

Quality Education in the present century and the Gandhian view points on Education.

Goutam Patra
Asst. Professor(W.B.E.S.)
Govt. College of Education, Banipur
North 24 Paraganas. West Bengal
Email: gtmpatra21@gmail.com
Mobile No. 9732519106

"I hear and I forget.
I see and I believe.
I do and I understand". – Confucius

Abstract: *Quality indicates all the essential attributes of an individual or an object acceptable to others for having its values. It implies totality of features of a product or service that bears upon its ability to the stated or implied needs. In the modern concept of globalization, the term quality emphasizes on meeting the need and demand of customers. In the context of education, it has become a deliberate enterprise aiming to provide a quality service to its consumers in order to enable them to contribute significantly for the development of nation. So the teachers have to play a multi-tasking role in this regard. Quality in education ensures the creation of human resources. So the perspectives of quality in education are multidimensional, more subjective and critical as well. The educational philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi gives a right direction for the qualitative development in the field of education. Gandhian Philosophy and thought on education had brought a new dimension and fundamental changes in the Teaching-learning process for building up of a new social order based on tolerance, truth and non-violence. But a dismal picture in the sphere of education is seen today as we have been failed to follow his glorious thought in the field of education. Moreover, education of today has become completely out of touch both with the realities of national life and the upsurge of national aspirations. It has failed to cope up with the socio-economic problem stirring up in our country. The morality and human values of the youth of our country have been decreasing day by day as the system of education gives the youth a little insight in their national heritage, culture and values. But if we go through the Gandhian thought, we will find that he categorically emphasized on the development of social, cultural, economic, environmental and aesthetic values through the adoption of 'Learning by doing' which will cause 'all round drawing out of the best in child and man –body, mind and spirit' Gandhi wanted to make our child to be more practical rather than depending upon the accumulation of bookish knowledge. He emphasized on the development of 3Hs (Head, Heart and Hand) instead of 3Rs (Reading, writing and arithmetic). Gandhian approach to education is thus the root of solutions of all present social, economic and educational crises in the present century.*

*“Education for Life
Education through Life
Education throughout Life “
Mahatma Gandhi*

Introduction: Mahatma Gandhi, (1869-1948) a great philosopher in the world contributed his views on education from a practical point of view and showed a new dimension of education related to the realities of national life and aspirations of people. Mahatma Gandhi first rejected the colonial system of education and introduced his planning of Basic education. In 1937 he launched his new scheme of education. This new scheme came to be known as Nai Talim or ‘Basic Education.’ Nai Talim is a new system of education based on training depending upon the accumulation of bookish knowledge. He emphasized on the development of 3Hs (Head, Heart and Hand) instead of 3Rs (Reading, writing and arithmetic). He introduced productive handicrafts in school curriculum and made the learning possible through a productive craft in the center of Teaching-learning process. Craft was the centre piece of the entire teaching programme. It was a radical change in reconstructing of the sociology of school knowledge in India. Gandhi’s proposal of basic education favoured the child belonging to the lowest stratum of society and changed the established structure of opportunities for education. He envisaged education as ‘the spearhead of a social revolution’ which would enable life to move forward towards peace, justice and co-operation.¹ Thus the programme of Basic education was a programme to change the established structure of opportunities for education.

Self-sufficiency through Education: Mahatma Gandhi wanted to make the school to be self-supported. He valued self-sufficiency and autonomy. The idea of *swaraj* and *swadeshi* were related to the new education system. The vision of his education system was an independent India made up of autonomous self sufficient -village communities. Making of ideal citizens being industrious, self- reliant and co- operative was the main objectives of education.

Gandhi wanted to make the child to be more practical rather than depending upon the accumulation of bookish knowledge. ‘Gandhiji’s purpose of education was to raise man to a higher order through full development of the individual and the evolution of a new man’.² Development of Self-dependency, self-sufficiency, self-awareness, love for truth, non-violence, creativity, life skill, values in life , soul force and will force are more pertinent components in Gandhian view points.

¹ Wasey, A. & Ehsas, F. (Ed.).(2008). *Education Gandhi and Man*. select writings Khwaja Ghulam Saiyyadain. Shakarpur, Delhi: Shipra Publications, P.12.

² Dash, B.N, & Dash, N.(2009). *Thoughts and Theories of Indian Educational Thinkers*. New Delhi: Dominant Publishers and Distributers, P.123

Education is not mere Literacy:

Mahatma Gandhi has given emphasis on acquiring good habits and believed that the main function of the teacher is not to teach the alphabet but to inculcate humanity. Mere literacy is not education.³

Education as Training: When Mahatma Gandhi was in the prison, he read Emerson, Ruskin and Mazzini. He had also been reading the *Upanishadas*. All confirmed him that 'education does not mean knowledge of letters but it means character building, it means knowledge of duty.'⁴

Education as Service:

Mahatma Gandhi opined that true education lies in serving others. 'A great deal of religious obligations on us is fulfilled when we nurse the sick.' He was not worried of the bookish learning so long as the students performed their duties and observed solemn ethical conduct.⁵

Education as laying strong Foundation:

Mahatma Gandhi considered education as the foundation of life. The ordinary meaning of education is knowledge of letters. To teach boys reading, writing, and arithmetic is called primary education. He believed that a man has had a liberal education has been so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will and does with ease and pleasure. One who is truly educated is defined by him as- 'whose intellect is clear, cold, logic engine with all parts of equal strength and in smooth working order, Whose mind is stored with a knowledge of the fundamental truths of nature,... Character-building has the first place in it and that is primary education. A building erected on that foundation will last.'⁶

³ Indian Opinion. 18 May 1907 (CW6. PP. 484-85) cited in Singh, Y.K. (2009). Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. New Delhi, APH Publishing Corporation, PP.1-2

⁴ Letter to Manilal Gandhi, 25 March, 1909 (CW9, P. 208). Cited in Ibid.,P.2

⁵ Letter to Ramdas Gandhi (*The Making of the Mahatma*. P.97) cited in Singh, Y.K.(2009). Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. New Delhi, APH Publishing Corporation, P.3

⁶ Hind Swaraj, Chapter xviii, 21 November, 1909(CW 10. PP.54-55). cited in Singh, Y.K. (2009). Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. New Delhi, APH Publishing Corporation, P.6

Education as Liberation:

Mahatma Gandhi believed that true education makes man liberate from bondage and permanent liberation from desire. It is the ultimate goal of life. He said,

'That is true education which leads to freedom. That which liberates is education. Liberation is of two kinds. One form of liberation consists in securing the freedom of the country from foreign rule. Such freedom may prove short-lived. The other kind of liberation is for all time.....the ultimate moksha.'⁷

Education as assimilation: Mahatma Gandhi expressed his opinion that it is the duty of students to assimilate whatever they have learnt. They should have religious and moral instructions as much of it as they can usefully apply.

'They need education in such measure that it would not become too much of a useless burden on them.'⁸

Overcoming Fear: Gandhi believed that real education teaches pupils to become more courageous. It teaches to follow the truth and to be devoted for the sake of own country.

'For us, fear has become synonymous with life. What is the use of that education which does not help us to overcome fear, but which, on the contrary, strengthens it? What kind of an education is it which does not teach us to follow truth and to cultivate devotion for the country?'⁹

Learning and courage: Learning without courage is not the goal of true education. Mental strength and courage is gained through work oriented education. Mahatma Gandhi suggested that - 'Let them (students) realize that learning without courage is like a waxen statue beautiful to look at but bound to melt at the least touch of a hot substance.'¹⁰

Education as Contemplation: Mahatma Gandhi opined that education should contemplate the whole life. Mere memorizing and bookish knowledge is not education. He had

⁷ Speech to students, Ahmedabad, 18 November 1926(CW 18, P.471) cited in, Ibid., P.7

⁸ Speech to Students in Bombay, 14 February, 1915(CW13, P.23). cited in, Ibid., P.7

⁹ Speech at students meeting, Agra, 23 November 1920 (CW19, P16) cited in, Singh, Y.K. (2009). Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. New Delhi, APH Publishing Corporation, P.8

¹⁰Young India, 12 July, 1928, P. 236. cited in, Ibid., P.8

no faith in the so-called system of education which produced 'men of learning without the backbone of character.'¹¹

True Education of the Child: Mahatma Gandhi believed that true education does not mean knowledge of the alphabet. Knowledge of alphabet is only a means to education. But true education implies a child's learning how to put his mind and all his senses to good use. He believed that a child who has made very good progress in his education 'who can understand the difference between truth and untruth, worth and worthlessness and chooses the good and true, while rejecting the bad and the untrue.'¹²

Education and Culture: Culture is the refinement of feelings. Education makes a man cultured. Cultural progress achieved through education makes a society and nation healthy. 'Education' means knowledge of literature.

'Education is a means and culture is the end. The latter is possible even without education. For instance, if a child is brought up in a truly cultured family, it will consciously imbibe culture from its family, in our country at any rate. Present-day education and culture have no connection with each other.'¹³

Development of Body, mind and Spirit:

The English word 'education' is derived from the Latin words 'Educere' 'Educare' 'Educo' and 'Educatum'. 'Educere' etymologically means 'drawing out'. That means to bring out the best of the latent talents. Development of a certain thing does not mean the change its kind or quality, but it is to bring out the latent qualities. Hence 'education' means 'unfoldment'.

True education is something different. Man is made of three constituents, the body, mind, and spirit. True education leads the development of all these constituents. Spiritual development causes the development of soul force and will force. True education is that which leads to '*moksha*'.

¹¹ Interview with W. W. Hall, October 1928 (CW37, P. 320). cited in, Ibid., P.9

¹² Navajivan, 2 June 1929 (CW41, P.6). cited in, Singh, Y.K. (2009). Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. New Delhi, APH Publishing Corporation, PP.1-2

¹³ Letter to Premabehn Katak, 5 January, 1931 (CW 45, PP. 63-64). Ibid., P.14

The maximum development of body, mind and spirit is main objectives of true education. Physical development is realized when all organs of the body function effectively and become active at will. Filling a lot of information does not indicate the real development of mind. Well educated mind always serves in the desired manner and shows positive and adoptive health behaviour. Spiritual development brings enlightenment and enables learners for self realization.

“Education can also be understood in another sense; that is, whatever leads to a full or maximum development of all the three, the body, mind and spirit, may also be called education.”¹⁴

Making the Right Choice : Mahatma Gandhi wanted to make a revolutionary change in the existing system of education. He suggested that this revolutionary change would be possible when hands on activities were given more emphasis. It would be miss interpretation only if mind is given importance in the process of development. Development of hands and feet is not less important. Right type of education helps to think correctly and to discriminate between right and wrong, good and bad and to assimilate needs and for its right choice.

According to him, ‘Our education has got to be revolutionized. The brain must be educated through the hand. An education which does not teach us to discriminate between good and bad, to assimilate the one and eschew the other is a misnomer.’¹⁵

Making the Whole Man: Mahatma Gandhi believed that the true economics of education lies in this fact that making of whole man is possible through the harmonious development of body, heart and soul. He gave emphasis on the training of all organs of body and it is the quickest way intellectual development. He categorically emphasizes on the harmonious development of body and mind with corresponding awakening of the soul. According to him,

‘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... A proper and all round development of the mind, therefore, can take place only when it precedes *paripassu* with the education of the physical and spiritual faculties of the child.’¹⁶

¹⁴ Navjiban Education Supplement, 28 February 1926(CW30, pp. 58-59). Cited in, Singh, Y.K. (2009). *Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*.New Delhi, APH Publishing Corporation,P.12

¹⁵ Discussion with teacher Trainees, Harijan,18 February, 1939(CW68, pp. 372-73). Ibid.,P.1

¹⁶ Harijan, 8 may 1937 ,p. 104 cited in Singh, Y.K. (2009). *Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*.New Delhi, APH Publishing Corporation,17

Education of the hand

Mahatma Gandhi advocated the education of the hand. Training of hands is the source of skill development. So a socially useful productive handicraft is the heart of Basic Education. Training of hands habituates man to think critically and creatively. Man becomes a creator of through the education of hand. He said, 'Literary education should follow the education of the hand – the one gift that visibly distinguishes man from beast.'¹⁷

True education is the knowledge of the atman or true self. It is the knowledge of God and Truth. The study of literature, the study of sciences and the study of art have the same goal of knowledge of the self. Mahatma Gandhi says,

'True education is that which helps us to know the atman, our true self, God and Truth. To acquire this knowledge, some persons may feel the study of literature, some for a study of physical sciences and some other for art. But every branch of knowledge should have as its goal knowledge of the self. That is so in the ashram.'

Strengthening of character:

Real education does not mean packing the brain with so many facts and figures, It does not mean in passing examinations by reading numerous books. Real education is the developing of character. Without developing of character the pursuance of non-violence is impossible. Formation of character is the foundation of life. He says, "In my wanderings among the students I made the discovery at an early stage of the movement that in order to conduct a movement of this kind character must be the foundation. We also found that 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. I do not to what extent you students of France lay stress upon character rather than upon intellectual studies, but I can say this that if you explore the possibilities of non-violence you will find that without characters it will prove a profitless study."¹⁸

¹⁷ Harijan, 8 March 1935, p. 28. Cited in Singh, Y.K. (2009). Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. New Delhi, APH Publishing Corporation, P.16

¹⁸ Speech at meeting of students, Marseilles, Young India, 1 October 1931 (CW 47, P.422). cited in, Singh, Y.K. (2009). *Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*. New Delhi, APH Publishing Corporation.

Culture as the Foundation of Education:

Mahatma Gandhi gave importance on the cultural aspect of education. He opined that the inner development of a person is reflected in his conduct. Ancient tradition and culture help in the formation of personal behaviour. The foundation of education is thus a glorious culture of nation. He says,

‘I attach far more importance to the cultural aspect of education than to the literacy. Culture is the foundation, Inner culture must be reflected in your speech, the way in which treat visitors and guests, and behave towards one another and your teachers and elders.’¹⁹

Education for a New World: Education is the way of creating a new world order based on Truth, tolerance, peace, non-violence and global harmony. He says, ‘Education must be of a new type for the sake of the creation of a new world.’ A new world based on mutual cooperation, mutual understanding can be created through the introduction of production oriented education. Students while engaged in productive work will be able to learn self-sufficiency, dignity of labour, mutual co-operation, social awareness, mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence of all living beings.

Nationalism: The main object of education is to bring national consciousness. A sense of oneness is grown through the education. True education enables students to serve for the progress of their own country. They do not look for their self-interest. National interest is given priority. National feeling is created through national type of education. According to him,

“Education is just means. If it is not accompanied by truthfulness, firmness, patience and other virtues, it remains sterile, and sometimes does harm instead of good. The object of education is not to be able to earn money, but to improve oneself and to serve the country. If this object is not realized, it must be taken that the money spent on education has been wasted.”²⁰ Harijan, 1947, p. 494

¹⁹ Speech at Kasturba Balika Ashram, 20 April 1946 (CW 84, p.36). Ibid., 19

²⁰ Pandey, J. (1998). *Gandhi and 21st century*. New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, pp. 219-220

Public Good: Education is applied for the public good. The villagers apply the new invention of science and technology in the field of agriculture and cottage industry. Thus the development of village economy enhanced. Mahatma Gandhi says,

“Knowledge is justified only when it is put to good use and employed in the public cause. Otherwise, as we pointed out once earlier and as everyone will readily admit, it is like poison.”²¹

Service of Humanity: Education is a tool that changes in the attitude of learners for the service of humanity. Self-less service, dedication to the welfare of humanity, personal ethics all the values can be imparted through the education. Mahatma Gandhi said that the students receive education not for their own benefit but for the service of their mother land. The good educational system should train a proper citizen against social or other evils. In Gandhian system of education a harmonious balance is reached between the individual and the social aim of education.

“Their end was not to get more than a decent livelihood or how to shine in life, but to serve humanity in order to serve the mother land. The education they received ought not to be prostituted to the base use of earning livelihood; it ought to be used to promote moral growth.”²² Speech at Law College, Trivandrum, 14 March 1925 (CW26, p.307)

Purity of personal Life:

Absolute purity of heart is the end of education. True education is for the purity of personal life. In the ‘Gurukul’ system of education the word student was termed as *brahmachari*. The *Brahmachari* led a religious life and gain purity of heart. Religion, ethics and spirituality were synchronized with the life of the *Brahmacharis*. Personal ethics defined by the Vedas led them to form a good moral character. According to Mahatma Gandhi,

“Purity of personal life is the one indispensable condition for building a sound education. ...And I hope you know what the word *brahmachari* means. It means searcher after God. The end of all knowledge must be building of character.”²³

²¹ Indian opinion, 4 April 1908 (CW8, p.171) Cited in, Singh, Y.K. (2009). Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. New Delhi, APH Publishing Corporation, P.37

²² Pani, S.P., Pattnaik, S.K., (2006), Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Gandhi on Education,

²³ Speech at Voorhee’s college, vellore, 30 August 1927 (CW, pp.422-23) cited in, Singh, Y.K. (2009). *Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*. New Delhi, APH Publishing Corporation. P. 43

Quest for Truth: True education helps to know the Atman, the true self, God and truth. This knowledge is gained by the study of literature, sciences and art. But every branch of knowledge should have as its goal, knowledge of the self. Devotion to duty and the spirit of service are necessary for proper development. According to Mahatma Gandhi,

“There is a science of every type of work---whether it is cooking, sanitation, carpentry or spinning. Everybody who does his work with the attitude of a student knows its science or discovers it.”²⁴

National character: Mahatma Gandhi believed that true education develops national character. Courage, strength, virtue, working ability all these qualities are grown by the Basic education. These qualities help to form a strong character of the individual and the society will be built on the strong foundation. The nation will be developed maintaining healthy relation with the states if the individual character is developed. He says,

‘I would try to develop courage, strength, virtue, the ability to forget oneself in working towards great aims. This is more important than literacy; academic learning is only a means to this greater end. I would feel that if we succeed in building the character of the individual, society will take care of itself. But in a nation where character is developed in all individuals, there can be no conflict between the dictates of one’s own conscience and those of the state.’²⁵

Self- control: Mahatma Gandhi considered education as self-control. He opined that true education would lead a life of self-control. In a letter to Bhogilal he expressed his opinion. ‘True education is development. One should, therefore, go in for such kind of education as will bring it about. It need not be of one fixed type. Hence it is not necessary to say anything on that subject. One should lead a life of self-control.’²⁶

Humility: Mahatma Gandhi did not give emphasis on passing of examination or obtaining degree. He emphasized on learning to be properly used through humility. True education enables individual to achieve humility and service to others. In a Speech at Dayaagram jethamal college, Korachi he emphasized on achieving humility of students. ‘But, if learning is to be put to proper use, if it is to be used only for the service, one should acquire more and more humility every day. No service is possible without it.’²⁷

²⁴ From a microfilm of the Gujrati: M. M. U./II, 10 July 1932 (CW 50, p.182) cited in, P. 44

²⁵ Remarks of mankind, 1932, pp. 104-05 cited in, Singh, Y.K. (2009). *Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*. New Delhi, APH Publishing Corporation.P.45

²⁶ Letter to Bhogilal, 20 February 1933 (CW53, p, 366) cited in, Ibid.,P. 45

²⁷ Speech at Dayaagram jethamal college, korachi,10 july 1934 (CW58 , p.164) cited in, Singh, Y.K. (2009). *Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*. New Delhi, APH Publishing Corporation.P.45

Development of Independent Thinking: In a speech at Lahore Mahatma Gandhi advised students to acquire independent thinking and opined that education liberates man and saves from darkness, sensuous pleasure and false behaviour.

‘At present the minds of the students become dull there. They can only imitate. Instead of this, they must acquire the power of independent thinking. Education is considered necessary to save ourselves from darkness, sensuous pleasures and capricious behavior.’

Conclusion: Teacher is the friend, philosopher and guide of the students. Teachers should have motherly feeling towards the students. So Gandhiji pronounced the term ‘teacher’ as mother teacher. He advocates devotion to the teachers ‘Guru Bhakti’ To him teacher is a creator of knowledge, preserver of knowledge and destroyer the weeds of ignorance like Lord *Brahma, Vishnu and Mahaswara* in Hindu religion. He says, “Education of the heart could only be done through the living touch of the teacher.” There should be intimate relation and personal touch between the teacher and the taught. Gandhiji suggested that if the best flowers among mankind take to teaching, society is abundantly enriched , their fragrance bond beauty are then made the best use of it. Therefore, teachers should develop such character, which will help them to elicit devotion from the student. Gandhiji says,“ Woe to the teacher who teaches one thing with the lips and carries another in the heart’

So it may be concluded that quality education seeks to perceive the complete personality of the child, and enhances the development in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain and hence facilitates the process of evaluation through criterion referenced tests. The approaches are planned by the teacher in order to bring desirable changes in the behaviour of the students to achieve master learning as goal.

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