects of adult education in the country, in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. 'Adult Education' will now be called 'Education for All' Age is not an impediment to education and the NEP 2020 policy has focused too much on it. The importance of education is known to all, and embarking on its path at any time is the right time. In life, one may not find opportunities to complete their basic education, but if the resources are available and you have a spark in yourself to be educated, then the educators show the lightened path.

### I. Mother Tongue

Mahatma Gandhi was one of the greatest proponents of 'mother tongue' as a compulsory medium of instruction during primary education. Children learn better and faster in a language they can understand. Through the medium of mother tongue, they enjoy school more and increase self-esteem.

The National Education Policy, 2020 has advocated, that "wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language" for both public and private schools.

### J. Cleanliness

Gandhiji put great emphasis on cleanliness or Swacchta, as he used to say, 'Swacchta Hin Seva'.

The recent Swacchta Bharat Abhiyaan, India's largest cleanup campaign, aims to fulfil Babu's dream of cleansing India. However, there is more to this cleansing drive than physical cleansing and the need to place more emphasis on the internal cleansing of the individual. So along with clean roads, toilets for a clean India, we need a corruption free society with higher levels of transparency and accountability as well.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that Gandhiji considered education not an end in itself, but a means to an end. It is considered an instrument at the service of the comprehensive development of individual personalities and the needs of the nation. In view of the problems present in society such as unemployment, inequality, unrest among students, moral degradation, terrorism and violence; Gandhi's concept of education seems to be the need of the present. Gandhi felt that education should not only increase knowledge but also develop culture in the heart and in the hands. Another of Gandhi's interests lies in the construction of character. According to him, education without the formation of character was not education. He viewed strong character as the foundation of a good citizen. Gandhiji wanted to build small, self-sufficient communities with ideal citizens who were hard-working, self-respecting, and generous people who lived in a small cooperative and community. He wished that some local handicraft be made as a means of education for children so that they develop their mind, body and soul harmoniously and also meet the needs of their future life. Such educational thoughts of Gandhi are relevant to development and provide solutions to current problems like unemployment, poverty, corruption and many others. In this work we have tried to discuss the educational thought of Gandhi.

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