

# **EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF MAHATMA GANDHI**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Gandhiji'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. As he criticized the colonial system of education as harmful to India. According to Gandhiji, colonial system of education was:

- i) Based on foreign culture, which has almost destroyed the local culture;
- ii) This system of education has limited itself to educating mind, it has completely ignored the education of heart and hand; and
- iii) Right education is not possible through foreign language.

The methods and techniques advocated by him and the environment he prescribed revolutionized Indian thinking and way of living. At heart he was devoted to idealism. He wanted to translate his ideals and values into practice. His philosophy of education is a harmonious blending of idealism, naturalism, and pragmatism. It may be noted that there is no inherent conflict between the three philosophies. Idealism is the base of Gandhiji's philosophy whereas naturalism and pragmatism are the helpers in translating that philosophy into practice. Gandhiji advocated the ideals truth, non-violence and moral values to achieve the ultimate truth of self-realization. He is a devotee of naturalism when he speaks about the development of the child according to his nature and he becomes a pragmatist when he advocates learning and doing by experience. All this leads to integration, so essential to effective education and development of the total personality.

## **MEANING OF EDUCATION**

According to Gandhiji "literacy is neither the beginning nor the end of education. This is only a means through which man or woman can be educated". Gandhiji observes "by education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man- body, mind, and spirit. This is only a means through which man and woman can be educated." This is how Gandhiji summed up his idea of true education.

**EDUCATION IS DEVELOPMENT:** “All round” implies harmonious development. ‘Drawing out the best’ recognizes a great potentiality coiled up in the child which can be realised and developed to its perfection through education.

It is development of human personality in terms of physical, intellectual and spiritual aspects. Education should take care of the whole child, the human personality. It should be the function of education to bring about a harmonious development of all the aspects of human personality so that it can grow to its highest stature and serve the society at its best.

**EDUCATION IS NOT LITERACY:** According to Gandhiji literacy itself is no education. Literacy is just a means of education. He emphasized the development of head, heart and hand (3 H). According to Gandhiji “true education is that which draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of the children.

## **AIMS OF EDUCATION**

Gandhiji has divided educational aims into two categories as under:

- Immediate aims of education.
- Ultimate aims of education.

## **IMMEDIATE AIMS OF GANDHIAN EDUCATION**

**1. Vocational aim:** Gandhiji wished that each child should, through his education, be able to learn a productive craft to meet his future needs of life by adopting some industry or business. Hence, he advocated education for self-reliance and capacity to earn one’s livelihood as the main aim of education. In his words, “Education ought to be for them (children) a kind of insurance against unemployment.

**2. Cultural aim:** He advocated that vocational education and cultural advancement should go side by side. He considered the cultural aspect of education as more essential than its academic aspect. Culture is the main foundation and an essential part of education. In the words of Gandhiji “I attach more importance to cultural factor of education than its literacy factor. Culture is primary and basic thing which the girls should receive from school.

**3. Character building aim:** Like Herbart, Gandhiji also believed that one of the essential aims of education is the moral development or character development. According to Gandhiji, the end of all knowledge should be the building up of character. Character building implies cultivation of moral values such as courage, strength of mind, righteousness, self-restraint and service of humanity. He believes that education will automatically develop an ability in the child to distinguish between good and bad.

**4. Total development aim:** Gandhiji once wrote, "The real education is that which fully develops the body, mind and soul of children." He further observed, "Man is neither mere intellect, nor the gross animals' body, nor heart or soul alone. A proper and harmonious contribution of all the three is required for the making of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education.

**5. Liberation aim:** According to Gandhiji education should liberate body, mind and soul. By liberation he meant two kinds of liberation. One was the liberation all kinds of economic, social, political and mental slavery. The second was, the liberation of the soul from worldly pursuits and devote itself to higher forms of spiritual living. Education should provide this spiritual freedom for self-growth and realization of the self.

**6. Dignity of labour:** Gandhiji wanted that education should develop students in such a manner that they become self-dependent. Gandhiji says that after seven years of education from the seven years of age to fourteen years, the child should be able to earn and should not hesitate to do manual works. The students must learn the dignity of labour. They should not feel shy while doing some work with their hands.

**7. Training for leadership:** Gandhiji believed that for successful democracy, good leaders are needed. Education should develop leadership qualities in students. That way only the students will be able to shoulder the responsibilities in a satisfactory manner.

**8. Social and individual aim:** Aims of education, as advocated by Gandhiji, have been both social and individual. Gandhiji rightly believed that the

individual and society are dependent upon each other, because one affects the other in all situations of life. He says that the problem of the individual is very important and he is afraid to give complete control of education in the hands of the state, because it may crush the individual's propensities towards advancement.

### **ULTIMATE AIM OF EDUCATION**

According to Gandhiji, the ultimate aim of education is to realize God. All other aims are subservient to this supreme aim. It is the same aim of self-realization which is coming down since the very early times of Indian wisdom and which constitutes the essence of Indian philosophy. According to Gandhiji, "development of the moral character, development of the whole- all were 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 VIEWS ON EDUCATION**

**1. Objectives of education:** The ultimate objective of the new education is not only a balanced and harmonious individual but also a balanced and harmonious society – a just social order in which there is no unnatural dividing line between the haves and have-nots and everybody is assured of a living wage and the right to freedom.

**2. Education through craft:** The uniqueness of this scheme is that education is to be given through village crafts. The need for a machine-less society, Gandhi developed his ideas on education. The core of his proposal was the introduction of productive handicrafts in the school curriculum. The idea was not simply to introduce handicrafts as a compulsory school subject, but to make the learning of a craft the centre piece of the entire teaching programme. Knowledge of the production processes involved in crafts, such as spinning, weaving, leather-work, pottery, metal-work, basket-making and bookbinding had been the monopoly of specific caste groups in the lowest stratum of the traditional social hierarchy.

**3. Curriculum:** Curriculum in Gandhi's scheme is activity centered and craft centered. As M.S Patel has put it in style; "Craft occupies the position

of the sun in the vast solar system of human life” satisfying our material needs in perfect harmony with the higher values of life. The subject in the curriculum includes in the following:

1. Basic craft – Agriculture, Spinning, Weaving etc.
2. Mother – tongue.
3. Mathematics – useful for craft and community life.
4. Social studies – social and economic life of the community, culture the community, history of craft etc.
5. General science – nature study, zoology, physiology, hygiene, physical culture, anatomy etc.
6. Drawing and music.

Gandhiji advocated uniform education for boys and girls up to the fifth grade and diversified education there after - general science to be replaced by domestic science for girls along with craft for both. He laid special stress on development of good handwriting. The technique of correlation is another characteristic of the scheme. This will encourage self - activity rather than rote memory. In his scheme of education Gandhiji proposed a life centred and activity centred curriculum where knowledge and skills are imparted through self supporting productive craft.

**Methods of teaching:** Gandhiji’s aims of education were different from those prevalent during his days. Current education was subject centred. Gandhiji disapproved that educational method considering as defective and emphasized to make crafts and vocations as means of education. He wished that some local craft should be made as medium of education for children so that they develop their body, mind and soul in a harmonious way and also meets the ends and needs to their future life. In this way, Gandhiji’s method of teaching was therefore, different from the current one. He emphasized the importance of the following principles in his method of teaching -

- i) To achieve mental development, training of senses and parts of the body should be given.
- ii) Reading should precede the teaching of writing.

- iii) Before teaching of alphabets, art training should be given.
- iv) More opportunities should be given for learning by doing.
- v) Encouragement should be given to learning by experience.
- vi) Correlation should be established in the teaching methods and learning experiences.
- vii) Mother tongue to be the medium of instruction.
- viii) Productive craft as the basic of all education.
- ix) Teaching through creative and productive activities.
- x) Teaching through creative and productive activities.
- xi) Learning by living, service and participation, self – experience.
- xii) Lecture, questioning and discussion method.
- xii) Oral instruction to personal study.
- xiv) All syllabi should be woven around vocational training.

In addition to the above, Gandhiji emphasized the need of co-curricular activities, planning, realistic experiences, initiative and sense of individual responsibility to be associated with the craft centred teaching method.

**Role of teacher:** He wanted the teacher to be a model of behavior an image of society a compendium of virtues. He wanted teachers to teach by example than by precept. He opposed corporal punishment. How can an apostle of non – violence advocated anything like that? Teacher must be well trained, proficient, man of knowledge, faith action and devotion. Teachers are responsible for carving the statues of their students. A teacher should be the epicene of character, a symbol of values, well disciplined, a unique personality, cultured and having a good mentality. His serenity and magnanimity should be outstanding and shining. He should be polite, pious, and having sea of knowledge. He should be a psychologist, a philosopher, a historian, a technologist in the matters of knowledge and seduction. He should be a guide, mentor, and guru for imparting knowledge to the students – the valuable pearls.

**Concept of discipline:** His concept of discipline is based on self - control. Self-control refers to inner discipline which leads to self - discipline. His concept of discipline was, however in tune with social discipline. He emphasized the value of self - discipline in life. He asserts that every individual is a productive citizen, a worker and a parent. Education is to be recognized as a potent means for generating then us - feeling among the individuals to make them, useful and responsible citizen of their country.

### **BASIC EDUCATION (*Buniyadi Shiksha*)**

To materialize the vision of society Gandhi evolved a scheme of education after many trials and experiments over a period of 40 years. His ideas revolutionized the current thinking about education. This scheme of education is known as Basic education or Wardha scheme of education or *Nai Talim* or new education or *Buniyadi Shiksha*. Gandhiji used the term basic to describe his scheme of education because it is intimately related with the basic needs and interest of Indian children. Moreover, it is closely related to the people living the villages. It is an educational scheme for common man who constitutes the base or backbone of our country. The goal of a Basic Education is to enable a student to acquire the desired fruit through his or her own actions.

**Features of Basic Education:** Basic Education was an embodiment of Gandhi's perception of an ideal society as one consisting of small, self-reliant communities. The basic scheme of education has the following important features:

- i) The core aim of Basic Education is to help students to develop self-sufficiency.
- ii) Basic Education laid a strong emphasis on manual work.
- iii) There should be free, compulsory and universal education within the age group 7 to 14.
- iv) It envisages providing education through the medium of craft or productive work so that the child gains economic self-reliance for his life.
- v) The medium of education should be mother tongue.
- vi) Education should develop human values in the child.

- vii) It is aimed to achieve the harmonious development of the child's body, mind heart and soul.
- viii) In basic scheme education is imparted through some local craft or productive work.
- ix) The basic education is self-supported through some productive work.
- x) It is geared to create useful, responsible and dynamic citizens.
- xi) Play is an essential part of basic education.
- xii) Subjects are taught in correlation with craft, with environment and with other subjects.

## **EVALUTION OF BASIC EDUCATION**

### **MERITS**

The following are the merits of basic education;

- Basic scheme is an education for life, education through life, and education throughout life. Shortly, it was a life centred education.
- This system is suited to our needs, requirements, genius, and aspirations for the future.
- The craft centred education will give greater concreteness and reality to the knowledge acquired by children.
- It synthesized the individual and social aims of education.
- It was a need based education which curtailed rural unemployment.
- Gandhiji's scheme was highly practical as it starts with action rather than reflection.
- Basic scheme takes in to account the needs, interests and aptitude of the child. Thus it is essentially child centred.
- The basic scheme was nationalist in setting, idealist in nature and pragmatic on one hand while social in purpose and spiritual in intent on the other hand.
- The Wardha scheme is non theoretical and as such it enables the student to undertake independent action.
- Basic education provides for the inculcation of an attitude of truth in children.

### **DEMERITS**

- ❖ The over emphasis on crafts and productive activity has often been criticized as child labour.
- ❖ It neglects education in terms of personality development and development higher mental abilities,



- ❖ The craft centeredness has resulted in enormous wastage of material as small children are not in a position to produce anything worth – while.
- ❖ Schools would degrade as trade centres.
- ❖ It may arrest the child's spontaneous development.
- ❖ The call for correlation becomes forced and unnatural.
- ❖ The basic scheme overlooked the possibilities of higher intellectual development of children.
- ❖ To serve as a medium for education the basic craft selected must answer the test of universality.
- ❖ Making handicraft as nucleus of teaching will amount to throwing the country further behind in this age of science and technology.
- ❖ It is not up to the aspirations of the new generation of a digitalized world.

### **GANDHIJI'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION**

Gandhiji'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. His important contributions to education are the following:

- Gandhiji put forth a very comprehensive and practical system of education suited to genius of our country. It is a constructive and human system integrated with needs and ideals of national life.
- Gandhiji was the first educationist to advocate the large scale use of handicraft, not only as a productive work but as a pivot round which the teaching of different subjects should be undertaken.
- He presented a practical scheme of education based on the principles of equity, social justice, non – violence, human dignity, economic well being and cultural self respect.
- Gandhiji gave a very broad - based concept of education describing it as all round development of human personality.
- He recommended immediate and ultimate aims of education which are in accordance with the Indian socio political, economic, cultural and social aim of education.
- He suggested a very practical and broad based curriculum. It is needed an integrated curriculum which is psychologically sound.
- The method of teaching suggested by Gandhiji is highly pragmatic and pedagogically sound.
- Gandhiji's educational model was not only holistic and practical; it was highly decentralized and integrated, with a demonstrated capacity to

motivate the entire community and place responsibility and accountability at the community level versus the state.

- Gandhiji's educational scheme revived India's economic, social and cultural life through the instrumentality of a handicraft.
- The basic scheme of education was a practical solution for rural unemployment. Gandhiji succeeded in presenting a type of education which can provide the necessary economic self sufficiency and self reliance.

### **GANDHI'S PUBLICATIONS ON EDUCATION**

- Basic education.
- Medium of instruction.
- Tasks before Indian students.
- To the students.
- Towards new education.
- True education Gandhi wrote extensively on education in 'Harijan'.

### **RELEVANCE OF GANDHI'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION IN THE MODERN CONTEST**

The most important point in Gandhi's scheme of education is its emphasis on relating school education to the needs of the society. He wanted to achieve this objective through a system of Learning while earning. He gave an important place to the learning of craft. It will be seen from the curriculum of the present day schools that work experience and socially useful productive work find an important place. His views on early childhood education are quite relevant to – day. Parent education is stressed for the proper development of the early stages of the life. His emphasis on education through the mother tongue is the accepted principle throughout the period.

### **CONCLUSION**

Gandhiji's contribution to education is unique. He was the first Indian who advocated a scheme of education based upon the essential values of the Indian culture and civilization. The methods and techniques advocated by him and the environment he prescribed revolutionized Indian thinking and way of living. At heart he was devoted to idealism. He wanted to translate his ideals and values into practice. His philosophy of education is a harmonious blending of idealism, naturalism, and pragmatism.

According to Gandhiji, "Education is an all round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit". He advocated that literacy should never be the end of education or even the beginning. True education according to him is that which draws out and stimulates the intellectual and physical facilities of children. He gave greater importance to the child, than the techniques and method of education. It was his firm belief that a sound education should produce useful citizens of the entire humanity. Education in its true and broad sense is a lifelong process, which begins with beginning of life and ends with the end of life going on unceasingly.