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INDIAN BASIC EDUCATION SYSTEM: THE PERSPECTIVES OF MK GANDHI

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Abstract

Education is the basis of all development of Human Resource. The most prominent Indian educational thinker, Mr. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi defines it as an enlightening journey throughout the walks of life towards wisdom. He devised his distinct & dynamic philosophy of basic education, including some unique curricular aspects. Today's India had made tremendous progress. However, it had fallen short of inculcating values and morality as propounded by Gandhi into its gen-next. So, in 2K15, instead of finding an Indian identity in education, we are again marching to the West to teach us.

Key-Words: Education, Basic Education, Gandhi

INTRODUCTION

Education dispels darkness and brings light to life. It is the bedrock of all Human Resource Development, a stepping stone for the one-world march of culture. Though its definitions, interpretations and applications are different for different sections of society, education is a continuous and dynamic life-process providing the emancipation from ignorance.

Cambridge English Dictionary defines education as the process of teaching or learning, especially in a school or college, or the knowledge that you get from this. Oxford Dictionary stipulates that education is the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university. Merriam Webster Dictionary defines it as the knowledge, skill, and understanding that you get from attending a school, college, or university. Thus almost all centers of readymade knowledge equalize education with instructions received in an organized institution, turning the pupil into a moving storehouse of information.

In contrast, philosophers define education as an enlightening journey throughout the walks of life towards wisdom. The ancient Philosophy of Education in India says "Dhio yo no prachodayat," endow us with the illumination of education, leading to life-changing wisdom. It defines 'guru' as a person who 'dispels the darkness.' It defines "acharya" as a person who inspires by exemplary leadership through his conduct. The original name of India, "Bharata" is derived from Sanskrit words 'Bhya' meaning 'knowledge' and 'ratah' meaning 'occupied.' Thus India is a land where the inhabitants are always occupied in search of knowledge.



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Modern India was the workplace of one of the greatest philosophers, **Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi**, who developed a distinct but dynamic philosophy of education along with unique curricular aspects.

Gandhi was born in 1869 and was assassinated in 1948. He was a social reformer whose life was immersed in truthfulness, non-violence, spirituality, universal brotherhood and the pleasure of renunciation. He was bestowed with the title “Mahatma” (The Great Soul) by Rabindranath Tagore. He was greatly influenced by his own life-experiences and perceptions of the then prevalent global environment.

GANDHI & HIS PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

1. Gandhi’s ‘*mysticism*’ springs from his unflinching faith in God.
2. Gandhi’s ‘*Spirituality*’ originates from his conception of religion as a moral force.
3. Gandhi’s “*dynamism*” lays emphasis on fair means to achieve the ends, i.e. the elimination of inequality and injustice.
4. Gandhi’s “*Idealism*” stipulates purity in personal and public life with insistence on truth and non-violence.
5. Gandhi’s “*practicality*” approach professes learning-by-doing vocational skills

GANDHI’S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Gandhi’s “idealism” conceived education as a fair and dynamic force leading to a definite goal. For him, education is a struggle for freedom — freedom from ignorance, inefficiency, insecurity, oppression, exploitation, injustice and alien rule. In ‘Harijan’ on 31-7-1937, Gandhi says, “By education I mean an all round drawing out of the best in child and man—body mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education not even the beginning. It is one of the means whereby man and women can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education.” Gandhi believed that development of goodness in the pupil leads to development of a fair and just society. He was mainly concerned with the education of children between 7 & 14 years of age. He said, “My plan to impart primary education through the medium of village handicrafts like spinning and carding, etc, is thus conceived as the spearhead of a silent non-violent social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequences. It will provide a healthy and moral basis of relationship between the city and the village and thus go a long way towards eradicating some of the worst evils of present social insecurity and poisoned relationship between the classes. It will check the progressive decay of our villages and lay foundation for a just social order in which there is no unnatural division between the ‘have’ and ‘have-nots’ and everybody is assured of a living wage and right to freedom. Lastly by obviating the necessity for highly specialized talent, it would place the destiny of the masses, as it were, in their own hands.”



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GANDHI'S AIMS OF EDUCATION - 'KARMA-YOGA'

1. **Skill Development** : Productive & Practical training to equip everyone with skills to earn his livelihood. Utilitarian Education is a life-building process. It emancipates from hunger and poverty. It leads to **Self Reliance**, i.e. individual & societal development so as to attain freedom from ignorance, injustice, and inequality
2. **Character Building** on Mass Scale. On 22-6-1940, Gandhi declared in *Harijan*, "Man is neither mere intellect, nor the gross animal body, nor the heart or soul alone. A proper and harmonious combination of all the three is required for making of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education."
3. **Morality** : Understanding the Moral & Ethical Purpose of Life
4. **Value Education** : Indoctrination of Spirituality, Truthfulness & Social Equity
5. **Freedom** from British Rule
6. **Incultation of Self-discipline** :Gandhi advocated discipline through self-control. It is synthesis of freedom and internal control. Self-discipline arises from restrain, fearfulness, usefulness and self-sacrifice.
7. **Women education** with home craft in curriculum
8. **Mother Tongue** as the preferred medium of instruction

GANDHI'S EXPERIMENT WITH EDUCATION - WARDHA SCHEME

Gandhi devised a revolutionary educational system focusing to attain economic freedom of the vast rural population. His prime target was children from up to 14 years. At his behest, in 1937, National Educational Conference was organized at Wardha. The report of the Dr.Zakir Hossain Committee along with the detailed syllabus was published in 1938. It was accepted by Indian National Congress in 1939 at Haripura session. Its basic vision was :

- Free and compulsory education for seven years.
- Mother Tongue is the medium of instruction.
- Education through manual, purposeful, and productive work; preferably value-centric and culturally acceptable handicraft

The basic features of the Wardha scheme could be summarized into two relevant factors.

A]. Education is imparted through a purposeful & productive activity like handicraft, at least during the first seven years of basic education. It balances passive theoretical instructions. It promotes active practical training and self-education.

B]. Sale of products of craftwork should make education system self-supporting.



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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Numerous Studies on Educational thoughts and experiments of Gandhi showed that the thinker perceived that education is the most powerful weapon that can be used for socio-economic progress, material advancement, political evolution and moral development of an individual and the society. Their concepts of education were also commonly founded on ethics, morality and spirituality. Gandhi's Education was not only the eradication of illiteracy but learning-by-doing vocational skills in a disciplined environment. His education system greatly emphasizes the culture of peace, sincere work, and dedication to the cause of the nation, social awareness, friendliness, righteousness, economic advancement, physical improvement and socio-cultural progress; based on work-centered education.

Kumar, Ravindra (1999) showed that for Gandhi, the prime aim of education is to make a man self-dependent; the purpose of education is to make the one efficient and skilful; and the objective of education is to guide and lead him to the pathway to progress. He said "Education can help mould and shape the human body, mind and character in such a manner that they may act as the means to achieve joy and efficiency." Romesh Thapar says, "Gandhi's utopianism arose out of his love for humanity. "Gandhi was humanist...from the first moment of his self-consciousness," Gandhi found the country was poor, disunited and weak. It was under alien domination where original Indian education, culture and ideals were neglected. On the basis of this observation, he forwarded the scheme of basic education with a vision on the aims, methods, and curriculum. Preet (2006) concluded that Gandhi emphasized upon harmonious development of women through education. He recommended domestic science for women in their curriculum. He laid stress on the mother-tongue as medium of instruction. Indian system of education is based on Morality with aspects like faith, non-violence, concept of religion and discipline. Though India had made tremendous progress, it had perhaps, fallen short of inculcating values and morality propounded by Gandhi.

EDUCATION IN INDIA 2K15

As on today, it is evident that the Indian Policy-makers on Education did not adhere to neither of these two thinkers. The reasons may be

1. Demise of these two stalwarts without strong legacy :

In pre-independent India the provincial governments tried to implement the Wardha Commission program in Bihar, Mumbai and UP at to some extent in Orissa. The post-Independence Congress govt. too adopted to implement this concept of utilitarian philosophy of basic education as a National Policy. However, after Gandhiji's death, the concept was awarded a quiet unceremonious burial. The later generation did not like this idea and no will to take up the huge task of re-invetning the education system in India.

2. Practical problems :

Logistic problems : Indian Govt. did not have resources to dismantle the running education system inherited from the colonial rulers



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3. Changing educational Philosophy of the world : The world's perception about definition, philosophy, application and utility of education has undergone a sea change since 1948, the year of Gandiji's demise. Indira Gandhi said, "Education is a liberating force and in our time, it is also a democratizing force cutting across all the barriers of class and caste smoothing out all inequalities imposed by birth and other factors."

CONCLUSION:

Mahatma Gandhi's principle on education was conceived for upliftment of the rural, rustic, and underprivileged population. Its implementation at a national scale needs a gigantic reform-movement. Hence it could not practically be revived in Post-Independence India, even after 68 years. So, in 2K15, instead of finding an Indian identity in education, we are again marching to the West to teach us.

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