

Gandhian concept of value education and the reconstruction of present society

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The Vedas say - "*Etat Desh Prasutasya Sakasat Agrajanman, Swam Swam Charitram Shiksheran Prithivyam Sarva Manava...*" It means that people who are born in this part of the earth should enlighten the entire world by presenting the example of their own character"

Gandhi's views on value education plays a pivotal role in the reconstruction of Present society in the Twenty-first century. The word education means to bring out the best qualities inside to outside. Education means the art of developing various physical, mental and moral powers of the learners. Education is a lifelong process. It starts from birth and continues till death.¹Gandhi's views on education were influenced by his general philosophy of life. Belief in God, truth, ahimsa, morality, ethics of life, dignity of labour, justice, equality, liberty, fraternity all these values help in building an ideal society. He wanted a society based on non-violence, on peace, on justice, on freedom of the individual within reason and on the principles of co-operation. He said, "Cleanse your heart of all narrowness and make it as broad as the Ocean. That is the teaching of the Quran and the Gita." Gandhi's value education helps in cultivating the spirit of non-violence, toleration, co-operation, public spirit and a sense of responsibility.

Gandhi accepts Huxley's definition of education – "That man, I think has had a liberal education who has been so trained in youth that his body is ready to servant of his will and does with case and pleasure all the work that as a mechanism it is capable of; whose intellect is clear with all parts of equal strength and in smooth order. Whose mind is stored with knowledge of the fundamental truths of nature...whose

¹Pandey, J. (1998). *Gandhi and 21st century*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, pp. 219-220.

passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience...who has learnt to hate all vileness and to respect others as himself?"²

Mahatma Gandhi was a man of action rather than a theorist. His theory of education is also by and large objective and experimental rather than subjective and speculative According to Gandhi the ultimate goal of education is 'self-realization'. He gave emphasis on the true development of head, heart and souls. All they are necessary for a satisfactory system of education.³

Education of the heart is the most powerful instrument of human and social transformation. The nature of value education is mainly based on the understanding of the thought, the cultivation of thought; the development of the virtues, good habit formation, and the development of skills.⁴ The true education distinguishes man from beast. The education through handicraft is the contemplation of truth and love. According to Gandhi, the education cannot be restricted to the knowledge of letters of alphabet rather it includes the moral, physical and mental development of a person.

2 Singh, D. (1995). Perspective in Gandhian Thought. New Delhi: Common Wealth Publishers, pp. 34-35.

3 Pandey, J. (1998). Gandhi and 21st century. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, pp. 221-223.

4 Raval G. (?). The Gandhian Vision of Education. Retrieved from http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/vision_edu,htm,P.2

All round development can not be possible if moral and spiritual development is neglected.⁵ Education is a striving force for re-orienting humanity to divinity.⁶ The Gandhian principle of education encompasses that principle of inner consciousness. The broadness of mind and the vastness of outlook can be attained only when work is turned into worship.⁷

Gandhian conception of value education is something different, which must equally develop the three constituents of man- the body, mind and spirit. 'Spirit' is more vital without which both body and mind cannot function. Education is that which leads to *moksa* - the qualities of spirit.⁸ The highest development of the individual to a high moral and spiritual order is possible if value education is imparted and only then the individual become a useful member of society.⁹

Moral education in educational institutions was not given directly but all the morals would lay at the very foundation of his system and all his concepts of value education.¹⁰ Mahatma Gandhi advocated that the educational system must be

⁵ Kumar, R. (?) *Mahatma Gandhi And Higher Education : A Critical Analysis*. Retrieved from http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/vision_edu,htm, p.1

⁶ Shukla, R. (2002). *Gandhian Philosophy of Education*. Jaipur: Sublime Publications, p. 283

⁷ Ibid; p.299.

⁸ Bourai, Himanshu. (2004). *Gandhian Philosophy and the New world Order*, Delhi: Abhijeet Publications, p. 114

⁹ Ibid; p. 131

¹⁰ Bourai, H.(2004). *Gandhian Philosophy and the New world Order*. Delhi: Abhijeet Publications, p. 138

one in which “the highest development of mind and soul is possible.”¹¹ Gandhi considered that apart from the literary, physical and vocational and the spiritual training are very essential part of the education for character building.

Gandhi opposed to the concept of loading the minds of the pupils with text books.¹² Because training of mind and spirit is not possible through reading of books. Manual labour and attachment to productive handicrafts bring mental development. Mutual reverence in a healthy work environment and dignity of labour is the training of soul force for spiritual development.

The concept of his value education stands on the bases of Ahimsa, Truth and Beauty. To him, ahimsa and truth are undeniably and remarkably interdependent. Ahimsa has both positive and negative form. “In its positive form, ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of ahimsa, I must love my enemy” (Gandhi 1996, pp 40).¹³

To quote Gandhi “... it is more correct to say that Truth is God than to say that God is Truth.” Mahatma Gandhi clearly defined the term “Truth’. He said, “I can live only by having faith in God. My definition of God must always be kept in mind. For me there is no other God than Truth; Truth is God”.¹⁴ Gandhi also

¹¹ *Ibid*; p. 130

¹² Pani, S.P., & Pattnaik, S.K., (2006). *Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Gandhi on Education*. New Delhi: Anmol Publications PVT. LTD., p. 195

¹³ Gandhi, M.K.(1996). *The essential writings of Mahatma Gandhi*. New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press

¹⁴ Research and Practice in Social Sciences Sihra, K Vol. 2, No. 1 (August 2006) 40-52

equates Love to Truth. Truth and Love are intertwined. Truth is as an emotion, an expression, and an act. Love is also understood as Truth itself. Love is for the self for the other and for the community as a whole. Indeed the realisation of all three entities are necessary.

Gandhi's choice of the term "Love" is interesting because of its intensity. Love denotes a very particular passion that incorporates care and responsibility to others. Kierkegaard insists that the emotion of love is best expressed through action. Gandhi's ideas of God and Truth can be realized through universal love. The use of the term love to describe Truth in action becomes apparent in his philosophy.

Gandhi establishes Truth as a guiding principle as it provides principles to spiritual, emotional and active elements of "this-worldly" life. The word *satya* (truth) comes from *sat* which means "to be" or "to exist" (Gandhi 2000, pp 36).¹⁵ To live through Truth is "to be" or "to exist" in wholeness.

Knowing the Self, the *Atmam*, with knowing the true nature of Reality is the knowing of God or Truth *Satya*. Self-realization is the ultimate goal of life and education. To know the Self, knowing the Truth, and realizing God is the goal of true education, 'which helps us to know the *atman*, our true self, God, and Truth'. True education is that which cultivates the soul or the spirit, and leads ultimately to the full and complete development of man's body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the primary goal of true education. True education is the cultivation of

¹⁵ Gandhi, M.K. (2000). *The essential writings of Mahatma Gandhi*. New Delhi,

character and the development of the spirit. It is the education of the heart not the head.¹⁶

The main principle of his value education is the 'simple living and high thinking' He wanted students to lead a simple life and do all their work by themselves like, washing their clothes, cooking their food etc. By the simplicity in education, the children should train in self-help and self-reliance.¹⁷

Gandhi opined that mere literacy is education. He believed that literacy in itself was not education. It was neither the beginning nor the end of education. It is only one of the means whereby the humans can be educated. By the way of good character only the students get good education. Therefore, he wanted students as well as teachers to give more importance to character building. His proposed curriculum is the source of making good character

Bertrand Russell has referred four virtues for building an ideal character. They are vitality, courage, sensitivity and intelligence. Gandhi said, "I would try to develop courage, strength, virtue, the ability to forget oneself in working towards great aims..."

He told that spiritual development of man through education is of utmost necessary.¹⁸ He says that value education producing not only good individual but

¹⁶ Glyn Richards, (2001), *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, p. 12

¹⁷ Janardan Pandey, (1998), *Gandhi and 21st century*, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, p. 221

¹⁸ Ibid.

socially useful citizens who understand their social responsibilities as an integral element of society. Gandhi's concept of value education is based on the critique of Modern Western Civilization and reassertion of Ancient system of Gurukul education.

The Upanishadic dictum *Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye*- that liberates one from the weeds of ignorance was accepted by Mahatma Gandhi. According to him Education does not mean mere spiritual knowledge nor does liberation signify only spiritual liberation after death. It includes all training that is useful for the service of mankind and liberation means freedom from all manner of servility even in the present life. He said, "Thus is true education which leads to freedom...that education which delays our freedom is to be shunned, it is satanic, and it is sinful."

Mahatma Gandhi emphasizes on the development of personality through building of character. He says "...real education consists not in packing the brain with so many facts and figures, not in passing examinations by reading numerous books but in developing character". Character building, modification of behaviour, refinement and development of personality are the important aims of education accepted by Gandhi.¹⁹

Social aspects of value Education:

Character building education with imparting social values is a vital step to create an ideal society. Social values such as, social awareness, interpersonal

¹⁹ Pani, S.P., & Pattnaik, S.K., (2006). *Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Gandhi on Education*. New Delhi: Anmol Publications PVT. LTD., pp. 173-77

relationship, Anti-touch ability ,Co -operation, Compassion, Common good, Courtesy ,Democratic decision making, Dignity of the Individual, Endurance, Friendship, Fellow feeling, Forward looking attitude, Honesty, Courage , curiosity, Devotion, Discipline, Faithfulness, Gratitude, Kindness to animals, Punctuality, Purity, National consciousness, Sincerity, Self-help, self-confidence ,Self-respect, Simple living, Self-support, Self-reliance, Self-restraint Sympathy, Tolerance, Universal love are roots of the social progress and social integration. Social values enable individuals to consider themselves as integral members of society. Mahatma Gandhi wanted to create a new social order based on Truth and Non-violence. In Gandhian system of education a harmonious balance is reached between the individual and the social aim of education.²⁰

Cultural values:

Cultural values refine personal behavior and create mutual reverence. Mahatma Gandhi gave emphasis on India's glorious past and ancient heritage. Cultural values improve bhaviuor pattern, personal feelings, attitude, and aptitude towards common good. Gandhi observed: "I attach for more importance to the cultural aspect of education than to the literary. 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 you sit, how you talk, how you dress, etc., so that anybody might be able to see at a glance that

²⁰ Ibid; pp. 176 -77

you are the product of this institution. Inner culture must be reflected in four speeches, the way in which you treat your visitors and behave towards one another and your teachers and class.”²¹

Values of Self-supporting Education:

Mahatma Gandhi wanted to make education self-supporting. Gandhi suggested students to achieve practical knowledge of agriculture. The problem of unemployment will be reduced if craft centric education is introduced. The art of rearing children and the laws of hygiene and sanitation are forming a part of education. Mahatma Gandhi’s view-point lies in the fact that education should necessarily be helpful in employment and its foundations should be laid on morality and ethics. This is necessary to reconstruct the society for the present prevailing situation in India.

*"The real difficulty is that people have no idea of what education truly is. We assess the value of education in the same manner as we assess the value of land or of shares in the stock-exchange market. We want to provide only such education as would enable the student to earn more. We hardly give any thought to the improvement of the character of the educated. The girls, we say, do not have to earn; so why should they be educated? As long as such ideas persist there is no hope of our ever knowing the true value of education". – **Gandhi***

²¹ Pani, S.P., Pattnaik, S.K., (2006), Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Gandhi on Education,