

A Study on Gandhiji's Basic Education and its Relevance in the Modern Education

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ABSTRACT

The modern educational system which has been adopted in India is badly equipped to achieve the overall objective of humane, scientific, and peaceful social order. It does not provide them wealthy opportunities for their all-round development to make them self-reliant. Nowadays the students are passing examinations and earning their degrees with first or higher divisions, but most of them are unable to become self-reliant and incapable to face the challenges. So, to overcome this condition Mahatma Gandhi has attempted to explore a system of education which is called 'Basic education' or 'Nai Talim'. This system of education conforms with his philosophy of life and values. In the Basic Education system, knowledge must be related to activity and practical experience. Gandhi realized that basic education was an essential component of the structural and socio-economic imbalances that were badly affected. His idea of basic education not only changed the educational system of India but also led to a social revolution. This paper aims to understand the Basic education system and its impact on the modern education system.

KEYWORDS: Mahatma Gandhi, Basic Education, Nai Talim, Handicrafts, Social Change, self-reliance

INTRODUCTION

The field of education is a social institution it prepares each and every human being as a good member of family, community, and society. The main aim of education is to make the people better and to let them develop their skills and confidence. It helps students to face many challenges in their life and also helps them to earn. The more knowledge one gains, the more opportunities open for the individuals to achieve better possibilities in career and personal growth. It opens the mind for different situations, which helps to solve problems of life effectively and to think critically about the world. However, the modern education system fails to prepare the learners effectively to tackle the problems of the modern world. The present education system failed to the individual as well as social development. It is in this context that Mahatma Gandhi's scheme of education is an alternative measure to establish a new social order. Gandhiji's principle on basic education would be able to inspire the whole world with his ideas of truth, nonviolence, peace, and love. This scheme was popularised in the named Wardha Scheme or Basic Education. As a nationalist leader, he fully realized that the British system of education could not serve the socio-economic need of the country. So, he had developed a complete philosophy of education for the whole country based on self-reliance. He had worked out it after a good deal of experimentation based on his philosophy of truth and non-violence. It preserves traditional knowledge and talents. It encourages self-employment which is the best method to fight against current unemployment situations.

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Objectives: The objectives of the study are to:

- Understand and review Gandhiji's principle of basic education.
- Highlight some important features of Gandhiji's basic education and its relevance with the modern education system.

Methodology:

The study was conducted based on the method of document review following the qualitative approach of research. The information presented in this paper was collected from primary and secondary sources like various books, Research Article, Magazines, Research Journal, and E-journal. The methods utilized for gathering information documented review, archival investigation, Representative themes that were found across materials gathered were coded and analysed for presentation. In this study, Gandhiji's Basic Education and its relevance in the modern education system, have been analysed. For that, some documents which are related to Gandhiji's life used by researchers. Each document's contents are examined in detail by researchers.

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. He never called education as a medium of formal literacy. Literacy cannot be the central education. It is only one of the means whereby a man or woman can be educated. He takes education in a broad perspective it included two basic objectives, acquisition of knowledge and a sense of freedom.

Knowledge begins with questioning or healthy inquisitiveness. This is the prerequisite for any kind of learning. Further Gandhiji in his philosophy of education suggests that education can liberate a person. By liberation, he means freedom from all servitude. Gandhi takes education as a lifelong process and does not limit it to formal schooling or acquiring degrees. It stands for the all- round and integral development of the human personality. It attached the physical, intellectual and spiritual potentiality of the individual and their harmonious development.

Mahatma Gandhi proposed his scheme of Basic Education (Nai Talim) in a well- formulated approach to education in 1937 in his news- paper 'Harijan'. To discuss different aspects of the scheme of education, an All- India education conference was held in Wardha on 22nd and 23rd October 1937. The conference is called Wardha Educational Conference and Gandhiji himself presided over the conference.

After serious discussions, the following four resolutions were passed in the conference-

1. Free and compulsory education is to be provided for seven years on a nationwide scale.
2. Mother tongue should be the medium of instruction.
3. The process of education throughout this period should have some manual and productive work and ability should be developed to engage them with handicraft work according to the environment of the child.
4. The proposed system of education would gradually be able to generate remuneration of the teachers.

"Learning by doing" was the fundamental principle of Basic education. Gandhiji believed in action and hence his concepts of basic education can be classified as activity method or practical method. It was mainly a method of co- relation between theory and practice activity through craft like gardening, weaving, spinning, carpentry, etc. He believes in establishing a balance between the body, the mind, and spirit. This is best done when education is given through handicrafts. The other specialty is that it is designed to be wholly self- supporting. It does not, therefore, demand an expenditure of millions on education.

Draft of Basic Education:

Initially, basic education was approved in the following form:

1. Compulsory and free primary education should be provided to the children in the 7 to 14 years age group.
2. The medium of education should be the mother tongue.
3. The whole education should be based on some basis handicraft or cottage industry.
4. The handicraft should be selected on the basis of the abilities of children and regional needs.
5. The articles made by children should be utilized and economic profit be earned with which school expenditure should be met.
6. Handicrafts be taught in such a way as to enable the children to earn their livelihood.
7. Besides economic importance in the education of handicrafts, its social and scientific importance should be given a place.

Some important features of Gandhiji's Basic Education:

1. According to Gandhiji and his philosophy, the important features of basic education may be listed below.
2. **All- round development-** Gandhiji repeatedly emphasized that education should offer an opportunity

to a child for all- round development of his or her personality. He said, "true education is that which draws out and stimulated the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of children." In his lifetime, he severely criticized the present system of education as a meaningless and wasteful exercise for children.

3. **Free and compulsory education for all-** Gandhiji wanted the basic education should be free and compulsory for all boys and girls between the ages of seven to fourteen. According to Gandhiji, "I am a firm believer 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 7 and 14 years. In primary level education should be imparted in student's mother tongue. A free primary universal education should be provided for all children in the village. This will make the backbone of a country strong. This concept was implemented in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.
4. **Craftcentred education-** Local handicraft was the means or medium of basic education. The craft was the prime subject, through which knowledge of the other subjects was communicated. The craft was the mediator between the child and the practical world. Gandhiji emphasized on craft- centred education which had great importance in the Indian scenario. In the Indian scenario, craft would make education self- supportive as it is not possible to educate all citizens and provide them government jobs. So, the craft centred education would help to provide employment opportunity to all citizens and make them self- sufficient. According to Gandhiji, the method of training the mind through village handicrafts from the beginning would develop a disciplined mind. Such practical productive work in education would to break down the existing barriers of discrimination between manual and intellectual workers. The scheme would increase the productive capacity and utilize their leisure profitably also.
5. **Mother tongue as medium of instruction-** One of the glaring defects in the existing system of education was that education was being imparted through the medium of a foreign language. So Gandhiji emphasized mother- tongue both as a subject of study and a medium of instruction. This is quite natural and academically sound. It enlarges the capacity to understand and to express new concept in the field of education. It also develops clarity of thinking.
6. **Development of creativity and critical thinking-** Gandhiji emphasized on the principle of 'learning by doing' which stimulates the individual's mind to think creatively and critically. His great emphasis on work- culture to the students from the initial stage was to enable the students to start producing while learning. So, his primary aim of basic education was to utilize head, heart, and hand rather than concentrating on reading or writing only. According to Gandhiji, "By education I mean an all- round drawing out of the best in child and man- body, mind and spirit". Literacy could not be the main aim of education.
7. **Emphasis on collaborative learning-** True education is a lifelong process that helps in cultivating the spirit of co- operation, tolerance, collaboration, and a sense of responsibility. All these qualities are required for the

development of human personality which can create a pleasant balance between the individuals and the social aim of education. Gandhiji always emphasized on collaborative learning. Craftwork helps a child to acquire collaborative learning skills and to realize the value of honest labour.

8. **Emphasis on moral education-** Gandhiji thought that peace is essential for human life which can be attained through education. Peace can be attained only through morality and ethics. According to him, education must be based on ethics and morality. Gandhiji advised to all students to consider morality and honesty as essential parts of their education.
9. **Emphasis on character building-** Education is the most powerful weapon to build genuine characters of a student. The goal of education should consist of character- building. The character- building includes the moral, intellectual and social behaviour of a student under all circumstances. A student should develop personality, compassion, kindness, fair- mindedness and the spirit of dedication by virtue of education.
10. **Development of self- reliance and patriotism-** The main purpose of basic education was to achieve an integral development of children and to create a sense of patriotism through the practice of handicraft. Gandhiji desired that the basic education system should be self-supporting for every child by learning a craft or occupational skill for livelihood. He wanted education to ensure employment. He told "My Nai Talim is not dependent on money. The running expenses should come from the educational process itself. Whatever the criticisms may be, I know that the only education is that which is 'self- supporting.'" He also said, "The teachers earn what they take. It stands for the art of living. Therefore, both the teacher and the pupil have to produce in the very act of teaching and learning. It enriches life from the commencement. It makes the nation independent of the search for employment".
11. **Development of faith on Truth & Non- violence-** A unique feature of Gandhiji's educational philosophy was the application of the principle of non- violence in the training of the child as a prospective citizen of the world. The scheme of Basic Education is imbued with the cardinal creed of non- violence and the idea of co-operative living. It is based on truth and non- violence. He thought that untruth and violence lead to bondage and can have no place in education. His scheme of education intended to bring an age from which "class and communal hatred is eliminated and exploitation is eschewed." Gandhiji remarked: "We cannot, will not think of exploitation and we have no alternative but this plan of education which is based on non- violence."
12. **Awareness on Social Services-** Another important aspect of the educational philosophy of Gandhiji is service and development of social awareness. Service includes love for the motherland. "The end of all education should surely be service," said Gandhiji. Social awareness and responsibility can be developed through the involvement of students in programs of community service. Students should be involved in different community services to develop responsibility and create awareness on social services. Education must be based

on social good, welfare for all, and must uplift the human aspect.

13. **Cleanliness and Untouchability-** Students should be sensitized on the merits and demerits of cleanliness and the evils of untouchability. Gandhiji had been opposing the untouchability and caste system from the very beginning and putting relentless efforts to eradicate. He was arguing that Brahmins and untouchables were equal in his eyes. He was publicly rejecting the notion of high and low caste feeling. At the age of twelve, Gandhiji had disagreed with his mother's warnings on not to touch an untouchable who used to clean their latrines in their house. He tried his best to break the centuries- old caste system and to remove the mark of untouchability from Hinduism.

Relevance of Basic education in Modern Education system from various perspectives:

1. **Aims of Education-** If the aims of education as determined by Gandhiji are analysed carefully it would become evident that all these aims are universal and perennial. He considered man as the sum total of body, mind, and spirit and emphasized on the development of all these three aspects of man.
2. **Curriculum-** If the curriculum as suggested by Gandhiji carefully observed, it makes out two features- first, it is quite broad, and second, special emphasis on handicrafts. The same curriculum was meant for both boys and girls. This curriculum was mainly implemented in Basic education. This curriculum is an activity-centred. The brain must be educated through hand. It appears that he wanted to make India a country of industries.
3. **Method of Teaching-** Gandhiji did not study psychology, yet his thoughts about teaching are fully psychological. He has laid foremost emphasis on learning by doing, in the place of traditional telling and book method Which is indicate the self- learning. He emphasized mother tongue as the method of teaching. Now a days it has become a common feature of the modern education system.
4. **Teacher-** According to Gandhiji teacher should be an ideal person of the society, he should be a man of ideal conduct and should be a social worker. In his view, no person should take up this job as a profession, rather it should be taken by the spirit of social service. Such people can bring the children on the right path. Similarly, in modern education teacher is not only for give knowledge to the children, he is a friend, philosopher and guide.
5. **Students-** Gandhiji focuses on child- centred education. He believed that child brings his own experience to the school and they have to be reconstructed. There is a lot of scope for the child to unfold its creative abilities and develop originality. He wanted the children to cultivate purity in thought, word and deed along with pursuit of knowledge. This concept is the central point of modern education system all over world.
6. **Discipline-** Gandhiji believed that, discipline should not be imposed from outside. There should be self-discipline or an inner urge of the individual to obey the laws and regulations prescribed by the group, community or society. He wanted the children to have

sufficient freedom so that they may develop and grow. But they accept that the discipline and training will be must if they wanted to develop their powers to the fullest. No school can be run without discipline. He opposed corporal punishment. This concept also relevant to modern education system.

Findings:

From the above discussion, it is clear to us that Gandhi thus had a dream of achieving a silent social revolution through his education program. The object of his education was to transform the village children into modern villagers. More importantly, the aim of Gandhian education was not merely to prepare the individual for employment but to make the individual self-sufficient. For Gandhiji, the goal of education was character building. He advocated that National Education had a great role to play in the formulation of self-rule. His Basic education takes up the challenging task of preparing young learners to become morally sound, individually independent, socially constructive, economically productive, and responsible future citizens. Its special relevance is noticed in the present education system deeply from the above viewpoint.

Conclusions:

So, in modern times, there is a large competition to passing the examination and to achieve a degree. Here is the lack of all-round development of a child. In this situation, basic education is the ultimate solution. Basic education is related to the basic needs and interests of the education for the development of a child. The aim of Gandhiji's basic education was to educate the students on crafts that would enable them to solve the problems of their livelihood and at the same time develop qualities of good citizenship. In Gandhiji's view, sound education must be rooted through the culture and moral value also. At present various educational committees are emphasizing to make education job oriented and productive for self-employment. With the serious problem of educated unemployment situation among young men and women, the present educational system should be reformed on the spirit of Gandhiji's concept of basic education. Gandhiji's idea of basic education is valid and fruitful which may also be used as guiding principles in the present scenario. The modern education system needs to be reformed at the elementary stage keeping in view the moral value and employability features of Gandhiji's basic education.

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