

Research Paper

Gandhian Philosophy and its relevance Today

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ABSTRACT

The educative process implies the process of educating the child. From the child's point of view it is an act of learning and from that the teacher it is a process of modifying the behavior of the young child through the various means and devices that school offers. We have already seen that the process has been regarded by

Adams as bi-polar in nature in as much as it involves the interplay of the educator and the educand. The personality of the educator acts on that of the educand in order to modify the latter's development. On the educator's side this process is conscious and deliberate. He knows and fully realizes that his aim is to bring about the development of the educand along definite lines through the modification of his behavior. We have seen that this modification can take place either by the direct application of the educator's personality to that of the educand or indirectly through the use of knowledge in its various forms-the knowledge that is communicated by the educator or other agencies including the environment.

Dewey's and the Gandhian philosophy of education make us see and believe that this process is not bi-polar but tri-polar in its nature. We have the teacher, the taught and the society with all its ramifications-the political-economic conditions and the wider society of the world beyond one's own country.

The child is to live in and for the community to which he belongs; hence true education comes through "the simulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situation in which he finds himself." We have discussed how society affects the educational aims, methods, administration and curricula. This impact has been brought out even in the democracy of education. The educator, the educand and society are, thus, the three great poles in the educative process. Their inter relationship depends on and is determined by many factors such as aims of education, the nature of curriculum, educational values inherent in aims and curricula, freedom and discipline.

Like many great thinkers, prophets and philosophers, Gandhi Ji was convinced that injustice, oppression and violence manifest from human heart and that education can play an effective role in developing a wholesome personality capable of resisting war, violence, injustice, oppression, violence and building a social order wherein man can live in peace and harmony with others. Since education is a potential instrument of man making and social engineering, he concentrated on an education

that could draw out the best in the child-body, mind and spirit-for developing of peace loving human personality. Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi:-

It is beyond any doubt that the relationship between education and philosophy is unbreakable. Philosophy is to be seen as a seed from which a tree grows. We can give the name of education to that tree. Philosophy which is a separate subject is before us, its need and importance cannot be ignored. It is only with the help of educational philosophy that the teachers, parents, school, government and other related people combine together to realize the aims of education and make concerted efforts in this context.

Gandhi, a 'half-naked fakir' as Churchill called him was not a revolutionary personality. By the help of career if trying and non-violence he could make India free. Dedication to the welfare of the nation was the aim of his life. For his dedication and sacrifice, he became a heritage of India. Gandhi ji looked upon his life as a series of experiments with truth and concluded that "life consists in nothing but those experiments". His life proved that human life transformation is possible through a "life process of experimentation in day-to-day activity".

Gandhian education has been characterised as encompassing the head, the heart, and the hands. It is a dynamic side of the philosophy of life.

Gandhi Ji as Naturalist

Aristotle was perhaps the first naturalistic educator. His educational aim was to develop man's nature for rational living. Among the other naturalistic philosophers have been such noted thinkers as Comte, Darwin, Democritus, Hobbes, Thomas Huxley, Lamarck, Locke, Karl Marx and Herbert Spencer etc.

In educational theory naturalism advocates as Adams points out, a system of training which does not depend upon schools and books, but upon the manipulations of the actual life of the educand. Its aim is to create conditions in which natural development will take place. It protests against the established systems that have become stereotyped. It stands for simplicity and is averse to sophistication. Its watch-word is "Back to Nature".

“I am convinced that the present system of education is not only wasteful but positively harmful. Most of the boys are lost to the parents and to the occupations to which they are born. They pick up evil habits, effect urban ways and get a smattering of something which may be anything but education.”

Gandhi Ji as Idealist

The fundamental proposition is that the mental or spiritual is more real than the material and that true reality is spiritual rather than material. Idealists believe that the objective universe is only an embodiment of mind and hence the study of humanities is more important than that of the positive sciences. Philosophers who can be called as Idealist are, Socrates, Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Berkekey, Kant, Hegel, Fitch and Schopenhaur etc.. The chief among the idealists who made an important contribution to the philosophy of education were Comeniys, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Herbert Spencer and Froebel.

Gandhi ji wanted to establish the kingdom of God on earth. He points the way through personal example for the application of the principles of all religions to life here and now in order that God may be realized by everyone in his life.

Gandhi ji also seeks to produce a harmoniously balanced personality through education which provides for physical activities like care of body and skills and spiritual activities which are intellectual, moral, aesthetic and religious. Gandhi ji conceived the purpose of education to be moral character. He also believes that the individual's potentialities exist in a dormant state in his original nature from childhood.

Gandhi Ji as Pragmatist

As compared with Naturalism and Idealism, Pragmatism is a doctrine of recent growth. It maintains that a true judgment is one which gives satisfactory results in experience. It regards satisfactory working and utility as the criteria of the true and the good. Truth is something which happens to a judgment and if a belief works, we have a right to hold it. The leading pragmatists include James, Schiller, Dewey and Kilpatrick

Acc. James Ross: “Pragmatism in education aligns itself with naturalism in starting with the child as he is; but, perhaps more consciously and deliberately than naturalism it seeks to modify the original nature of the child by providing him with a helpful type of experience, particularly that of a social character, in which he has direct participation. It is the child's nature to experiment with life, and he is encouraged to do this, to do this, contrive new responses to deal with the new situations of which his educator sees that he has a plentiful supply.”

Gandhi ji's approach to philosophy and education is pragmatic. Gandhi Ji believes in the absoluteness of truth. He, therefore, calls his autobiography “The Story of My Experiments with Truth” the experiments which he relates in his Autobiography are spiritual or rather moral. He does not claim any degree of absoluteness or perfection for these experiments. He clearly observed: “I claim for them nothing more does a scientist who, though he conducts his experiments with the utmost accuracy, forethought and minuteness, never claims any finality about his conclusions, but keeps an open mind regarding them. I have gone through deep self-introspection,

searched myself through and through, and explained and analysed every psychological situation. Yet I am far from claiming any finality about my conclusions. One claim I do indeed make and it is this. For me they appear to be absolutely correct and seem for the time being to be final. But at every step I have carried out the process of acceptance or rejection and acted accordingly. And so long as my acts satisfy my reason and my heart. I must firmly adhere to my original conclusions.”

Ultimate aim of education

Gandhi being an idealist believed in spiritual aims of education. So he gives his meaning of education thus: “By education I mean an alround drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. It is one of the, means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education”. True goal of education according to Gandhi, is not intellectual but moral and spiritual. True education should result not in material power but in spiritual force. It strengthen man's faith in god and nor weakening it. Faith in God was an indispensable condition for him to achieve the ultimate aim, i.e. selfrealisation.

“Long before I undertook the education of the youngsters of the Tolstoy Farm I had realized that the training of the spirit was a thing by itself. To develop the spirit is to build character and to enable one to work towards knowledge of God and self-realisation. And I held that this was an essential part of the training of the young and that all training without culture of the spirit was of no use and might be even harmful.”

Immediate aims of Education

“Nor must we forget the physical aspect of education, which may be seen as two-fold. Firstly, the health and fitness of the body must receive due attention, for without such health and fitness the pursuit of the spiritual values is seriously handicapped. Secondly, there must be a fostering of the bodily skills that are the executive instruments of man's invention, enabling him to the create an artificial physical environment more in accordance with his desires and needs than the one given him. Physical and spiritual activities are not, of course, entirely separable; but have a certain amount o f common ground. Moral values, which are spiritual, can be found in physical activities; intellectual values are pursued in the application of skills to the problems of the physical; and aesthetic values are discovered in the mastery man acquires over his material in his crafts.”

I had no difficulty, says Gandhi Ji, “in giving at the Tolstoy Farm (Transvaal) all round development to the boys and girls for whose training I was directly responsible.” According to Gandhi ji “you have to train the boys in one occupation or another. Round this special occupation you will train up his mind, his hand-writing, his artistic sense and so on.”

Education for character building

Character building was the fundamental enterprise in Gandhi Ji's ideal school. Development of personality was more significant than accumulation of intellectual tools and academic knowledge. Good education is “that which draws out and stimulate the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of children.” His concept of personality was based on ideal man of the 'Gita' which advocates

integrated personality (Sthita Prajna).

- **Community central education**
Gandhi ji advocated community centred-education. According to him, the school is basically a community linked to social achievements. Students should learn how to live together in a community on the basis of co-operation, truth and non-violence. He executed this idea in the Sevagram Ashram, where the community was created on the basis of co-operation, sympathy and self-help.
- **Self supporting education**
Gandhi ji aimed at the self-supporting aspect of education. He advocated knowledge through work. The use of craft at all levels of education was his concept of 'Karma Yoga'. The introduction of craft in education was an extension of his theory of “Bread labour”. He was against bookishness and excessive verbalizing in teaching. His aim was to bridge the gap between education and life by drawing upon the cultural, social and vocational potentialities of the students and to make education 'life centred'.
Gandhi Ji's view on Curriculum
The craft or productive work should be rich in educative possibilities. The object of the Wardha Scheme was not primarily the production of craftsman who can practice a craft mechanically, but the “exploitation for educative purposes of the resources implicit in craft-work.” The committee recommended three suitable basic crafts, viz., 1 Agriculture 2 Spinning and weaving; and 3 Cardboard-work, wood work, and metal work. In order to work out an effective and natural co-ordination of the various subjects and to make the syllabus a means of adjusting the child intelligently and actively to his environment, the committee chose three centres, intrinsically interconnected, as the focus for the curriculum, viz the physical environment, the social environment and the craft-work which is the natural meeting point since it utilizes the resources of the former for the purposes of the latter.
Mother tongue: mother tongue as medium of instructions
Practical mathematics: Arithmetics, Geometry, Algebra and Measurement etc.
General Science: Zoology,, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Home Science and Gardening etc.
Music
Drawing
Health Science
Moral Education
Gandhi Ji's view on Teaching Method
According to Gandhi Ji, the best method of teaching is 'Learning by doing' and 'Learning by experience'. He had also faith in hymnology, meditation and remembering as well. His main base of any method of teaching was to present knowledge in a compact form as one unit and to develop it through some activity. He called it co-relation method. Gandhi Ji emphasized that whatever has to be taught to the child, should be taught in a natural manner.
Gandhi Ji's view on Women education
Gandhi ji considers women as the mother of the race. Gandhi ji opined that English education is meant for men and women will not profit by it. Therefore a proper training should be given to them, so that they can discharge their responsibilities well. Gandhi ji on

women's education, said, “Man and woman are equal rank, but they are not identical. They are a peerless pair being supplementary to one another, each helps the other, so that without the one the existence of the other cannot be conceived, and therefore it follows as a necessary corollary from those facts that anything that will impair the status of either of them will involve the equal, ruin of them both.”

Gandhi Ji's view on Teacher
“I do not even remember having made much use of the books that were available. I do not find it at all necessary to load the boys with quantities of books. I have always felt that the true text-books for the pupils are his teacher. I remember very little that my teachers taught me from books, but I have even now a clear recollection of the things they taught me independently of books. Children take in much more and with less labour through their ears than through their eyes. I do not remember having read any book from cover to cover with my boys.”

Gandhi Ji's view on Discipline
Gandhi Ji accepted the importance of discipline, but this discipline should be self-inspired. He opposed the repressionistic method to bring discipline. He wanted to give sufficient freedom to the students. He has always opposed strict discipline. He said, “I have always been opposed to corporal punishment. If the boy and girl students do not learn discipline during their school time, all the time and money spent on them would become wastage.”

Conclusion
What was Gandhi ji? Was he a saint or a statesman, a revolutionary or a reformer, a philosopher or a religious mystic, the practical man of the world or a visionary? No single category could contain him. He overreached the limits of every classification and refused to be the trammels of time and space and yet he was none at the same time. There is only one word that can properly describe him, viz., and the prophet. He was the prophet of a new age. As a prophet or inspired teacher he did what all great teachers of mankind like Christ, Mohammed and Buddha had done-the work of lifting the vast multitudes of men and women from the quagmires of ignorance and superstition that always tend to eclipse the pristine purity of the human soul. The age in which he lived and worked bears the indelible stamp of his great personality and has become the living epoch of great movements of thoughts and actions.
In each epoch, there is always a man who personifies the peculiar spirit of the age and whose ideals continue to influence humanity for centuries to come. Rightfully revered as the man of the Millennium, Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi was the man of patriotism, who exerted a profound influence over the history of India as well as the world. Dr. Sharma says, “Gandhi is back and has already entered schools, colleges and universities etc.”

Mahatma Gandhi as an impossible idealist we have missed the wider meaning and deeper import of non-violence i.e. his struggle with the limitations of human nature. A more pervasive and insidious form of violence is manifested in the routine behavior of the rich and powerful in humiliating the weak, the poor, the lower

castes, persons from another community; in denying other human beings dignity and status. It seems that the leader is back in our youth's psyche as the Gandhian Philosophy and visions more relevant these days.

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