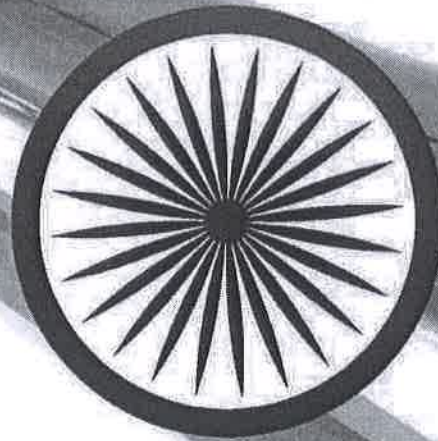


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Principal
NCRD'S Sterling College of Arts, Commerce & Science
Nerul, Navi Mumbai - 400706



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Mahatma Gandhi and Education: Relevance of Gandhi Today

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Introduction

Education is an integral and important instrument of social revolution and for lifting the human life continually to something better culturally, socially, morally and spiritually, said Mahatma Gandhi during 1930 and his thoughts on education are very much relevant even today after 90 years. The basic and fundamental purpose of education is to make the youths to understand own culture which means beliefs and behavior of different people of the nation, understand them and respect their culture. Understanding the people socially is to understanding their needs, issues and respect their values as human beings. Education is to bring moral development of youngsters and add to their moral values and spiritual values. Education is not just literacy or knowledge of some subject but application of knowledge for the welfare of the society and for the welfare of the nation as a whole. Ancient Indian thinkers considered education as idealistic or spiritualistic where as modern Indian thinkers regard education from the practical standpoint and the present education thinkers consider education means developing skills to perform some task. However Gandhi's thought on education was developing mind, body and spirit which means all round development of a youth. Development of a nation and the welfare of society depends more

on the development people of that nation and human development of people depends on the type of education imparted to young generation in that region. Gandhiji believed that education must not only teach a particular subject but teach how to discriminate between good and bad, it should be able to develop the ability of young generation to understand the needs of their land where they live. Basic education is expected to link the children with their area (surrounding) may be city or villages. And India being a country of villages the basic education must teach the children about the needs and wants of villages and make them to understand the relationship between the city and a village. And higher education (university education) must convert the youths to true servants of the nation who will work for the nation building. Gandhiji's was of the opinion that best education should suite to the needs of the villages and we should take vidyapeeth to the villages. True education according to him, should bring harmonious growth of body, mind and soul.

Relevance of Gandhi's Views on Education

- ◆ **Basic (Elementary) Education:** His thought on basic education was based on development of morality and human values. His idea on education was to make education self-supporting by teaching

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craft, agriculture and other productive work there by by-passing potentially the need for government funding supports. Basic objective of teaching craft, agriculture and other productive work was to earn while learn and generate some income while studying and such income will be source of income to the educational institutes and the students also will understand the value of money and dignity of labour.

He proposed education which leads to the development of mind, body and soul. And his proposal on education was named by him as "Nai Talim" which was based on the philosophy of education for life, through life and throughout life. Nai Talim was divided into, pre-basic, basic, post-basic, university and social education. Pre-basic is nursery school, basic is elementary education for a period eight years, (for 7 to 15 years age group), post basic is high school education and social education has become adult education. According to him basic elementary education is the birth right of every child in India. He proposed teaching of alphabet and number must start when the child acquires elementary knowledge of history, geography and art of spinning. This type of education according to Gandhiji is conceived as the source of silent social revolution. This provides a healthy and normal basis of relationship between the city and village. This leads to a long way towards eradicating some of the worst evils of present social insecurity and poisoned relationship between the classes (Harijan. 1937 p 293)

Relevance today : The basic education today is also known as elementary education which mainly aims at developing mind, teaching numbers,

alphabets and words. Education in the present era is more bookish and information based and importance is given to memorizing the answers and information. In the present basic education system children do not get opportunity to learn by doing anything practically so as to experience and learn. The present basic education does not teach the importance of labour work hence children do not know about dignity of labour due to which children do not understand the importance of earning money during their early years of life

The present education system is more about making career, going to other countries and making money and less about nation building and service to the nation and society. The fundamental objective of education is developing and adding moral, ethical, social, spiritual values and character building of the youths and few of these objectives seems to be neglected. The prevailing scenario in social, economical, political and spiritual aspects reveal that self interest and self welfare is given first priority and interest of nation and welfare of society as whole is given secondary importance by the educated people. The examples of increasing conflicts among various castes, communities, caste based and region based political parties, increasing corruption, financial scandals in banks and so on are gradually leading towards concentration of economic resources in few hands. And the fact is that majority of people involved in all such anti-social activities are educated people. This shows that Gandhi's thought on education for developing mind, body and morale values is very much essential not only in the present era but also in future

- ♦ **Language of Education:** Gandhi was the strong supporter of imparting basic education in mother tongue (language of province). According him true natural education should be imparted through the language followed by each province. He declared that 'real freedom will come only when we free ourselves of the domination of western education, western culture and western way of living which have been ingrained in us. Freedom from this culture would mean real freedom for us'. He was firm believer that knowledge of English is not essential to the service of our motherland. According to him the parents who give education to their children in English, they deprive them of the spiritual and social heritage of the nation and render them to that extent unfit for the service of the country. English education is based for foreign culture which is different from Indian culture, it ignores the culture of heart and hand and confines simply to head. Though he suggested basic education must be imparted in mother tongue, he also advocated to learn a foreign language to connect and to communicate with other countries and understand the culture of foreign countries.

Relevance : The present basic (elementary) education in India is gradually dominating by the English language schools and the schools with regional languages are decreasing year by year. English language schools are preferred even by the slum areas in urban belt and rural areas where the parents and the community speak regional language. The children from such areas studying in English schools are confused with their mother tongue and also with the English language. Many Indian

personalities have become world leaders even by studying school education in their regional language. e.g. Shri Raghunathrao Mashalkar from Maharashtra who studied basic education from regional language.

- ♦ **Environmental Conditions for Education:** Gandhiji believed that the type of education imparted to the children and the conditions in the schools must necessarily be related to the conditions of life in India. The scheme of education must provide knowledge so as to secure the main occupation and religions with good understanding of the country. There must be some agreement between the education a child receives at the school and the environment of the home. He suggested school environment must be comfortable so that the children must learn happily. A school must be extension of home and there must be some concordance between the impressions which child gathers at home and at school to get best results. The education through other than own language breaks the concordance and education through English language leads to slavery and degradation. Parents to their children and husbands to their wives must communicate in their own vernacular language not in English (Selected works of Gandhi. Vol.5). Character building has the first place in Gandhian education (Dr. Subba Rao 2012). Gandhi considered character as a foundation of human development and he holds that the school must be extension of home. As per Gandhiji, true education must correspond to the surrounding circumstances and makes the democracy function. Educational environment should be so revolutionised as to answer the wants of poorest villager instead of answering

those of an exploiter. Thus Gandhiji focused on conducive environment in schools for overall development of child to become a responsible citizen of India.

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