

# Relevance of Educational Proposals of Gandhi

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## Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi's life was based on pragmatic philosophy. His approach to truth and non-violence to solve any issue is well known. We can see his pragmatic philosophy in Basic Education model proposed by him. His Basic Education model is based on craft or productive work, activity based, earning while learning. The principles behind this model are- character building through cultural, moral, truthfulness, non-violence values which impart all round development of child. He was also in favour of providing education through mother tongue. He defined Education as - "by education, I mean an overall all around drawing out of the best in child and man, in body, mind, and spirit."

**Keywords:** Pragmatic, Non-Violence, Rural Industrialization, Harmonious, Integrated Education

## Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi influenced the lives of society and his approach to most issues was moral, truth, down to earth and holistic. His philosophy was pragmatic and highly farsighted. The village and villager was the center of his economic thought. His contribution to education as well as his model of basic education incorporates his philosophy, approach and strategy. His model was highly decentralized and has capacity to motivate the whole country and humanity. M. Gandhi tried to reform the defects of the prevailing educational system. Gandhi's idea was to use swadeshi materials so the Basic National Education aimed to provide education through the medium of craft or productive work. The work done at home offered lifelong educational, socialization, communication and vocational benefits to the family members. His curriculum was activity based, which can transform the school into "place of work, experimentation and discovery". So his idea may also kept unemployment and crime rates low. The spirit of cooperation and respect prevailed. But since aims, goals, and objectives, collectively as a component of curriculum provide direction and focus for the entire education program. Gandhian philosophy of education is still relevant in the present context of our country. His concept of Basic Education is significant from every angle so far as Indian system of education is considered. It is psychological sound because he believes in the principles of learning by doing. According to him manual work will lead to physical development. It will also develop other qualities of head and heart in the field. The child develops a scientific outlook. He believes that child is good by nature. He is a spark of the divine. He defined Education as - "by education, I mean an overall all around drawing out of the best in child and man, in body, mind, and spirit".

## Integrated Education

He told that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs, e.g. hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, etc. In other words an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect. A proper and all-round development of the mind, therefore, can take place only when it proceeds with the education of the physical and spiritual faculties of the child. They constitute an indivisible whole. What goes by the name of education in our schools and colleges in the cities today is in reality only intellectual dissipation. Intellectual training is there looked upon as something altogether unrelated to manual or physical work. But since the body must have some sort of physical exercise to keep it in health, they vainly try to attain

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that end by means of an artificial and otherwise barren system of physical culture, which would be ridiculous beyond words. The young man who emerges from this system can in no way compete in physical endurance with ordinary labours. As Gandhi M said that "Students would not only develop a fine, healthy body but also a sound, vigorous intellect that is not merely academic but is firmly rooted in and is tested from day to day by experience. His intellectual education would include knowledge of mathematics and the various sciences that are useful for an intelligent and efficient exercise of his avocation. If this is added to literature by way of recreation, it would give him a perfect well balanced, all-round education in which the intellect, the body and the spirit have all full play and develop together into a natural, harmonious whole. 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 the making of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education".

### National Education

Gandhi was focused on policy which should be a national promise to the people of the country. It should be far away from blind imitation of west. Gandhi M "We are almost certain that the necessity for choosing is hardly realized. As long as confusion on this matter exists, 'national' education cannot flourish and that for a simple reason, The Government is already imparting one type of education in respect of which it is impossible for any purely nonofficial body to complete. Official organization is bigger, it has more money, and it has more prizes to offer. We believe that this root paradox will last as long as there is no hard and clear thinking about fundamentals. If, as a result of careful decisions, we promise to the people that the education we offer will be truly Indian and not a mere inferior prototype of the education offered in the schools and colleges of Government, people are bound to listen to us". Gandhi felt the need to overhaul education system. He thought for national education and proposed the following methods to be evolved.

- Education must be imparted through the mother tongue.
- There must be accord between the education a child receives at the school and the environment of the home.
- It must be so planned as to meet the needs of the majority of the people.
- The teachers in primary classes must be competent of good character right from the first class.
- Education must be free.
- Over all control must be in the hands of the people.

### Aim of Education

The human society owes its existence because of education. There is need to know about the goals, aims or objectives of education. Without determining the aims of education, it is not possible to plan the curriculum and the methods to be followed to impart it. Aim enables to act with a purpose and meaning. Education gives right direction to that activity. In the absence of the aims in education, progress cannot be achieved.

### Bread and Butter Aim

Bread and Butter aim refers to utilitarian aim which is an immediate requirement. Gandhi focused on education that provides earning while learning. This has to be a tool with each and every learner. He can remove unemployment keeping in mind the poverty and unemployment of India. He focused and suggested industrial training and development of manual skills and handicraft as subject of education which will give satisfaction to the student not only of his earning and self reliance but also it will be proved as a support to his/her family and nation at large.

### Cultural Aim

According to Gandhi cultural aspect of education is more important than the literacy. Culture is the foundation, the primary thing which the girls ought to get from here. It should show in the smallest detail of your conduct and personal behaviour, how to sit, how to walk, how to dress etc. it is the education through which students or everyone learn the glorious culture of the country India, it's incredible arts, religions and so on. Education is the device which makes them familiar with our great culture and it is to be taught that how do they adopt and what is the importance of value of our culture. Thus Gandhi laid much emphasis on cultural aim of education and recommended that Geeta and Ramayana to be taught as a means of introducing students to their rich cultural and spiritual heritage.

### Harmonious Development

Education should develop all the three levels i.e. read, write and arithmetic. The education should help in feeling what is taught and what happens to him and to express, what he feels and also what he wants to do. So all the faculties of person should be developed. Writing and reading will make him literate and arithmetic will help in calculating day today expenses and more importantly it will help in logical thinking and analyzing things.

## Moral Aim

Education should make person aware of what is right and wrong. It inculcates in us values and manners and moulds our character. He focused more on character building than on literacy. According to him development of personality was more significant than accumulation of intellectual tools and academic knowledge. And we also believed that an educand should be taught nonviolence, truth, and importance of thoughts, word and deed.

## Social and Individual Aim

The aim of education of Gandhiji is both social and individual. He wanted individual perfection and a new social order based on "Truth" and "Nonviolence". Education trains an individual and makes him an ideal citizen who will help his nation. An individual learns so many things from surrounding, culture, society and so on and he progresses simultaneously society progresses because the individuals' growth is nothing but the growth of the society and nation.

## Ultimate Aim

Self realization is the ultimate aim of life as well as of education. Through education everyone understands about themselves and get answer of the universal question who am I? It is the education which helps them to understand their existence and its purpose. It is the spiritual education which provides knowledge of God and self realization. The individuals recognize their potentials or abilities and prove them as ideal citizens of their nation via education. It is the education which makes them familiar with spirituality and different religious and finally every individual realize what they are? This is the self realization the ultimate aim of education. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi "true education should result not in material power but in spiritual force. It must strengthen man's faith in God and not awaken it". He further adds "Development of the whole all was directed towards the realization of the ultimate reality - the merger of the finite being in to infinite".

## Free and Compulsory Education

Mahatma Gandhi has advocated free and compulsory education for all up to age of 14 years because students of age group of 7 to 14 everyone enables to read write and count the basic expenses or sums. If the education is not free and compulsory then students who belong to poor families remain illiterate.

## Self Financing

According to Mahatma Gandhi "My idea is not merely to teach a particular profession or occupation to the children, but to develop the full man through teaching that occupation". Gandhi M "If every school introduced spinning, it would revolutionize our ideas of financing education. We can work a school for six hours per day and give free education to the pupils. Supposing a boy works at the wheel for four hours daily, he will produce every day 10 tolas of yarn and thus earn for his school one ana per day. Suppose further that he manufactures very little during the first month, and that the school works only twenty six days in the month. A class of thirty boys would yield, after the first month, an income of Rs. 48120 per month.

I have said nothing about literary training. It can be given during the two hours out of the six. It is easy to see that every school can be made self-supporting without much effort and the nation can engage experienced teachers for its schools. The chief difficulty in working out the scheme is the spinning wheel. We require thousand of wheels if the art becomes popular. Fortunately, every village carpenter can easily construct the machines. It is a serious mistake to order them from the Ashram or can be cheaply introduced in every village".

## Character Formation

Character-building is another important objective of basic education. A student should be impressed upon the values of simple and honest living and hard work. Besides the emotional impulses the child should be taken care of through mental training. Fellow-feeling, mutual sharing, love sympathy, compassion etc. should be generated in the mind of the child during his formative period. That will help him to cultivate moral values like discipline, integrity, purity of character etc. in his later life. Gandhi lays utmost emphasis on moral development to be one of the primary objectives of education.

Character is the solid foundation for self-development. The aim of education is character building. This depends upon the ideals cherished by the individual. The educator should present high ideals before the educands. The best way to develop a character is the personal example of high character set by the teacher. In brief, the character should have priority over knowledge of the alphabet. If this order is reversed, the attempt would be like the cart before the horse and making it push the cart with its nose, and would meet with the same success as the latter course.

## Principles of Basic Education

There are certain basic principles behind his Basic Education, which are as under:

### Free and Compulsory

His ideas regarding basic education or buniyadi talim, has given his view that education i.e. elementary education should be free of charge and all should get educated so that they can do minute calculations of daily life expense, read and write. This is necessary because this will make a person live independently.

### Through Mother Tongue

He emphasized on mother tongue as medium of instructions at the initial level of learning pattern. Since any mother tongue is the foundation of capability building of students, it would enable the children to express themselves effectively and clearly in their first language. Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi: "The youths who come to it will receive their instruction through the medium of their vernaculars. Our language is the reflection of ourselves, and if you tell me that our languages are too poor to express the best thought, then I say that the sooner we are wiped out of existence the better for us. Is there a man who dreams that English can ever become the national language of India? (Cries of "Never") Why this handicap on the nation? Just consider for one moment what an unequal race our lads have to run with every English lad".<sup>1</sup>

### Craft Centeredness

Gandhi (1937) "As to the necessity and value of regarding the teaching of village handicrafts as the pivot and centre of education I have no manner of doubt. The method adopted in the institutions in India I do not call education, i.e. drawing out the best in man, but a debauchery of the mind. It informs the mind anyhow, whereas the method of training the mind through village handicrafts from the very beginning as the central fact would central fact would promote the real, disciplined development of the mind resulting in conservation of the intellectual energy and indirectly also the spiritual". Learners should get exposure to learn skills and craft like knitting, weaving, farming, cooking which make them self-dependent as they will not only earn on their own but also develop three domains:-

#### Physical Domain

By doing physical work like agriculture, which will give good physical exercise.

#### Psycho-motor Domain

By developing social skills - how to behave, how to work in groups; how to co-ordinate.

#### Cognitive Domain

By developing thinking skill, analyzing, estimating- what would be the expense to prepare craft and how much material will be required.

### Self-Sufficiency

Basic education should provide such training that one can realize their immediate aim- earning- after or during basic education. Earning for one's own self and satisfying one's needs.

### Co-related Teaching

He considered knowledge as a whole that is each and every subject interrelated. While doing craft work, it requires economical skills to buy material and to keep estimate how much it would require. It will also require mathematical skills to calculate the earnings and so on. As the subject should be taught which will lead to all-round development, students should develop love for subjects to learn them.

### Non-Violence

One of the aim of basic education is to prepare ideal and responsible citizen who will develop virtues like non-violence so that they are not attracted by violence and other anti-social activities. If each would try to inculcate this value then there will be peace and harmony among the citizen of India. There will not disagreement and it will good understanding with each other.

### Ideal Citizen

Education makes man to think broader and ideal perceptive, therefore Gandhi focused on preparing ideal citizens for nation who is responsible and sensible to nation's, duties and rights. Education of civics will give them civic sense and work procedures of governmental works and responsibilities. History will make them aware of golden days as well as of the bravery of the national heroes, who fought for the freedom of India which will lift their nationalistic feelings.

### Character Building

Character building has first place in Gandhian education. Character is similar to foundation. A building built on sand collapses where as a building erected on a strong

foundation lasts for long time. Gandhi holds that the school must be an extension of home. There must be agreement between the impressions, which a child gathers at home and at school to achieve the best results.

## Curriculum

Mahatma Gandhi's contribution to education especially his model of basic education incorporates his philosophy, approach and strategy in education even in current scenario. Gandhi's model was not only holistic and practical, but it was highly decentralized and integrated with a demonstrated capacity to motivate the society. Mahatma Gandhi was focused on the curriculum based on craft centered education through mother tongue of the students. He also incorporates his thought with including social studies, natural sciences and music etc. in his curriculum. According to him curriculum should be as follow:

### Craft

He was determined to educate the society within their neighboring surroundings. His idea was to use swadeshi materials so the Basic National Education aimed to provide education through the medium of craft or productive work.

The basic craft should be related to farming, gardening, spinning and weaving, carpentry, sculpting and work of leather, metal etc. His curriculum was activity based, which can transform the school into "place of work, experimentation and discovery". Gandhi M "I would therefore begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. I hold that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education. Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today but scientifically, i.e. the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process. I am not writing this without some confidence, because it has the backing of experience. This method is being adopted more or less completely wherever spinning is being taught to workers. I have myself taught sandal making and even spinning on these lines with good results".

### Mother Tongue

He suggested that medium of the instruction should be mother tongue. Through mother tongue only students can express themselves effectively and clearly. They can learn easily ethical and moral values and importance of national heritage in their life. According to him if English

is to be taught as medium of instruction, then it hinders the development of understanding and clarity of thoughts/ideas of the learners. Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi: "The only education we receive is English education. Surely we must show something for it. But suppose that we had been receiving during the past fifty year's education through our vernaculars, what should we have today?<sup>1</sup> We should have today a free India; we should have our educated men, not as if they were foreigners in their own land, but speaking to the heart of the nation ; they would be working amongst the poorest of the poor, and whatever they would have gained during the past fifty years would be a heritage for the nation" Gandhi states that English cannot and ought not to become the National language. In this connection Gandhi refers to the requirement of a national language. He says that:

- It should be easy to learn for government officials.
- It should be capable of serving as medium of religious, economic and political intercourse throughout India.
- It should be the speech of the majority of the inhabitants of India.
- Everybody should find it easy to learn.
- In choosing such a language considerations of temporary or passing interest should not count.

Gandhi states that English language does not fulfill any of these requirements. To think that English language can become Indian national language is a sign of weakness.

## Subjects

Mahatma Gandhi was in favor to teach mathematics, social studies, general science including nature study, botany, zoology, chemistry, astronomy, hygiene, physical culture etc. Some main subjects are given below:

### Mathematics

Everyone must have fundamental knowledge of these subjects as it is useful in day today life. Student must be taught the calculation, algebra and geometry.

### Social Studies

It is the combination of History, Civics, Geography and Economics. Study of these subjects makes students to understand and appreciate their own culture and also to understand nature and function of family, state and the nation and their inter-relationship.



## General Sciences

It includes Chemistry, Botany, Zoology and Hygiene. By studying these subjects students will be able to know about their health and hygiene and also think logically the cause and effect relationship. Domestic science was initially compulsory for both boys and girls. It is necessary to learn about how to manage house and its expenses.

## Drawing

Drawing was included in the curriculum to develop creativity in the students. Drawing has its importance at three levels, it develops expression skill through drawing, and it touches to imaginative faculty of mind and also focuses on aesthetic sense to appreciate art at both level- artist's and interpreter's level.

## Music

Music was added in curriculum so as to draw out talent and creativeness of the students to acquire peace and spirituality. I heartily endorse this proposition. The modulation of voice is as necessary as the training of the hand. Physical drill, handicrafts, drawing and music should go hand in hand in order to draw the best out of the boys and girls and create in them real interest in their tuition.

## Moral Studies

According to Mahatma Gandhi moral studies is very important for students to study as it will inculcate the moral values, good behaviours and respect to elders and teachers. It will also make students to celebrate the social and national festivals and do social works etc.

## Technical Education through the Mother Tongue

Gandhi deprecated the suggestion that it would need a lot of research and preparation to enable them to impart technical education through the medium of the mother tongue. Gandhi M "Those who argued like that, were unaware of the rich treasure of expressions and idioms that were buried in the dialects of our villages. In Gandhi's opinion there was no need to go to Sanskrit or Persian in search for many expressions. He had been in Champaran and he had found that the village folk there, could fully express themselves with ease and without the help of a single foreign expression or idiom. As an illustration of their resourcefulness, he mentioned the word have a gadi which they had coined to denote a motor car".<sup>9</sup>

## Hindi as a National language and Subject

Hindi alone can become the national language. It presents some difficulty in case of the learned classes in Madras. For men from the Deccan, Gujarat, Sind and Bengal it is easy enough. In a few months they can acquire sufficient command over Hindi to enable them to carry on national intercourse in that tongue. It is not so for the Tamils. The Dravidian languages are distinct from their Sanskrit sister in structure and grammar. The only thing common to the two groups is their Sanskrit vocabulary to an extent. But the difficulty is confined to the learned class alone. We have a right to appeal to their patriotic spirit and expect them to put forth sufficient effort in order to learn Hindi. For in future when Hindi has received State recognition, it will be introduced as a compulsory language in Madras as in other Provinces, and intercourse between Madras and them will then increase. English has not permeated the Dravidian masses. Hindi, however, will take no time. To become the national language of India what is the test of national language?

- For the official class it should be easy to learn.
- The religious, commercial and political activity throughout India should be possible in that language.
- It should be the speech of the majority of India.
- For the whole of the country it should be easy to learn.
- In considering the question, weight ought not to be put upon momentary of short-lived conditions.

The Hindi language fulfill all the conditions above mentioned

## Discipline

Discipline is another very important aspect of education. The aim of education cannot be achieved until and unless students are not well disciplined in their life. Gandhi M "The pupils must have initiative. They must cease to be mere imitators. They must learn to think and act for themselves and yet be thoroughly obedient and disciplined. The highest form of freedom carries with it the greatest measure of discipline and humility. Freedom that comes from discipline and humility cannot be denied, unbridled license is a sign of vulgarity injurious alike to self and one's neighbors".<sup>5</sup>

## The Teacher

The teacher has higher responsibilities. He has to develop values among the learners. The teacher should

follow morality. There should not be any dark patch on his character because he is role model for many students. Gandhi says - "education of the heart could only be done through the living touch of the teacher". Education becomes effective and faithful only to the extent to which there is personal touch between the teacher and the taught. It will be very difficult to achieve character building in the absence of devotion to the teacher. He should have devotion to duty, to the students and to God. He is to play the role of a mother. An ideal teacher in Gandhi's word is the "mother teacher". He says I used the word "mother teacher" because the teacher must really be a mother of children. The teacher is responsible not only for imparting knowledge, but also in moulding the character and personality of the pupils. An effective teacher is a person of high moral and spiritual qualities. He taught with his heart and soul.

### Evaluation

Evaluation is a decisive phase of education pattern. Mahatma Gandhi has emphasized on it seriously. It can be seen as follow:

### Merits of Basic Education

Since work occupies a central place in life, it had an important place in Basic Education. Dignity of labour was emphasized by him and work was made an integral part of this education. Through Basic Education Gandhi introduced a new method of teaching. This method is to teach all subjects through crafts and taken as activity centered meant to free children from tyranny of words and cramming. As to be a craft centered education, it was visualized by Mahatma Gandhi that schools need be self-supporting. The crafts organized scientifically would result in more production and the sale proceeds must fetch a good income. Basic education was sound sociologically. Then the spirit of dependence on others was required to be removed from the society. In short, Basic education was intended to eradicate many ills of the society. Basic education was providing for training students in democratic living and practices. It was aiming at forming positive attitudes, creating interests and appreciation, developing understanding and imparting skills in citizenship. On the whole, it was a training of citizenship.

### Drawbacks in Basic Education

Since craft was occupying an important place in Basic school curriculum, selection of a suitable craft was determining the success and efficiency of Basic Education. But most of the schools followed the trodden

path or stereotyped process without bothering for the local conditions and needs. For example, in the areas where cotton was not grown and had to be brought from a long distance, weaving was introduced as a craft even in those areas. In Basic schools every subject was being taught through a craft. The principle of correlation was tried to be adopted in all subjects, but in real situation it was done as a ritual without any seriousness. In fact, correlation was a slogan and fiction. It was complained that the schools cannot be made self-sufficient with the production by children. The concept of self-sufficiency was thought to be idealism and was not emphasized by most of the teachers and inspecting officers. Products by unskilled hands were not selling well and fetching adequate income. Rather Basic Schools were more expensive than traditional schools. Although Basic Education was visualized to be socially sound for removing the existing disparities, it was rather aggravating the situation. It was tending to be meant for the children of poor labors and farmers only and children of high class families were not going to these schools. The gulf between poor and rich classes rather widened due to Basic Education. Basic schools called for highly qualified and well equipped teachers for properly teaching subjects through correlation and organizing crafts with efficiency. But in fact many teachers employed in such schools were lacking proper understanding of the Basic Education principles and desired orientation with the idealism or values impregnated in the system.

### Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi was great nation planner. He was quite aware for an ideal family, society and nation. His approach toward truth, cleanliness, punctuality, self dependency and ideal personal behaviors etc. was their indirect lessons for a society in between his curriculum was taken place in front of education pattern. Education is ongoing process of any healthy and lively society. As planner of society Mahatma Gandhi was highly focused on it even in the age of freedom struggle, where main objectives were to organize and agitate against British rule. Therefore Gandhi has used education as medium of awareness for contemporary society. Now when current government is trying to propose new education policy, many aspects of Gandhian education system must be considered.

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