



## Dharma of Student, Teacher and Education in Present Context: A Gandhian Perspective

SAHDEV LUHAR

Assistant Professor of English,  
N. S. Patel Arts College, Anand (Gujarat).

### Abstract:

*Gandhi held very high conception for student, teacher and education. Most of Gandhi's important writings on education and duties of student-teacher have been compiled and edited by Bharatan Kumarappa in two books Basic Education (1951) and Towards New Education (1953) as well as some of his essential writings such as Hind Swaraj (1909) and others. Gandhi proposed a humanistic approach to education. He believed education aims at building character, and hence it is the duty of a teacher to provide value-based education – an education that moulds human morally. He opined that education can play an effectual role in developing a wholesome human personality capable of removing all social vices and building a social order wherein man can live in harmonious way with others. For him, education is a potential instrument of man-making and social engineering and therefore he transmitted that education should draw out the best in the child – body, mind and spirit – for developing peace loving human personality. The ideas of Gandhi were not implemented in education system due to some practical problems but now the time has arrived to follow the Gandhian philosophy if we want to survive and create an independent India. In this way, this paper explores the ideas of Gandhi once again and makes an appeal that the teacher and students should be responsible towards the future of country*

### KEYWORDS:

Gandhian Philosophy, Education, Value-based Education

An apostle of inner aesthetic excellence, Gandhi showed the world a way to humanity. The greatness of Gandhi was not instant inundation of greatness but rather the greatness of a common man who through a long process of experiment and error, insight and astuteness, aspiration and endeavour, and achieved a greatness undoubtedly of his own. The story of his memoirs “An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth” is an exceptional evidence of this process. Gandhi is not of an age but for all ages; his ideas are not for one country but for the whole world; corporally he has passed away, but perpetually he is breathing in those who have raised their voice against any (social) evils through the non-violative weapons of Satya and Ahimsa. His life and thoughts will go on stimulating the numerous succeeding ages all over the world. One of the greatest gifts of Gandhi to the whole world is his inspirational

Please cite this Article as :SAHDEV LUHAR , Dharma of Student, Teacher and Education in Present Context:A Gandhian Perspective : Golden Research Thoughts (Sept ; 2012)



thoughts on the education system in India. Still rooted in the Macaulay-an method of teaching, our present education system, immediately, needs to be reformed.

The time has arrived to reconsider the obligatory duty of students, teacher and education in the present context of India. Gandhi has given us his pearls of wisdom for the efficient functioning of the education system of India. No doubt Indian education system has progressed a lot in the field of education but it is off track progress; a progress that has lost its sound moral footing. Hence we find our politicians, principle-less; engineers, ethics-less; doctors, disloyal; managers, manner-less; teachers, treacherous and students, selfish. Education does not only entail imparting the knowledge of letters but cultivating the moral character of people. Education is the process of making man human; not the process of making man machine, robot. What is the use of the education that fails to make man morally wise, sensitive, and insightful? Our education system, that has unknowingly created evils in the society, needs to be rinsed with Gandhi's educational philosophy. If the students and the teachers become aware of their duty towards the (re)formation of country, the modern education system will consequentially terminate all the social tribulations.

Our education system needs to revive the forgotten definition of, what we can say, the real, true or the living education. True and real education is, "an all round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit." <sup>1</sup> Echoing Gandhian faith, Sri Aurobindo puts true and living education as:

True and living education is which helps to bring out to full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life all that is in the individual man, which at the same time helps him to enter into his right relation with the life, mind and the soul of the people to which he belongs and with that great total life, mind and soul of humanity of which he himself is unit and his people or nation a living, a separate and yet inseparable member. (Italics mine) <sup>2</sup>

By considering these notions of education we can best arrive at the clear idea of what we shall strive to accomplish by our education system. We shall, here, consider the dharma of education, teacher, and student – in reverse order than suggested in the title of the article. For Gandhi, literacy should not be the end of the education, nor, should be its beginning; it is just medium. What Gandhi believes is that the true education draws out and stimulates the intellectual and physical faculties of the students. Education should produce good citizens, not public. Education has to make harmonious development of body, mind and spirit. Any education system that stresses only one of these aspects of human personality can be truly said deficient. This is the defect which is prevailing in the modern education system of India.

Gandhi conceived Education not in a parochial sense of a classroom process but in a broad sense of a life long process which begins with the beginning and ends with end of the life going on persistently and incessantly. The prominent precepts of Gandhi's new educational philosophy were: (1) free and compulsory education, (2) craft-centred education, (3) self-supporting education, (4) mother-tongue based education, and, (5) education based on non-violence. So far the first precept is concerned; the central government and state government have implemented the policy of free primary education to all children which will soon reach to the remotest corner of India, so it is better to reconsider the rest. Craft-centred education is essential to make man self-reliant and self-supportive. But in today's context 'craft-centred' does not simply imply the craft which is associated with the natural objects, but today, as it is observed, our students also need to be acquainted with the primary technical objects or electronic equipments which we daily use and to repair them. This will develop a scientific attitude in them. Craft-centred education should be the part of our primary education system. So by the time students complete their education, they will learn many creative things, which will be more useful in their life than the knowledge of letters only. Gandhi believed in tension-free education but our education system is found to be increasing the tension of students, we have to make it easy. Gandhi's stress on mother-tongue based education does not denote that he was anti- English language but he was against the psychological slavery that English has brought to India. In Hind Swaraj, the Reader, one of the two speakers in discussion, asks whether English education is unnecessary or obtaining the Home Rule or Swaraj. The Editor, another speaker and spokesperson of Gandhi, polemically replies "yes and no." For him, English education is unnecessary as he firmly believes that -

To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them. The foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us. I do not suggest that he has any such intention, but that has been the result. It is not a sad commentary that we should have to speak of Home Rule in a foreign tongue?

And it is worthy of note that the system which the Europeans have discarded are the system in

vogue among us. We ignorantly adhere to their cast-off systems.<sup>3</sup>

**Gandhi makes a note of the ludicrousness which English education has brought and our pitiable condition –**

We write to each other in faulty English, and from this even our M.A.s are not free; our best thoughts are expressed in English; the proceedings of our Congress are conducted in English; our best newspaper are printed in English. If this state of things continues or a long time, posterity will – it is my firm opinion – condemn and curse us.

It is worth noting that, by receiving English education, we have enslaved the nation. Hypocrisy, tyranny, etc. have increased; English-knowing Indians have not hesitated to cheat and strike terror into the people. Now, we are doing anything for the people at all, we are paying only a portion of the debt due them.

Is it not a painful thing that, if I want to go to a court of justice, I must employ the English language as a medium, that when I become a barrister, I may not speak my mother tongue and that someone else should have to translate to me from my own language? Is not this absolutely absurd? Is it not a sign of slavery? Am I to blame the English for it or myself? It is we, the English-knowing Indians, that have enslaved India. The curse of the nation will rest not upon the English but upon us.<sup>4</sup>

**Focusing on the necessity of teaching English in India, Gandhi observes:**

We are so much beset by the disease of civilization that we cannot altogether do without English-education. Those we have already received it may make good use of it wherever necessary. In our dealings with the English people, when we can only correspond with them through their language, and for the purpose of knowing how disgusted they (the English) have themselves become with their civilization, we may use or learn English, as the case may be.<sup>5</sup>

However Gandhi was not against English but the intellectual colonialism which the English has brought. Gandhi knew that primary education in any language, except mother-tongue, will shrink the intellectual development of the students hence he emphasized the role of mother-tongue in the primary education. Gandhi insisted on inculcating the virtue of non-violence in students. Initially indicated to sort out the communal and international strife, the Gandhian idea of non-violence is need of the clashing condition of India which will also impart the moral character to the students.

Reflecting on the duty of teacher, Gandhi notes that education is just tool and teacher has to use this tool to shape the students. The first thing that a teacher has to always remember that he has to deal with breathing subject – an infinitely subtle and sensitive organism, and not with the machinery, so he should be sensitive in his behavior with the students. He should provide comprehensive education to the students without the evils of the strain and cramming. The first principle of true education that a teacher should always remember is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not a taskmaster or instructor; he is aide, helper and guide whose business is to suggest and not to impose. We can attribute the following duties to a teacher in present context:

(1) to enable pupils to make a happy synchronization of work and mind from creative and critical points of view, (2) to ensure pupils to have self-realization and self-activity for moral, social, physical, creative, aesthetic and intellectual development under the umbrella of unwarranted freedom, (3) to enable pupils to feel and inculcate the spirit of essential goodness of humanity in a naturalistic setting of learning in a joyous atmosphere of mutual understanding and self-reliance, (4) to enable pupils to have the training of self-understanding and self-discovery in order to have a preparation to contribute their best to the cause of a better world to live in, and (5) to enable pupils to be fired with the zeal for knowing the unknown and finding out the nobler avenues for efflorescence of his creative and critical appreciation for whatever is true, good and beautiful.<sup>7</sup>

A teacher can fulfill this duty very effectively when he creates mutual relationship with his students. His duty does not end up with his working hour; he is all-time teacher. He should not focus on the particular group of the students who are quick learners, he should also encourage the slow learners and assign them apposite task according to their caliber. A teacher is the role-model for his students, so he has to also cultivate moral character which his student will imbibe from him. He has to always remember that he is giving shape to the future of his country, so from initial stage he should also make students devoted towards the reformation of the country.

Students were nearest and dearest to Gandhi. During the non-co-operation movement, on Gandhi's clarion call, many students left their schools and colleges and joined Gandhi's army. Many collegian students later on became his esteemed co-workers. His contacts with students Gandhi realized that young students have energetic powers in them, and if they are guided on right path, their latent talent can be used for the development of the country. He found that there is solid need of character formation of students morally. In his book, called *To Students* compiled by Bharatan Kumarappa, Gandhi explains to the students their role in the society and country. Gandhi stresses on the need of religious base in students saying that:

I confess to a deep sense of sorrow that faith is gradually disappearing in the student world. When I suggest to a Hindu boy to have recourse to Ramayana, he stares at me and wonders who Rama may be; when I ask a Mussalman boy to read the Koran and fear God, he confesses his inability to read Koran and Allah is mere lip-profession. How can I convince such boys that the first step to a true education is a pure heart? If the education you get turns you away from the God, I do not know how it is going to help you and how you are going to help the world. You were right in saying in your address, that I am endeavouring to see God through the service of humanity, for I know that God is neither in heaven, nor down below, but in every one ...<sup>8</sup>

**Correlating religion with moral values, Gandhi goes on saying that:**

For morals, ethics, and religion are convertible terms. A moral life without reference to religion is like a house built upon sand. And religion divorced from morality is like 'sounding brass' good only for making a noise and breaking heads. Morality includes truth, ahimsa and continence. Every virtue that mankind has ever practiced is referable to and derived from these three fundamental virtues. Non-violence and continence are again derivable from Truth, which for me is God.<sup>9</sup>

According to Gandhi, students have to nurture moral values in them. In a speech delivered at the meeting organized by the Association of the past and presents students of Marseilles on September 11, 1931 and later on published in *Young India* on October 1, 1931, Gandhi makes the following observations:

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 know to what extent you students of France lay stress upon character rather than their intellectual studies, but I can say this that if you explore new possibilities of non-violence you will find that without character it will prove a profitless study.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore students should have religiously rooted moral character. Apart from these, students should have love for country. Under the impact of westernization, students are inclining themselves towards the western culture, keeping Indian culture aside. Students have to realize that they are the future of India; they should actively participate in important matters concerning our country including politics as well.

In this way, looking on the scenario of education modern in times, we all have to agree that now the time has arrived to follow the Gandhian philosophy if we want to survive and create an independent India. Gandhi – a solution to all the problems...!

**WORK CITED:**

1. Gandhi, MK. Harijan: July 31, 1937.
2. Aurobindo, Sri. *True and Living Education* (SABLC Vol. 26). Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1972.
3. Gandhi, MK. *Hind Swaraj*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 2006 Reprint.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Chakrabarti, Mohit. *Mahatma Gandhi: A Revaluation*. New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1994.
8. Kumarappa, Bharatan ed. *MK Gandhi: To Students*. Ahmadabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 2008 Reprint.
9. Ibid.
10. (Qtd. in) Chakrabarti, Mohit. *Mahatma Gandhi: A Revaluation*. New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1994.