

Philosophical and Educational Thought of Mahatma Gandhi

Philosophical Thought of Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi was born on 2 October, 1869 at Porbandar in Gujarat in a Vaishnava, prosperous and well established family. His full name was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. His father, Karamchand Gandhi was the dewan of Porbandar state and was a man of religious and virtuous nature. His mother, Putlibai too was a very religious and virtuous woman. Mahatma Gandhi was influenced by his family environment greatly.

Gandhiji had received education in Vaishnava religion in his family. He had read the translation of the *Manusmriti* in his childhood. He used to read *Gita* regularly. In England, he had read *Bible* and the *Light of Asia* and had enjoyed the company of Annie Besant. His religious and philosophical thoughts developed on the basis of all these. But his life philosophy was basically based on *Gita*. He called *Gita* as 'Gita Mata'.

Gandhiji has not propounded any new philosophy. He has given practical form to the basic facts of Indian philosophy. But in its practical form, it tells us of the insight of Gandhiji which is known as **Gandhian philosophy, Gandhism or Sarvodaya Darshan**. We shall here discuss the metaphysics, epistemology, logic, axiology and ethics of Sarvodaya Darshan of Gandhiji.

Metaphysics of Gandhiji's Sarvodaya Darshan

Gandhiji considered the *Gita* as the finest treatise of metaphysics. According to *Gita*, there are two basic elements — Purusha (God) and nature (matter) and God is supreme in them. Gandhiji agreed with this. He clarified that the greatness of God becomes evident by two facts. First, it pervades every particle of the nature, but nature does not pervade in God. Second, God is the creator and nourisher of this world, and is its destroyer. Gandhiji has divulged this fact from *Gita* that God is the creator of this world and the nature is the cause. He took God in the form of absolute truth. Gandhiji believed that God is unchangeable so He is true; while nature (matter) is changeable so it is untrue.

He considered the soul as the part of God. He believed that when God is true, the soul too is true. Gandhiji accepted the soul, God and truth, in the form of beginningless and endless energy.

Gandhiji considered man as the sum total of body, mind and soul and said that the ultimate aim of human life is self-realization, attainment of God and emancipation. He divided human life into two aspects — physical and spiritual. In his view, these two aspects depend on each other, the other cannot develop without the development of the one. Man should develop both these aspects simultaneously.

Now the question arises — How can the physical and spiritual aspects of man be developed simultaneously? Gandhiji says that for the development of physical aspect, physical knowledge and activities are required basically, which can be got by senses; and for the development of spiritual aspect, spiritual knowledge and activities are needed basically, which can be got by reading the religious scriptures, singing devotional songs, satsang and social service. He considered the abidance by the **Ekadasha Vrita**—**Satya** (truth), **Ahimsa** (non-violence), **Brahmacharya** (celibacy), **Asvad** (tastelessness), **Asteya** (non-stealing), **Aparigrah** (non-hoarding), **Abhay** (fearlessness), **Asparshyata Niwaran** (removal of untouchability), **Kayik Shrama** (physical labour), **Sarva Dharma Sambhava** (religious goodwill) and **Vinamrata** (politeness) as necessary for the development of both aspects in proper perspective.

Epistemology and Logic of Gandhiji's Sarvodaya Darshan

Gandhiji has divided knowledge into two classes —physical and spiritual. In physical knowledge he has included the knowledge of physical world and different aspects of human life (social, economic and political); and in spiritual knowledge he has included the metaphysics of the universe, God, soul and Supreme Being. In Gandhiji's view, both types of knowledge are necessary for man; physical knowledge is necessary for physical life and spiritual knowledge is necessary for self-realization or attainment of God or emancipation.

According to Gandhiji, physical knowledge can be attained by senses, and spiritual knowledge can be attained by reading of devotional songs and satsang. He considered *Gita* as the supreme treatise of spiritual knowledge.

Axiology and Ethics of Gandhiji's Sarvodaya Darshan

Gandhiji considered man as the sum total of body, mind and soul. According to him the ultimate aim of human life is the attainment of truth or God. He called it as emancipation. But he emphasized on attaining physical development first and to make one free from material deficiencies. For emancipation, he has considered the **Anashakti Yoga** of *Gita* as the best means and for materialistic prosperity has

accepted the importance of labour, morality and character. And for the attainment of both these, he has emphasized on the abidance by the **Ekadash Vrita** (truth, non-violence, celibacy, tastelessness, non-stealing, non-hoarding, fearlessness, untouchability removal, physical labour, religious goodwill and politeness). He considered these as the values of human life.

Truth is the end and means both for Gandhiji. As the end, truth is that which ever exists and is endless, that is God, and as a means, truth means true thought, true speech and true conduct. By non-violence he means the absence of evil thought towards all beings. In Gandhiji's view, only the slaughter of the being is not violence, exploiting somebody is also violence and possessing an evil thought about somebody is also violence. In his view, the truth cannot be attained or abided by in the absence of non-violence. He considered non-violence as the most essential for the attainment of physical and spiritual perfection. By celibacy he meant to control the mind by controlling the senses. Keeping away from sensual pleasure amounts to tastelessness. Non-stealing implies not taking somebody's things. Non-hoarding things means to remain devoid of things which are not necessary for life. Fearlessness implies freedom from all types of fear. By untouchability removal is meant not to consider somebody as low caste on the basis of birth. By physical labour is meant not consuming things without labour. Religious goodwill means to consider all religions as the means to attain God. And by politeness is meant renunciation of ego and anger and the development of mercy and forgiveness. According to Gandhiji, every man should follow these ideals. The person who follows them will think of the rise of all beings and will become a **Sarvodayi** in true sense. In Gandhiji's views, such a person of liberal heart can alone attain happiness and peace in life and can realize the 'self' (Soul, God)

Educational Thought of Mahatma Gandhi

The Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi was not only a political leader, but also a great religious analyst and social reformer. He submitted several suggestions for the reform in the prevalent education which was bookish, theoretical, narrow and examination-oriented education. He is established as an educationist in the educational field.

Gandhiji considered education as the birthright of man, and considered it as much necessary for any type of development of man whether physical or spiritual, as is mother's milk for the development of body of the child. This is the reason that he emphasized on providing compulsory and free general education for all children up to a certain age. He clearly opined that this education cannot be imparted by the medium of English; this can be given only by the medium of mother tongue. As it is, he considered English as the language which causes mental slavery. He wanted education to make man self-dependent and able to earn his

livelihood, so he laid special emphasis on the education of handicrafts. Besides, he wanted to effect spiritual development of man, so he emphasized on directing the children to follow **Ekadash Vrita** by education. On the basis of this educational philosophy, Gandhiji determined the form of national education and named it as **Basic Education**. We present here the analysis of his educational thought.

Concept of Education

Gandhiji did not consider only literacy as education. In his own words, "Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby men and women can be educated." Gandhiji considered man as the sum total of body, mind, heart and soul. He clearly opined that education should effect the development of man's body, mind, heart and soul. Gandhiji transformed the education of 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic) into 3Hs (hand, head and heart), and said that the function of education is not to teach how to read, write and calculate, but to develop his hand, brain and heart too. In his own words, "**By education I mean an all round drawing out of the best, in child and man — body, mind and spirit.**"

Aims of Education

According to Gandhiji, the ultimate aim of human life is emancipation. He took emancipation in a very wide sense. He talked of physical, mental, economic and political emancipation first, and then of spiritual emancipation. He reasoned that until a man is free from physical weakness, mental pressure, economic deficiency and political slavery, he cannot attain spiritual emancipation. This is the reason that he wanted to effect the highest development of man's body, mind and spirit. The views that Gandhiji expressed about aims of education can be summarized as follows:

1. Physical Development : Whatever the aim of human life, it can be attained through this body, so it should be developed first. Gandhiji had felt the need of this aim during his school life itself. Later he considered it necessary for spiritual development too.

2. Mental and Intellectual Development : According to Gandhiji, mind and spirit too should be developed along body. He said that as mother's milk is necessary for physical development, in the same way, education is needed for mental development. Education should perform this function.

3. Individual and Social Development : Gandhiji has laid emphasis on both types of development of man, individual development and social development. Gandhiji considered individual development as necessary for the development of individual, society and nation. In his view, the supreme manifestation of individual development is spiritual development, and social development is necessary for

spiritual development. By social development he meant to learn to live with love and cooperation. He believed that spiritual development is possible by loving and serving the whole mankind.

4. Cultural Development : According to Gandhiji, culture is related to the spirit and it manifests itself in man's behaviour. He considered cultural development as necessary for controlling man's behaviour and for his spiritual progress, and considered it to be a chief aim of education.

5. Moral and Character Development : Gandhiji knew the significance of the force of character. He emphasized on its development by education. He considered necessary to develop the qualities of truthfulness, non-violence, celibacy, tastelessness, non-stealing, non-hoarding and fearlessness in all children. He termed such schools as the factories of character making. In his own words : "The end of all the knowledge must be the building up of character, personal purity."

6. Vocational Development : For freedom from economic deficiency, Gandhiji emphasized on vocational aim of education. He wanted to make each man self-dependent and emphasized on the education of a handicraft or industry for it. He clearly said that the children should be enabled to earn their livelihood by basic education.

7. Spiritual Development : According to Gandhiji, the ultimate aim of human life is emancipation, self-realization or knowledge of the self. The physical, mental, individual, social, cultural, character and vocational developments that we have talked above, the aim of all these is to help man in attaining self-realization. For it, Gandhiji considered religious and moral education as necessary. In this regard, Gandhiji was influenced by *Gita*. He laid equal emphasis on all of **jnana**, **karma**, **bhakti** and **yoga**. He considered **non-violence** and **satyagraha** as their concrete form.

Curriculum of Education

Gandhiji was aware of the country's basic needs. For the fulfilment of these needs and for the construction of classless society, he laid emphasis on activity-based curriculum. He gave prominent place to handicraft and cottage industry in the basic education (classes 1 to 8). Besides, he included mother tongue Hindustani, practical mathematics, social subject, general science, music, drawing, hygiene and moral education.

Methods of Teaching

Gandhiji considered man as the sum total of body, mind and spirit, and he said that the development of all these is essential for his all-round development. In other words, man's development depends on these three — body, mind and soul.

This is the reason that he has given place to the activities of the body, mind and spirit in the teaching process. He had not studied psychology, but it seems that he was a scholar of behavioural psychology. In the educational field, he laid most stress on activity. According to him, learning by doing and learning by self-activity is effective learning. Though he also accepted the significance of narration, explanation and question-answer methods. He also believed in the listening, thinking and practice method as propounded in the Upanishads and Vedanta. Presenting knowledge as a whole unit and to develop it through an activity are the chief bases of his teaching method. This is called **correlation method**. But Gandhiji emphasized on the use of these teaching methods in their natural way. We think it necessary to discuss them in brief.

1. Imitation Method : Gandhiji clarified that imitation is the natural tendency of children, they learn by imitation in the beginning, therefore they should be taught by this method. Gandhiji considered it to be the best method for training the children in good conduct. In his view, good conduct should be founded in the children in the childhood, the qualities developed at this time are permanent in nature. He laid much emphasis on the fact that the parents and teachers should behave with the children affectionately by which they learn to love. Besides, they should follow the truthfulness, non-violence, celibacy, tastelessness, non-stealing, non-hoarding, fearlessness, untouchability removal, physical labour, religious goodwill and politeness in their conduct, so that the children imitate them to do good conduct.

2. Activity Method : Gandhiji clarified that activity is the natural tendency of the children, they keep doing one or the other thing at all times, therefore, the education of a subject or skill should be given by activity. Gandhiji has emphasized on teaching a knowledge or skill by self-experience as far as may be possible. Today, play-way method and experimental method are activity methods. Gandhiji emphasized on the use of this method for the education of art, music and handicrafts.

3. Oral Methods : Oral methods include lecture, question-answer and debate, etc. Gandhiji permitted to use these methods as auxiliary methods. He clarified that the children are very curious, whatever teaching method you may use, they would keep asking questions in between; their questions should be replied immediately, and their doubts should be resolved. But a care should be taken that the children should remain active physically and mentally at all times, they should not be mere passive listeners.

4. Correlation Method : Gandhiji laid much emphasis on this fact that whatever is taught to the children should be taught in real form in real circumstances. For it, he emphasized on making children's natural environment, social environment or other related handicraft as the centre, of their education,

and to impart all knowledge and activities through it. The method of relating all subjects and activities of the curriculum with each other is called **correlation method**. When children's natural environment, social environment or handicraft is taken as the central subject and all subjects and activities of the curriculum are related to it, such method should be called **intrigation method**. But in general use it is also called **correlation method**. According to Gandhiji, in this method, the children take part in real activities of their real life, and thus learn naturally. Thus, their physical and mental activities are synthesized and they become prepared for real life.

5. Listening, Thinking and Practice Method : Listening, thinking and practice method is our ancient method. In this method, the students listen at first, they hear the oral precepts of the teacher, think upon it and then practise it. In fact, knowledge has no meaning until it becomes a part of our practical life to assist us in our development. Gandhiji has accepted the utility of this method for such subjects as religion and philosophy, but with certain amendments. According to him, when the children have grown up, they should do satsang, listen to precepts, study, contemplate, discover the truth by intellect and reasoning, and then practise the truth in practical life. But this method can be used only when the children are able to contemplate.

Discipline

Gandhiji accepted the significance of discipline. In his view, true discipline is motivated from within. He opposed the repressionistic method for the attainment of discipline. In his view, true discipline can be developed by impressionistic method. He emphasized on giving the children pure natural environment and higher social environment. He believed that the children will develop high ideals and high conduct in such type of an environment. If the children still follow a wrong track, then the teachers should make use of their self-power to bring them on the right track. But this self-power is not got as it is. The teachers have to follow celibacy in their life.

Teacher

In the views of Gandhiji, the teacher should be an ideal person, torch of knowledge and man of good conduct. In his view, a person taking this profession as a mere profession cannot become an ideal teacher. A teacher can become an ideal teacher only when he accepts this profession as an act of social service. He has to function in several forms, as father, friend, assistant and guide to the students, so he should be forbearing, liberal and patient.

Student

The student is the focal point of educational process. In Gandhiji's views,

the student should remain disciplined and should follow celibacy. Gandhiji allowed full freedom to the children for their individual development but within the scope of their social and spiritual development. Gandhiji emphasized on children's physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual development from the very beginning and to make them self-dependent. In his views, such a person can do good of his own and of the world. According to Gandhiji, the student should be self-restrained and curious.

School

Gandhiji had his unique thought about schools. According to him, the school should be such a workshop where the teachers work devotedly and so much of production work should be done in them due to the joint effort of the teachers and students that they become economically self-dependent. He emphasized on making schools as community centres. He said that schools should conduct different activities of the community and the people of the community should have facilities to read and work there. They should conduct adult education in evening or night classes. Thus, the community should assist the schools in different activities on the one hand; and on the other, the schools should help the community in different activities.

Other Aspects of Education

Mass Education : During Gandhiji's times, literacy rate in India was about 13%. Due to the lack of school education, the people were neither confident nor aware. How could have we progressed then? In order to save us from the curse of illiteracy, Gandhiji laid special emphasis on mass education, adult education and women education. He presented basic education in order to educate the children. It was the national education plan in which emphasis was laid on providing compulsory and free education for children from 7 years to 14 years of age. Gandhiji centred this education on handicrafts, because the handicrafts are basic tasks of our life and the students can earn some money for the schools, and this education can be made available to all. The second step for expansion of mass education is provision of adult education. In his view, the responsibility of educating the illiterate adults lies with the society. He exhorted the social leaders, social organisations and students to come forward for adult education. Gandhiji did not consider only literacy as education, he also included cleanliness, hygiene, intellectual development, moral development, industry, vocations, social welfare and culture related activities in it.

Women Education : Gandhiji considered women as the supreme creation of God. Gandhiji clarified that the working fields of women and men are slightly different, yet their cultural needs are similar, so both of them should be given opportunities for their respective development. He clarified that a woman has to

chiefly carry out the task of wife, mother and society-maker. She is surely different from man in the first two tasks, but for her third duty, she should possess the clear knowledge of her civilization and culture. But under any circumstances, he wanted women to distance from music and dance. He opined that these activities enhance sex. The only difference in men and women education should be that the women should be given additional education in domestic work. By giving equal place to women in society and making provision for their education Gandhiji has done a great service to the society and Nation.

Co-Education : Gandhiji had experimented by teaching the boys and girls together and had accepted the possibility of co-education on its basis. According to Gandhiji, co-education can be provided at primary and higher levels but it is not proper during adolescence. While expressing his opinion, he allowed each society the concession to accept or reject co-education keeping in view their respective environment.

Vocational Education : Gandhiji was opposed to theoretical education, he has emphasized on such activity-based practical education which provides skill and capability to work in all fields of life. He was conscious to the basic needs of food, cloth and shelter of man, so he gave a prominent place to handicrafts in his basic education. He clarified that India is a country of agriculture and cottage industries, so the children should be trained in agriculture, gardening and handicrafts. He wanted that the children should become self-dependent after education and may earn their livelihood. The children who want to be educated in heavy industries and professions, they should be provided that. According to Gandhiji, such education should be provided at industrial and vocational centres. For it, Gandhiji has supported scientific and technical education.

Religious Education : Gandhiji was a religious man; prayer, devotional songs and reading *Gita* were parts of his daily life. But he was not in the favour of education of any specific religion in schools. He feared that religious education in this religiously diverse country can enhance communalism still more. Therefore, he gave place to common principles of all religions and moral education in the curriculum. He considered the truth as God. He laid foremost emphasis on the education of truth, non-violence and celibacy for the attainment of the truth. Besides, he accepted the utility of affection. He accepted human service as the noblest religion. In his view, the real religious education is to incline the children towards service to humanity.

National Education : The education that the Englishmen provided for us had two aims — to prepare clerks for assisting them in the administration work, and to create such men who may be Indians by body but anglicized at heart. Its curriculum was very defective, it had no relation with Indian way of life and culture. More emphasis was laid on English language and literature, and English

was the medium of education. This education was available in only some big towns. Besides, it was expensive. As a result, only people of high classes could get it. The most sad thing is that the people educated in this manner came to exploit the illiterate people.

With the freedom movement, Gandhiji worked for educational reforms too. At first, in 1921, he placed the proposal of national education, but it could not be given a concrete form. The self-governments were formed in all states of India in 1937 and Congress came to power in 7 out of 11 states. The National Education Conference was held at Vardha in October, 1937. In it Gandhiji presented the draft of national education which is called **Basic Education**. It is being discussed there :

Draft of Basic Education

Initially basic education was approved in the following form :

- (1) Compulsory and free primary education should be provided to all children in 7 to 14 years of age group.
- (2) The medium of education should be the mother tongue.
- (3) The whole education should be based on some basic handicraft or cottage industry.
- (4) The handicraft should be selected on the basis of the abilities of children and regional needs.
- (5) The articles made by children should be utilized and economic profit be earned with which school expenditure should be met.
- (6) Handicrafts be taught in such a way as to enable the children to earn their livelihood.
- (7) Besides economic importance in the education of handicrafts, its social and scientific importance should also be given a place.

Basic Principles of Basic Education

Basic education was developed on the following basic principles :

1. Principle of Making Education Compulsory and Free : Gandhiji considered education as the birthright of man. He clearly declared that depriving a child of his right to education is the violation of his right; this is untruth and amounts to violence on humanity test. So he emphasized on this thing at first that the state should provide compulsory and free primary education to all children between 7 and 14 years of age.

2. Principle of Making Education Self-Supporting : Gandhiji faced the question of universal, compulsory and free primary education, and the state had not proper funds to provide it. Therefore, he emphasized on compulsory handicrafts education in schools. He estimated that the articles produced in schools will meet the expenses of the schools.

3. Principle of Truth, Non-violence and Sarvodaya : Gandhiji worshipped truth and non-violence. He considered any type of exploitation in the society as violence, and at that time the people armed with English education were exploiting the common people. So Gandhiji accepted the principle of equal education for all, it would not differentiate between high and low, and nobody will exploit anybody; and everybody will get an equal opportunity for progress.

4. Principle of Correlation of Education with Life : During Gandhiji's times, English people had no concern with the real life of the Indians. Gandhiji emphasized on correlating education with the real life of children, their natural and social environment, and on domestic and regional industries in order to relate it to real life.

5. Principle of Making Mother Tongue as Medium of Education:- Gandhiji clarified that children have natural command over their mother tongue, general education can be arranged through it. This is the reason that he had accepted mother tongue as the medium of basic education.

6. Principle of Basing Education on Handicrafts : Gandhiji had several ideas about basing education on a handicraft or industry. First, he wanted children to realize the significance of physical labour. Second, he wanted to make children self-dependent and enable them to earn their livelihood. Third, he wanted their progress. Fourth, he wanted to relate education with village life. And fifth and the last, he wanted to make education self-dependent; he wanted to meet the expenses of schools by the sale of the articles produced there.

7. Principle of Developing Knowledge as a Unit : If we look from physical perspective, there is an aim of education, that is to prepare man for real life. In that case, all subjects and activities in the curriculum should be related to his real life. From this viewpoint, Gandhiji emphasized on developing knowledge as a whole unit. On this thought of his, correlation method was developed. From psychological viewpoint too, knowledge is a whole unit, it should be developed as a whole unit.

Aims of Basic Education

By basic education is meant to provide basic knowledge and skill to the children and to prepare them for normal life. The following aims have been determined of basic education :

1. Physical and Mental Development : Gandhiji was aware that man is a psychophysical being, so he emphasized on his physical and mental development first. He also emphasized on constructing the curriculum on its basis.

2. Establishment of Sarvodaya Society : Man is a social being, therefore education should effect his social development. But Gandhiji took social

development in a specific meaning. He wanted to construct such a society in which nobody will exploit anybody, all will love each other, all will cooperate with each other, and all will help in each other's progress; it will be the rise of everybody.

3. Cultural Development : The Indians of higher classes of that time were the admirers of western culture. So Gandhiji wrote with great emphasis that if a generation becomes ignorant of the efforts of its ancestors, and feels ashamed on its culture, then it is destroyed. Therefore he had provided basic education to preserve Indian culture.

4. Character and Moral Development : Gandhiji knew the significance of force of character. His companions too had emphasized on character-development by education. This is an important aim of basic education.

5. Vocational Development : Gandhiji said two things about it — First, the handicraft taught to the children should produce so much of production that from its profits the schools can be run; and second, the children should be able to earn their livelihood after having gained skill in these handicrafts or industries.

6. Development of Citizenship : An individual is called a citizen from state viewpoint. It is necessary for the citizens of any country to follow the national rules and be loyal to it, they should do their duty and protect their rights. This is the chief aim of any national education system. Basic education is a national education plan; it is natural for it to have this aim.

7. Spiritual Development : In Gandhiji's own words, "By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best, in child and man — body, mind and spirit." It is clear that Gandhiji wanted to effect spiritual development too by education. But he did not favour the education of any one religion, he emphasized on its attainment by religious goodwill.

Curriculum of Basic Education

For the attainment of above aims of basic education, the following activity-based curriculum was constructed :

- (1) Handicraft and Industry (spinning, weaving, gardening, agriculture, wood work, leather work, book art, earthen work and fishery, etc.)
- (2) Mother tongue
- (3) Hindustani (Hindi), for non Hindi students.
- (4) Practical mathematics (weights and measures, arithmetic, algebra, geometry)
- (5) Social subjects (history, geography, civics and social studies)
- (6) General science (nature observation, gardening, botany, zoology, chemistry, physics, home science)
- (7) Music
- (8) Drawing

- (9) Hygiene (cleanliness, exercise and games)
- (10) Moral Education (moral education, celebration of social and national festivals, social work)

Note

- (1) Prominent importance was given to handicraft and industries. In the beginning, 3 hours and 20 minutes were specified for them out of a total of 5 hours and 20 minutes everyday; later this time was reduced.
- (2) Same curriculum for all up to class 5. Girl students could take home science as basic handicraft in class 6. Later, commerce, Sanskrit and modern Indian education came to be included in classes 7 and 8.
- (3) Religious education was not given a place in basic education curriculum, only moral education as approved by all religions was included.

Method of Teaching in Basic Education

In Basic education activity-based teaching methods have been emphasized in place of traditional telling and book methods. The following are its chief characteristics :

- (1) Activity and experiences are given prominent importance in basic education. Children are given opportunities for nature observation and social work, they are given opportunities to learn by self-experience.
- (2) All subjects and activities are correlated in basic education; it is called correlation method. In the beginning the basis of correlation was a handicraft or industry, later it was approved to make natural environment or social environment as its bases too. In this method, children get real knowledge and skill by taking part in real activities of real environment and get it as a whole unit.
- (3) In basic education, real knowledge is imparted by the medium of real activities of children's life.
- (4) In basic education, the knowledge of mother tongue is also imparted naturally — first oral language (listening and speaking) is taught and then written language (reading and writing) is taught.
- (5) In basic education, children are given free opportunities for self-expression.

Teacher in Basic Education

In national basic education, woman teachers has been given preference over man teachers. Besides emphasis was laid on the fact that the primary teachers should be at least matric pass and trained in teaching.

Evaluation of Educational Thought of Mahatma Gandhi

Evaluation of an object, activity or thought is done on the basis of certain predetermined norms. Education is the process of development of man, it is the

process of enhancing his knowledge and skill and of providing proper direction to his conduct, thought and behaviour. Then the evaluation of an educational thought or system should be done on this basis how far it has been or can be helpful in constructing suitable education from the above viewpoint. We have made an endeavour in this direction.

Gandhiji is one of the greatest man of this age. There is no human field in which he has not contributed. He will be ever remembered to the end of human civilization for his contribution in political freedom, removal of untouchability, making of classless society and teaching lessons of truth, non-violence and love. He has conducted several experiments in the educational field too and has prepared a national education plan for it. He is established as an educationist in the world of education.

Gandhiji has not propounded any new philosophy. He has given practical form to ancient Indian philosophy. But in giving it the practical form, he has worked with his originality, so it is known as Gandhian philosophy or Gandhi darshan. Gandhiji believed in the existence of soul and God and considered the ultimate aim of human life as emancipation. For this emancipation, he considered physical, mental and spiritual development of man as essential. His educational thought is developed on this basis.

Concept of Education

Gandhiji accepted education as a means of an all-round development of man. In his view, literacy is not education; it is neither the beginning, nor the end, it is only a means to educate men and women. In his own words, "By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best, in child and man — body, mind and spirit."

This definition of education makes out its aims and functions clear, but it does not tell of its form. Gandhiji considered education as a process and accepted it as the natural activity of man. Had he divulged the dynamic and progressive aspect of education, he would have been known as an true educational analyst.

Aims of Education

Gandhiji considered man as the sum of body, mind and spirit and has emphasized on the development of all these three aspects of man. From this viewpoint, he has emphasized on physical, mental, intellectual, individual, social, cultural, moral, character, vocational and spiritual development aims of education.

If the aims of education as determined by Gandhiji are analyzed carefully, it would become evident that all these aims are universal and perennial. Of course, Gandhiji could not conceive of the education of political system and citizenship and national goals of his time. How could he have, our country was under the English rule and the only national goal before us was that of attainment of freedom.

If these two aims are added to the aims of education as determined by Gandhiji, it would come to include all aims of modern education.

Curriculum of Education

The curriculum constructed by Gandhiji for the attainment of the aims determined by him, was as follows — handicraft and cottage industry (weaving, spinning, gardening, agriculture, wood work, leather work, book work, earthen work and fishery, etc.), mother tongue, Hindustani (from today's viewpoint national language Hindi for those whose mother tongue is not Hindi), practical mathematics (arithmetic, algebra, geometry, weights and measures, etc.), social subjects (history, geography, civics and social studies), general science (gardening, botany, zoology, chemistry and physics), music, drawing, hygiene (cleanliness, exercise and games, etc.) and conduct education (moral education, social service and other social work). But the prominent emphasis was given on handicrafts and then on mother tongue.

If the curriculum as suggested by Gandhiji is carefully observed, it makes out two features — first, it is quite broad, and second, special emphasis has been laid on mother tongue and it has been made the medium of education. But foremost emphasis has been laid on handicrafts. It appears that he wanted to make India a country of cottage industries. Moreover, he has not presented any clear views about the curriculum for secondary and higher education.

Methods of Teaching

Gandhiji did not study psychology, yet his thoughts about teaching are fully psychological. He has laid foremost emphasis on learning by self-experience. Besides, he has stressed on two things — first, whatever is taught to the children should be taught by keeping them in real circumstances, and second, the whole knowledge and activities should be taught as a whole unit. For it he has emphasized on the use of correlation method. Gandhiji has also emphasized on the use of ancient teaching methods, such as imitation, oral, activity and listening, thinking and practice methods but in such a way as to make students active all the time.

The opinion of developing the whole knowledge by taking a handicraft or natural or social environment at the centre, appears to be fine theoretically, but only failures have surfaced in its practical use. Much work was done in the 30 years after independence, several models of correlation method were prepared, but with no result. We should agree with Gandhiji only this much that as far as may be possible, the children should be given opportunity for learning by doing, and as far as possible they should be taught using the correlation method. We do not favour using correlation forcibly.

Discipline

Gandhiji considered discipline necessary in all fields of life including educational field, but he favoured discipline motivated from within. He has

supported impressionistic method for the development of this discipline in schools. According to him, the teachers should present ideal conduct before the students so that the children imitate them to learn discipline, and if still a child conducts himself otherwise, he should be brought on the right path by the force of self. Gandhiji was not in the favour of punishing the children under any situation.

Adam has divided the methods of establishing discipline into three classes — repressionistic, impressionistic and emancipationistic. There is no doubt that the impressionistic method is the most effective. The first thing in this context is that we cannot expect of all teachers to have good conduct; and second, the number of students in schools is so high that ideal teachers do not come in their contact. If schools formulate rules to make students follow them, it should be considered a great achievement. Punishment system is necessary for it but punishment should be given with great care; the children should be made to realize that punishment is being given in their own interest, and is not out of enmity or ill-will. However, harsh punishment is not appropriate under any situation.

Teacher

According to Gandhiji, teacher should be an ideal person of the society, he should be a man of ideal conduct and should be a social worker. In his view, no person should take up this job as a profession, rather it should be taken by the spirit of social service. Such people can bring the children on the right path.

As far as ideal conduct on the part of teachers is concerned, generally all societies expect this much of them. But it is mere talk to expect of teachers not to demand higher salary or to do their work with a spirit of social service. It would suffice if the teachers do their work honestly.

Student

Gandhiji expected of the students to follow celibacy, school rules and take part in social work and become self-dependent.

In modern age, the students are not expected to follow celibacy, but it is expected of them to follow school rules. It is only fancy to expect of children to involve themselves in social work or become self-dependent.

School

Gandhiji possessed a novel attitude about schools. First, he wanted to develop schools as workshops where both teachers and students labour, articles are produced by handicraft and the produced items meet the expenses of the schools and they become self-dependent. Second, he wanted to develop them as community centres. He wanted that there should be cooperation between school and community and they should take part in each other's activities. He expected of the schools to organize evening or night classes for adult education.

Other Aspects of Education

Mass Education : Gandhiji took mass education in a very broad sense, he included general, compulsory and free education for children between 7 to 14 years and adult education in it. He took adult education in its extensive form; he included cottage industries in it along with literacy. Gandhiji's efforts started the expansion of mass education. It is another thing that due to expansion of the field of knowledge, the level of general education now has been made upto class 10 instead of class 8.

Women Education : Gandhiji has also emphasized the need of women education. He raised the slogan of giving education to women much like men. He only talked of imparting them the education of home science in addition. Much progress has taken place in this field in the last 60 years, and the situation is that the women are demanding their rights. In our view, general education should be available to all men and women without any distinction and specific education should be made available to the eligible without any discrimination.

Vocational Education : Gandhiji's views regarding vocational education cannot be called modern. First, the children from 7 to 14 years cannot be trained in handicrafts, agriculture and other cottage industries; and second, so much development has taken place in the field of science and technology that we cannot run these cottage industries without their knowledge. Therefore, in the new 10+2+3 structure of education, education of general vocations has been provided at +2 level, and education of specific vocations at +3 level.

Religious and Moral Education : Gandhiji was a man of religious nature, yet he was not in favour of imparting the education of any specific religion in schools. He feared that it would irk the followers of other religions. In the name of religious education, he supported the education for service to humanity. In this context, we do not agree with Gandhiji. For the development of religious goodwill, we think that the education of basic principles of different religions is necessary.

National Education : Basic education as presented by Gandhiji for national education was according to the contemporary age, but it has become meaningless in the present times. We present an analysis of its merits and demerits.

Merits of Basic Education

It is true that this plan appears to be very useful theoretically, but it has been very unsuitable in its practical form. As such its principles can be considered as its merits.

1. Self-Dependent Plan : The government at that time did not have finances to arrange compulsory and free primary education. The idea of basing basic education on handicrafts to meet school expenses appeared to be very useful. It is another thing that it could not happen.

2. **Emphasis on All Round Development of Man :** Man's physical, mental, social, cultural, moral and character, vocational and spiritual development was emphasized in basic education. It is another thing that we could not achieve these aims by it.

3. **Preparation for Real Life :** India is a country of villages. Basic education was meant to provide compulsory education in village industries — agriculture, animal husbandry and village handicrafts such as spinning and weaving; and it was expected to make children able to earn their livelihood. It appears good theoretically; it is another thing that we could not achieve it by basic education.

4. **Basic Curriculum for Indians :** Basic education is related to real life of Indians. It has included all necessary subjects and social activities for all-round development of the children. The important thing is that Hindustani (Hindi) was made compulsory for the children of the whole country. Had we succeeded to do it, the whole country would have been united.

5. **Elimination of Class Discrimination :** There are several classes of people on several bases as religion, caste and profession, etc in our country. Basic education has provided equal education and equal service work for all without distinction. Though class distinction could not be eliminated by it, but it could be diminished.

6. **End of Difference in Physical and Mental Labour :** During those times, the Englishmen taught us English to make us white-collared persons and to raise our status. Its evil consequence was that mental workers considered superior and physical labourers as inferior. Basic education made the education of handicraft or industry and social work as compulsory for all children. When everybody has to do physical labour, there is no question of taking anybody as inferior. This provision would have eliminated class discrimination, but it could not.

7. **Activity-Based Teaching Method :** In basic education, opportunities are given for learning by self-experience and doing real activities in real circumstances. This is a psychological method of learning, the knowledge and skill thus got are permanent.

8. **Integration of Whole Knowledge and Activities :** In basic education, knowledge and activity are considered inseparable, and all subjects and activities are developed as a whole unit by the medium of a handicraft, industry or natural or social environment. It is called correlation method in basic education. It is a proper method of teaching.

9. **Mother Tongue as the Medium of Education :** The Englishmen had made mother tongue (regional languages) as the medium for primary education, yet primary school with English medium were being run. Gandhiji emphasized on providing education only by the medium of mother tongue. Equality can be attained only then.

10. Proximal Relationship between School and Society : Schools were not proximally related to Indian life in the English education system. This difference between school and society was eliminated in basic education. Society's language, society's handicraft, society's industries, society's festivals, and society's other activities were included in the school curriculum. It established proximal relationship between school and society.

Demerits of Basic Education

However numerous may be the theoretical merits in basic education and songs of its praises, yet it has utterly failed in its practical form. It has the following demerits :

1. Incomplete Plan : Though it is called the national education plan, yet in fact, it is only a plan for compulsory and free primary education. Moreover, it has kept in view the needs of rural children only, and not those of the urban children.

2. Absence of Relationship with Higher Education : Basic education is for children between 7 and 14 years of age group. Its curriculum was constructed keeping the needs of the children in this age group and for those living in rural areas. It has not been related with secondary and higher education, it has not been made the basis for higher education. It appears that the children will not opt studies after that. Education should be organized in an orderly way.

3. Unsuitable for Urban Areas : Of course, India is a country of villages, yet it is not proper to keep the curriculum for primary education limited to the needs of only rural areas. It is a serious demerit of it. It appears that basic education was made only for the poor people of India.

4. Excessive Emphasis on Handicrafts : Basic education lays the utmost emphasis on education of handicrafts. It has been the central subject of the curriculum and all subjects and activities are planned to be taught through it. **Zakir Hussain** had specified 3 hours 20 minutes for it out of the school time of 5 hours 30 minutes. It appears that the planners of basic education wanted to make India a country of handicrafts. What else can be the purpose of giving undue importance to any subject or activity at the cost of other subjects and activities! How can all-round development of children be attained in such a situation!

5. Wastage of Raw Material : It is mere fancy to expect of children to produce usable articles. The articles made by school children were not worth using, they could not be sold in the market. This plan accomplished a little, but wastage of raw material.

6. Misuse of Time and Energy : It is not possible to make children skilled in handicrafts at primary level. In basic education, neither the children could be trained in any handicraft, nor the school expenditure could be met out from the

sale of produced articles. Besides wastage of raw material, it also misused time and energy of the children.

7. Unnatural Teaching Method : The type of teaching, as told in basic education, is a natural and psychological method, but forcible correlation eliminates its naturalness and effectiveness. Moreover, it is mere fancy to expect to integrate all subjects and activities, that too by taking a handicraft, industry, natural environment or social activity at the centre.

8. Orderly Teaching Impossible : Even if some subjects and activities of the curriculum can be synthesized and developed, there is confronted another problem of presenting a subject or activity in its logical sequence. The correlation method cannot be used to teach in an orderly way.

9. Absence of Religious Education : Basic education is called fundamental education of India, and amazingly, religious education has not been included in it which is the basis of Indian society, only moral education has been included. Gandhiji feared that enmity may spread in the name of religious education. Does any religion teach enmity?

Influence of Gandhiji

Gandhiji is the proponent of Sarvodaya principle. He did not distinguish between man and man, he wanted to establish a classless society in place of class society, and he succeeded in this task a great deal. He started a movement to eliminate the class discrimination between white and black people in South Africa and later started the same movement in India for ending high and low class system based on birth. Due to his effort, birth-based class system started to be replaced by classless society; it is another thing that the vote politics has sowed the plant of communal discrimination which is a great obstacle in national integration. Gandhiji endeavoured religious goodwill in place of religious narrowness, it had profound effect. Had the people conducting vote politics not favoured religious narrowness, the country would have been very different and better.

Gandhiji was a great man of his age, his influence was not limited to India alone, rather it spread to other countries as well. Today, the whole world is proceeding towards the establishment of classless society, and all religions are anxious to come out of the religious narrowness to enter the wide sphere of humanistic religion.

Gandhiji has also influenced the education. Due to him, steps were taken for an educational system for general, compulsory and free education. Besides, the system of adult education also gained momentum. As far as basic education is concerned, it was applied in several states before independence and in all states after independence. In no time, all primary schools had the billboards of basic primary school. Emphasis on basic crafts in the curriculum needed material and

finances from the government. Incessant workshops were conducted to train the teachers in the correlation method; but all these efforts proved to be gainless. It neither caused physical, mental, social and cultural development of the children, nor it brought about moral and character development. The children could not even be made enabled to earn their livelihood. Leave alone elimination of class distinction, it further deepened the gap. It came to be considered as low standard education. It is the truth too. Not even one dream of Gandhiji could be realized by it. Of course, the Gujarat Peeth (Ahmedabad) and Hindustani Taleem Shiksha Kendra (Sevagram) are the concrete form of his ideals, where village reform programmes and self-realization programmes are run side by side. But this type of education cannot attain economic development of the nation. The need of the hour is to march shoulder to shoulder with the world in all fields of life.

Conclusion

In brief, it can be said that Gandhiji wanted to indianise Indian education and for it he determined broad aims of education and constructed an extensive curriculum for it. He emphasized on active participation of the children in ancient teaching methods to make them useful and emphasized on the use of correlation method of teaching. He said that discipline should be motivated by the inner-self and impressionistic method should be adopted to develop it among children; all educationists agree with him in this regard. His views about the teacher are somewhat abnormal, but everybody agrees with him that the teacher should be an ideal person of the society. The significance of following celibacy by the children is accepted by all. Of course, it is mere fancy on the part of Gandhiji to think that schools should be economically self-dependent, but everybody agrees on his second view that these should be developed as community centres.

Gandhiji's views and tasks are invaluable about mass education and women education. For them, the country will remain indebted to him forever. We do not agree with him about religious education; we are in the favour of imparting education of basic principles of all chief religions of the world. Nobody now agrees with Gandhiji's national education (basic education) and the people who still sing song in its praises are not true Indians.

M.S. Patel has said about educational thought of Gandhiji as follows : "His philosophy of education is naturalist in its setting, idealist in its aims and pragmatist in its methods and programme of work." However, we do not agree with him. First, Mahatma Gandhi was not influenced by these western philosophies. Second, he was influenced by Indian philosophy, especially *Gita* philosophy. And third, he laid equal emphasis on the development of all the three body, mind and spirit. It should not be rational to relate his views with any western philosophies even if they happen to be similar to them. The Ekadash Vrita that Gandhiji presented for

physical and spiritual development, and the education plan based on truth and non-violence is fully constructed on the background of Indian philosophy; it is based on Indian philosophy from every angle. We bow to this great man time and again.

Test Questions

Essay Type Questions

1. Elaborate Gandhiji's thought in the context of aims of education, curriculum and teaching methods.
2. "Gandhiji's philosophy of education is naturalist in its setting, idealist in its aims and pragmatist in its methods and programme of work." How far do you agree with this statement? Support your answer with reasons.
3. Evaluate educational thought and practice of Gandhiji.

Short Answer Type Questions

6. What did Gandhiji mean by truth, non-violence and satyagraha?
7. What do you understand by 3Hs education of Gandhiji?
8. Mention the aims of education as determined by Gandhiji.
9. What were the views of Gandhiji regarding religious education?

Objective Questions

10. Select the right alternative :
 - (i) Which Gandhiji influenced the most?
 - (a) Vedas
 - (b) Upanishads
 - (c) Gita
 - (d) Ramayana
 - (ii) According to Gandhiji, what is the real form of bhakti?
 - (a) Worship
 - (b) Rituals
 - (c) Satsang
 - (d) Service to humanity
 - (iii) At what place has Gandhiji placed non-violence in his Ekadash Vrita?
 - (a) First
 - (b) Second
 - (c) Third
 - (d) Fifth
 - (iv) When did Gandhiji present his national basic education plan?
 - (a) 1937
 - (b) 1938
 - (c) 1947
 - (d) 1948

Answers

10. (i) Gita

10. (iii) Second

10. (ii) Service to humanity

10. (iv) 1937

