

Gandhi's Concept of Education

For – Post Graduate, semester- II

Gandhian Philosophy (Phil CC-07)

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Education means the process of continuous enrichment and development of human personality by various means. Gaining knowledge is one of the ways to enrich our mind. Gandhi's concept of education is both practical and dynamic with strong spiritualistic orientation -- a powerful weapon to bring about a silent revolution in mankind.

The Gandhian political system is based on the assumption that there is an element of goodness essentially present in every person. What we need is proper education to bring out this element of goodness.

According to Gandhi, the state has to prepare individuals for the village-republic (*gram ganrajya*), or for making possible the emergence of the ideal government. Therefore, individuals have to be trained and educated in such a manner that the ideal is reached conveniently.

Therefore, according to Gandhi, the goal of education should be moral education or character-building; and the cultivation of a conviction that one should forget everything selfish in working towards great aims. Therefore, Gandhi defines education in the following way: “By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man –body, mind, and spirit.”

Wardha Scheme or Nai Talim

Gandhi’s greatest gift in the sphere of education is known as, ‘The Wardha Scheme of Education’ or ‘*Nai Talim*’. For Gandhi, education is the means for realizing *Sarvodaya* , i.e., upliftment of all. Education, for Gandhi, is a method to bring silent and non-violent revolution in society. According to Gandhi, “An education, which does not teach us to discriminate between good and bad, to assimilate the one and eschew the other, is a misnomer”. Gandhi said that education is the potent weapon to liberate human beings from all vices.

The Wardha Committee report on education in 1937, headed by Dr Zakir Hussain, was based on a series of articles published by Gandhi in *Harijan*. The basic scheme of education has the following important features:

- Mother tongue should be the medium of instruction.
- There should be free, compulsory and universal education within the age group 7 to 14.
- Manual productive skills should be imparted in the children and special emphasis on handicrafts.
- Fusion of the theory and practical, i.e., learning by doing.
- Co-education initially.
- The core aim of basic education is to help students to develop self-sufficiency.
- Education should develop human values in the child.
- It is aimed to achieve the harmonious development of the child's body, mind, heart and soul.
- It is geared to create useful, responsible and dynamic citizens.
- Religion should not interfere with education and students should be taught in such a manner that they respect all religions.

Women's Education

Gandhi was a protagonist of women's education. He wanted to free women from social serfdom. He opposed the purdah system and enforced widowhood. According to Gandhi, it is only education which can

empower a woman in such a manner that she can be able to uphold her natural rights. Education is necessary for enabling women to attain their real position in society.

Methods of Teaching

Aims of education, according to Gandhi, were different from those prevalent during his days. Gandhi disapproved of the then prevalent educational method as defective, and emphasized the need to make crafts and vocations as means of education. He emphasized the importance of the following principles in his methods of teaching.

- To achieve mental development, training of senses and parts of the body should be given utmost importance.
- Reading should precede the teaching of writing.
- Before teaching of alphabets, art training should be given.
- More opportunities should be given to learning by doing.
- Correlation should be established in the teaching methods and learning experiences.
- Basic craft at focal point.
- Teaching through creative and productive activities.

- Learning by living, service and participation, self-experience.
- Oral instruction to personal study.
- All syllabi should be woven around vocational training.

Aims of Education:

Gandhi has divided educational aims into two categories.

1.Immediate Aims of Education:

a) Vocational aim: He wanted that each child should earn while engaged in learning and gain some learning while he is busy with earning.

b) Cultural aim: He considered the cultural aspect of education as more essential than its academic aspect. In the words of Gandhi, “I attach more importance to the cultural factor of education than its literary factor”.

c) Character building: Core principle behind the Gandhian education system was character building. He said that character is the foundation of any education. Weak moral and ethical person will not be able to take the world to new heights. According to Gandhi, the end of all knowledge should be the building up of character.

d) Perfect development aim: Gandhi said, “The real education is that which fully develops the body, mind and soul of children”.

e) Dignity of labour: Gandhi says that after seven years of education (7 to 14 years) the child should be able to earn. The students must learn the dignity of labour, they should not feel shy while doing some work.

f) Training for leadership: Gandhi believed that for successful democracy, good leaders are needed. Education should imbibe, good leadership qualities to the children.

2. Ultimate Aim of Education:

According to Gandhi the ultimate aim of education is to realise God or Self-realization. According to Gandhi “Development of the moral character, development of the whole, all are directed towards the realization of the ultimate reality, the merger of the finite being into the infinite”. It is realizing Godliness in his self.

Gandhi’s contribution to education:

Gandhi’s contribution to education is unique. He was the first Indian who advocated a scheme of education based upon the essential values of Indian culture and civilization. Gandhi’s philosophy of education is naturalistic in its setting, idealistic in its aim and

pragmatic in its method. So, his philosophy of education is a harmonious blending of idealism, naturalism and pragmatism. Gandhi's idea on education is very innovative. His idea of vocational education was so unique that even now a days it is being promoted by the government of India. Thus, Gandhian education scheme is very relevant today, the only need is to give it more attention and chance.