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## GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY: RELEVANCE TO MODERN SOCIETY

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### ABSTRACT

Gandhiji was a great philosopher, Indian lawyer, politician, social activist and writer who became the leader of the nationalist movement against the British rule of India. Gandhi is internationally esteemed for his doctrine of non-violent protest (Satyagraha) to achieve political and social progress. He was arrested and imprisoned many times. Mahatma Gandhi's greatest gift is known as "the Wardha scheme of education" or "Nai Talim". Gandhi says "Purity of personal life is the one indispensable condition for building a sound education." According to T. S. Avinashlingam "Basic education is the last and perhaps the greatest gift of the father of our nation." according to T. N. Siqueira "The Wardha scheme was first sketched in 1937 by M. K. Gandhi in the Harijan published at Wardha." He dedicated his whole life to the service of the motherland, and service of humanity. However, he studied the Bible, Geeta and Quran and came to the conclusion that the principal tenets in all religions are the same. Gandhiji says about mass education as "Mass illiteracy is India's sin and shame and must be liquidated." This research paper to be discussed about the Educational Philosophy of Gandhiji relevance of his thoughts for Modern India.

**Keywords:** Gandhian Philosophy, Educational Experiment, Non-Violence, Satyagrah, Self Discipline, Basic Education, Sevagram Politics, Humanitarian Culture.

### Introduction

#### Statement of the Problem

**"True education must correspond to the surrounding circumstances or it is not a healthy growth." "What is really needed to make democracy function is not knowledge of facts, but right education." "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." "The weak can never forgive"**

**Mahatma Gandhi**

Gandhiji was born on October 2, 1869, at Porbandar, Kathiawar, in Gujarat. Gandhi was youngest of the three sons of Putlibai and Karamchand Gandhi. His childhood name was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. His father was diwan of Rajkot. Gandhi's father, were popularly known as Kaba. Kaba Gandhi was an honest, upright, a strict disciplinarian, and very hot tempered. Gandhi's mother was an extremely religious, very loving and hard-working woman. At school, first the primary at Porbandar, and later the Albert High School, Rajkot. Gandhi showed no particular brilliance, played no games and avoided company. At school, he was slow, hesitant and shy. He read little beyond text books, but respected his teacher, though, even at his bidding. He would not copy from his neighbour's answers. To be at school at the stroke of the hour and to run back home as soon as the school closed- that was his daily habit. According to him he literally ran back, because he could not bear to talk to anybody. He was even afraid lest anyone should poke fun at me. He wore the traditional Indian dhoti and shawl, woven with yarn hand-spun on a charkha. Thus, he took for granted ahimsa, vegetarianism, fasting for self-purification. Gandhiji was married with Kasturba at the age of 13 Years. The values of truthfulness, honesty, integrity was instilled in him from the very beginning. He was mortally afraid of the dark, of ghosts and spirits, and also of snakes and scorpions. His father died in 1887. He passed the matriculation examination in 1887. After the matriculation Gandhi joins the Samaldas College. But everything was difficult for him in that college. At the end of the first term, he returned home. When 18 years old (in 1888), he was sent to London to study law where he remained for three years. He had promised his mother that he would not eat non-vegetarian food, or drink alcohol, and he remained true to his word.

He returned to India in 1891, after the completion of his studies. He thinks forward to meeting his mother, and giving her the good news, but he was to be sorely disappointed. When he was away in England, his mother had passed away. The news of her death had been withheld from him because his brother thought he would be mentally disturbed, and his studies would be affected. After qualifying as a Barrister, he set up his practice as a lawyer, in Rajkot. As he did not get much work there, he came to Bombay. Even in Bombay he did not get any cases. Finally, he got one case. He prepared well for it, but in court he was unable to present it satisfactorily. Disappointed, he felt that he would never make a successful lawyer. Just at that time Gandhi's elder brother managed to get him a case. He was asked to represent Mr. Abdulla, a rich businessman in South Africa. After much deliberation, Gandhiji agreed to accept that case. In April, 1893, he went to South Africa in connection with a civil law case of a firm Abdulla and handled it very well. He remained there for 21 years. Gandhi in South Africa developed his political views, ethics and politics. In 1915 Gandhi returned for India. At the



request of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, his "Political Guru" he joined the Indian National Congress. In 1930 Time magazine made him "Man of the Year". In 1934 Gandhi resigned from Congress party membership. Gandhi returned to active politics again in 1936, with the Nehru presidency. M. K. Gandhi is also called Bapu (Gujarati: endearment for "father", "papa") or Gandhiji or Nekad Fakar or unofficially called the Father of the Nation or father of the modern India. Origin of this title is traced back to a radio address (on Singapore radio) on 6 July 1944, where Subhash Chandra Bose addressed Gandhi as "The Father of the Nation".

On 28 April 1947, Sarojini Naidu during a conference also referred Gandhi as "Father of the Nation". He wanted to establish Ram Rajya which he identified with justice, peace, happiness and welfare of all. Gandhi always loved his people- Muslims as much as Hindus. Even when Pakistan was formed, he spoke for the Muslims of India who were comparatively so few in numbers. Many Hindus thought that he favoured the Muslims too much. Nathuram Godse held misguided ideas of this kind. On 30th January 1948, in Delhi, when Gandhi set out to attend a prayer meeting, he was shot dead by an assailant Nathuram Vinayak Godse advocate of Hindu nationalism. His last words were 'Hey Ram'. People all over the world paid rich tribute to Gandhi. He was murdered, yet he was calm and peaceful even in death. It seemed as if he were sleeping. The great Mahatma's life had come to an end! The place near Yamuna River where he was cremated is the Raj Ghat memorial in New Delhi.

### Objectives of the Study

A brief study based on life, philosophical views, educational views and works of Mahatma Gandhi.

### Research Method

The research method which is used in present study is based on Philosophical research method.

### Factors That Influenced Gandhi's Philosophy of Life and Philosophy of Education

Following were the chief influences which had a great effect on Gandhi's philosophy of life and philosophy of education.

1. Mother's Influence: Gandhi was influenced by his devout Vaishnava Hindu mother. She taught him the lessons of simplicity and piety.
2. Three great thinkers
  - i) Rayachand bhairavji Patel who taught Gandhi the first lesson in non-violence.
  - ii) Ruskin, through his book 'Unto the last' drew his attention to the principle of dignity of labour.
  - iii) Leo Tolstoy's 'The kingdom of the God is within you', greatly influenced his spiritual outlook.
3. Gandhi's Ashram or Farm: The Phoenix settlement, the Tolstoy Farm and the Sabarmati Ashram etc.
4. Other influence: The stories of Shrivastava and King Harishchandra, Ramayana, Advaita Vedanta, Hinduism, Vaishnavism, Buddhism, Christianity, reforms and teachings of the Swaminarayan tradition of Hinduism. During his stay in South Africa Gandhi read translated texts of Bible, and Quran. The Bhagavad Gita works as his spiritual dictionary and greatest single influence on his life. He called the Geeta as Geeta mata. He also read the translated form of Manusmriti in his childhood.

### Literary Work of Mahatma Gandhi

He was not only a great Mahatma, freedom fighter, a social reformer but a great writer also. For decades he edited several newspapers including Harijan in Gujarati, in Hindi and in the English language; Indian Opinion, Young India while in South Africa and Navajivan, a Gujarati monthly, on his return to India. He writes My experiments with truth (autobiography), Satyagraha, Hind Swaraj or Indian home rule, a political pamphlet, and a paraphrase in Gujarati of John Ruskin's 'Unto This Last', Key to health, Constructive programme, The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi, All men are brothers, My religion and India of my dreams, and collected works of Mahatma Gandhi has hundred volumes having his correspondence with Govt. His other important books are: After 15 August, Mangal Prabhakar, Pragna- Prawachan, Christian Mission, Athithi Ki Raah Par, Anashakti Yog, Bhramacharya, Mere Samkaaleen, Ashramwaashi, Geeta Bodh, Neeti Dharm, Sarvodaya, Bahino se, Basic education, true education, to the students, towards new education, task before Indian students, medium of instruction and tasks for India. Gandhi also wrote extensively on education in 'Harijan' - a paper founded by him.

### Gandhi's Philosophy of Life

Two words are fundamental in his philosophy of life: 'Truth' and 'non-violence'. Mahatma Gandhi has observed, "Ahimsa and truth are like two sides of a coin". According to him "Ahimsa is the means, Truth the end." Gandhi's thoughts, values and principles of life have been well reflected in his scheme of Basic education in particular and in his philosophy of education. Gandhi was greatly respected for his simple living, high thinking, and fearless attitude. Gandhi was believed in "one God" and in his absolute control. The fearlessness is essential for truth and non-violence. Gandhi believed thus:



## **Brahma Satyam, Jagat Spurthihi. Satya Shodhanam Janmaha.**

[Cosmic principles are the truth. Universe around provides the inspiration. Purpose of life is to discover the truth.]

Gandhi believed in the human brotherhood and in the establishment of “a universal community of free persons without artificial barrier of caste, creed, wealth and power”. This community will be a “spiritual society” based on love, truth, justice and non-violence. Mahatma Gandhi sacrificed his life for establishing Rama Rajya- a classless society in which there will be no distinction between high and low, rich and poor. His philosophy is known as Gandhi philosophy, Gandhism or Sarvodey philosophy. Service for humanity was the core of his philosophy.

### **Silent Features**

1. Truth: Truth is the Means to God realisation which is the ultimate aim of life. God is life, truth and light. He says ‘Truth is God and God is Truth.’ Thus, truth in Gandhi's philosophy is "God".
2. Non-Violence: According to Gandhi devotion to truth can only be practised through devotion and strict adherence to Ahimsa. Gandhi says “Ahimsa is complete absence of ill-will against all the lives. In its dynamic condition, it means conscious suffering. Non-violence is, in its active form, goodwill towards all life. It is pure love.” Although Gandhi was not the originator of the principle of non-violence, he was the first to apply it in the political field on a large scale.
3. Fearlessness: Gandhi's non-violence was based on two factors-fearlessness and satyagarh. “Fearlessness connotes freedom from all external fear- fear of diseases, bodily injury and death, or dispossession, of losing one's nearest and dearest, of losing reputation or giving offence, and so on.”
4. Satyagraha: Satyagraha is a synthesis of the Sanskrit words Satya (truth) and Agraaha (insistence on). Thus, satyagarh means ‘insistence on truth’. Satyagarh is change of heart by self-suffering, by adherence to truth and non-violence. According to Gandhi Satyagraha does not depend on outside help, it derives all its strength from within. Satyagarh means holding fast to truth. After possessing the quality of courage or fearlessness only an individual can start Satyagarh for fighting against any evil-social, political or economic. Mahatma Gandhi has defined Satyagarh as “the beliefs in the power of truth, the power of love by which we can overcome evil through self-suffering and self-sacrifice”. He says “So the Doctrine came to mean vindication of truth, not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's self.” His first significant attempt in India at leading mass Satyagraha was the non-cooperation movement from 1920–1922.
5. Self-discipline and Self-purification: Gandhi always held the high ideals of purity, sacrifice and service.

### **Gandhi and Idealism**

Like all other idealists, Gandhi believes in the harmonious development of personality and advocates those different types of social culture and physical activities may be undertaken to achieve this end.

### **Gandhi and Naturalism**

Gandhi agrees with Rousseau that the child is good by nature and this face must be kept in view by us while planning his education. He advocates freedom for the child. He greatly stresses the importance of educating the child in natural surroundings. He minimises the importance of text-book. The Basic system is based on activity of the child.

### **Gandhi and Pragmatism**

He has an experimental approach towards life. Like Dewey, Gandhi believed that reality is that which can be verified. He says the child should learn from the experiments of life. The project method of the pragmatism and the Basic scheme of Gandhi have many common points.

### **Gandhi and Realism**

Gandhi thoughts about the Progress of men, society and countries physical development was necessary. Education related to life, education made to behavioural, education made with the help of any industry, education made to self-dependent etc., made him realism.

### **Gandhi's Educational Experiments**

Gandhi was highly pragmatic in his outlook. He believed that truth is that which bears out in testable situations. Likewise, he tested all his educational ideas through experiments in education and then advocated them. His educational philosophy evolved through these experiments. They are the outcomes of long years of his sustained thinking and experience of nearly 40 years both in South Africa and India.



## South Africa

In South Africa Gandhi did not send his children to European schools because of his disbelief in English medium education. He himself taught them through their mother-tongue, Gujarati. A Quaker mission in South Africa attempted to convert him to Christianity. Gandhi joined them in their prayers and debated Christian theology with them, but refused conversion stating he did not accept the theology therein or that Christ was the only son of God.

1. **Phoenix Settlement:** The Phoenix Settlement, established by Gandhi near Durban in 1904. Gandhi started a school in South Africa with 30 children. Instruction was given both in literacy aspects and training in agriculture and painting. It was an ideal school-workshop wherein both theory and practice were integrated.
2. **The Tolstoy Farm:** Tolstoy farm was built by Gandhi on land donated by Hermann Kallenbach in 1910, as a colony for housing satyagrahis families and proved to be an ideal laboratory for Gandhi's educational experiments. People belonging to various religion; Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians lived together. Some Hindu girls were also there. The activities which the young contributed their energies to at Tolstoy Farm included general labouring, cooking, scavenging, sandal- making, simple carpentry and messenger work. The medium of instruction was mother-tongue. English was also taught. Children learnt by doing. Textbooks were not used.

## India

After reaching in India from South Africa he continued his own work on education along with struggle for Indian independence movement and social evils.

1. Shanthiniketan: Gandhi stayed sometime with Rabindranath Tagore at his Shanthiniketan and with his group from South Africa.
2. Satyagraha Ashrama: The Satyagraha Ashram was founded on May 25, 1915 in Ahmedabad at Kochrab, when Gandhi returned from South Africa, with 25 inmates. A school was attached with the Ashram which Gandhi wanted it to become a model school. Training was given to the members to qualify themselves for service of the country. This service was to be consistent with universal welfare. Here he worked for the Harizen's situation, village industries, other social progress and creative work.
3. Sabarmati Ashram: The Satyagraha Ashram was shifted to Sabarmati, Ahmedabad, and Gujarat due to outbreak of plague in former place. Gandhi stayed at the Ashram from 1915 to 1933 later on the Ashram was disbanded. Sabarmati had very good natural surroundings. Weaving was the principal activity here.
4. Champaran: Gandhi attempted proper village education at champaran. He opened six primary schools in six villages. The chosen on the condition that the villagers shall provide free board and lodging facilities to the teachers. The 3R's, formal grammar, cleaning and good manners were also taught to the children.
5. Sevagram Ashram in India: He came to Wardha in 1934, at the invitation of Jannalal Bajaj. In April 1936, Gandhi established his residence in the village Shegaon, which he renamed as Sevagram, which means 'village of service'. Sevagram has become an inspiring place. Many decisions on import and national matters and movements were taken at Sevagram. In spite of many practical difficulties, Gandhiji decided to settle here.
6. Wardha scheme: Gandhi launched a new scheme in 1937 to be applied on a nation-wide scale. It was earlier propounded in the columns of the 'Harijan'. It was a revolt against established orthodoxies in education. An All-India national education conference was held at Wardha on 22 and 23 October 1937. Gandhi presided over this conference which was attended by Dr. Zakir Hussain, K.T. Shah, Vinoba, Mahadev Desai and Kaka Kalelkar. This conference is also known as Wardha education conference. The following resolutions were passed:
  - a. Free and compulsory education is provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale.
  - b. The medium of instruction be mother-tongue.
  - c. The main centre of seven years education program must be hand-craft based.
  - d. Process of education to centre on a basic craft-manual, productive work and the environment of the child.
  - e. This system of education gradually to cover the remuneration of teachers.

All India National Education Conference appointed a committee in the presidency of Dr. Zakir Hussain for above thoughts. Committee presented his first report on December, 1937 is Haripura congress conference and second report on April, 1938. Haripura congress conference accepted committee report which report is known as Wardha scheme on Basic National education. T.N. Siqueira says that "The Wardha Scheme may be considered the boldest and completest attempt so far made to solve the great problem of India's illiteracy." Dr. S. N. Mukerji says that "Nai Talim is child-centered education, and the child learns through activity." In Basic schools do work about 5-hour, 30 minutes, from which 3-hour, 20-minute times for craft centered or fundamental craft. Gandhi writes that "Basic education links the children, whether of the cities or of the villages, to all that is best and lasting in India." Acharya Kriplani says that "The scheme of basic education is Gandhiji's latest fad in the domain of education."



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## Gandhi's Philosophy of Education

Gandhi's Philosophy of Education is a dynamic concept. He believed that education should bring about the development of the whole man. He regarded as one of the masters of the mankind, one of the great teachers of the human society. His educational thoughts were relevant to life, needs and aspirations of the emerging Indian society. He wanted that all teaching should be carried on through concrete life situations relating to industry or to social and physical environment, so that whatever the child learns becomes assimilated into his growing activity. A unique feature of Gandhi educational philosophy was the "application of the law of non-violence in the training of the child as a prospective citizen of the world." He criticised the existing British colonial system of education, determined the true nature of education and its purpose, suggested a new pedagogy and also build a comprehensive system of education suitable for the uplift of the masses which is known as "New education", "National education", "Basic education" or "the rural education" or "the wardha scheme of education". Basic education system is the behavioural form of his educational philosophy. The word 'Basic' is derived from the word 'Base' which means the bottom or the foundation of a thing upon which the whole thing rests or is made.

## Meaning of Education

Gandhi believed in the total development of the human personality through education. He advocated that education should start with hand. His emphasis was more on 3H's (head, heart and hand) than on 3R's (reading, writing and arithmetic). His concept of education means "an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man-body, mind and spirit". He viewed education as a quest for truth and non-violence. Gandhi emphasised the craft-centered education. Gandhi said that "literacy should never be the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and women can be educated". He felt that true education calls for a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs and mental faculties. Gandhi gives importance both of individual and society. Gandhi hence mentioned in the Young India dated 26th March, "A nation cannot advance without the units, of which it is composed, advancing and conversely, no individual can advance without the nation of which it is a part also advancing." True education, according to Gandhi, is that which drawout and stimulates the intellectual and physical faculties of the children. Gandhiji kept ultimate aim and immediate aims of education. In the definition of true education Gandhi explained freedom or Vimukti as true goal of education. We shall discuss here all the aims of education as follows:

## Importance of Gandhi's Educational Thoughts in Modern Era

Gandhi's ideas on education are based on the study of psychological, sociological and economic principles, which is very useful in modern era. Gandhi's ideas on education not only prescribe new methods and techniques of education but also a new way of life. A scheme based on such foundations is certainly progressive and dynamic. Basic education is related to life. This is modern psychological maxims. It is based on the socio-economic structure which is very useful thought for poor students. Education should fit the child rather than that the child should fit education, is an educational maxim accepted as the days of Comenius, Rousseau and Pestalozzi. In spite of the repeated assertion of these principles, in the case of India it found expression only in the basic education. Nowadays in modern India the contact between school and community are decreasing so Gandhi's concept of intimate contact between the school and the local community helpful for increasing. Gandhi's thoughts; child works at his own pace and plans and executes in his own way which maxims is used in modern education system. In modern era, Childs's curiosities are satisfied with the help of Gandhi's teaching methods: learning by doing, correlation, experimentation methods and work experience. His method shrawan manan nidhhityasan (listening, thinking and practice) used in yoga in present time. The teacher of basic education has to be more active than the traditional teacher. The most distinctive features of basic education are correlation.

Its emphasis is on co-operation as against competition. Basic education gives opportunities for self-expression which is related to modern psychological concept child-centered education. Basic education is Combination of Naturalism, Pragmatism and Idealism. He accepts that the discipline and training will be must if they wanted to develop their powers to the fullest. Gandhi advocated the ideals of truth, non-violence and moral values to achieve the ultimate truth of self-realisation. These values are important to develop character and moral values in student in present time, because in the present time students are more indisciplined. His message was honoured by the Kothari Commission (1964-66) in its recommendation for work-experience in school education as an integral part of the curriculum. Advocating work experience, the report observed that: "In our country, a revolutionary experiment was launched by Mahatma Gandhi in the form of basic education. The concept of work-experience is essential similar. It may be described as a redefined of his educational thinking in terms of a society launched on the road to industrialisation." Even now it is accommodated in the form of socially useful productive work. Craft is correlated with knowledge, life and environment. Co-education is there. This concept is useful for modern developing India because there is not available of much teachers, separate buildings, laboratories, libraries and computer labs etc. There is no verbalism as it is based on an activity and is full of direct experiences. Nowadays there are large demands of technical education such as B. Tech., M. Tech., B. C. A., M. C. A., B. B. A. Etc. This is related to Gandhi's craft-centered vocational skills development. Basic education is highly psychological, being related to the child's immediate life. Gandhi also addressed the issue of free and compulsory education. The application of Gandhi's concept of education was first suggested for children between the ages of 7 and 14



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by Indian constitution. This was later on extended to all the stages. He opposed corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is banned by Indian government in present time according to RTE Act 2009.

Gandhi laid the foundation of a scheme of national education that was suited to our needs, requirements, genius, and aspirations for the future. It encompassed the physical, intellectual and spiritual faculties of the individual and their harmonious development. Gandhi speaks and struggle for untouchability, religion, mass education and women education in India, which results are shown in front of us. Gandhi worried about illiteracy of India. So, they want to literate Indian peoples. Nowadays Indian literateracy rate is high approx 74.04%. Whatever may be its merits and demerits, we should not forget that education to Gandhi meant inspiring the children with a new ideology based upon personal purity and unselfish service, resulting in the creation of a society based upon truth and love. Gandhi formulated his scheme of basic education in the context of poverty, illiteracy, backwardness, frustration, and the degeneration of our masses, resulting from the disruption of traditional social institutions and the destruction of the small-scale cottage industry. The basic educational scheme was an essential ingredient of Gandhi's plan to eliminate the rural-urban divide and redress the structural and socio-economic imbalances that were abound in Indian society.

### Conclusion

Gandhi educational philosophy is found to be sound and scientific psychologically as well as sociologically. It is also quite adequate pedagogically and biologically. By emphasising craft and manual work in his scheme of education, Gandhi felt whole personality of the child can be improved. Any kind of productive craft would involve planning, experimenting, coordinating and evaluation. This would develop his intellectual powers along with physical ones. Learning by doing is immensely conducive to the coordinated development of the child. This will enable students to fulfil many of their psychological needs and creative urges like satisfaction, security, self-confidence, self-respect and self-expression. The vital principle of correlation will promote a well-integrated and well-balanced education as well as an all-round development of the personality. Gandhi educational philosophy was fully in accordance with his non-violence and democratic social order. Gandhi's democratic society will be a "Sarvodaya Samaj" in which there will be social justice, peace, non-violence and modern humanism. M. S. Patel has rightly observed, "Gandhi ji's philosophy of education is naturalistic in its setting, idealistic in its aim and pragmatic in its method and programme of work. All these tendencies are not separate in its philosophy. These fuse into a unity, giving rise to a theory of education which would suit the need of the day and satisfy the loftiest aspiration of human soul". It can be said that he has presupposed a perfect being as God and he asserted strongly that everyone is capable of achieving this perfection because this perfect being or God is not his personal God and an abstract reality but it is the Truth of daily life, which can be experienced by leading the best course of life. Gandhiji Philosophy and his beliefs total depend upon Satyagraha and non-violence. Its destructive impulses for non-violence against the terrorism, philosophy of non-violence has great relevancy it contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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