

# Gandhism and Present Scenario of Education in India

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## Background of Education in India

Education is regarded as an important tool and the backbone of the overall progress of any nation. It constructs the personality of a human being. It has a potential of generating a spirit of enquiry and questioning to the accepted truths in the society and rebel against the injustice. So it is considered as an important factor in the process of transformation of society and all its other aspects from one stage to other. It inculcates scientific attitude among the people. It is regarded as an important instrument in bringing society out of evil practices and superstitious mentality. It affects the socio-political and economical structure of the society.

The colonial rule was mainly responsible for the modern education and socio-economic and political change in many Asian, African countries. According to Gramsci, colonialism is an important part of the heritage of the most third world countries and in many instances still continues to influence relation between these countries and Western nations not only in the sphere of economic but also the domain of culture. The colonialism had its wrested interests and so the rulers need the mediators between them (rulers) and the people (ruled). To foster own economic, socio-cultural relations in new land the rulers deliberately create a class of the

mediators by giving them modern education. The newly educated class proved as good mediators in achieving the colonial interests, as it was trained by the modern education. Thus education played the significant role in spreading colonial ideas among indigenous people to fulfill colonial interests.

The colonialism is always attacked and its educational system is accused of being used as a tool by the capitalist to exploit the Asian and African countries and to subjugate them. Some of the thinkers considered that the education is used as the most important ideological state device, by the ruling classes to ensure that the society largely follows to their ideas and interests. According to Antonio Gramsci, the intellectuals or the upper sections of the products of the education system are officers of the rulers to exercise the subordinate functions of social hegemony and political government.

At the other end, are many social scientists, politicians, educationalists and educational planners who consider education as a very important instrument of social change, especially in the context of the Third World countries? But in its operational level, the system of education always benefits dominant strata of the society as compare to the lower caste people. The educational system works, both in forms and

content, with decisive social bias heavily in favor of the upper or the dominant strata of the society.

The role of education was limited only to equip young people with some minimum skills at least, like literacy and numeracy. With the growth of modern economy, the role of education got changed and meant to train the youngsters with information, knowledge, skills and values for doing various jobs needed in the society. The economy began to influence the role, content, specialization of education accordingly. However the knowledge, values, skills acquired through education, apart from fulfilling the needs of the society, they are also affecting the socio-economic and political structure of the society. His idea of Basic Education was mainly focusing on vocational training or work experience because it stimulates the human mind for creative thinking or dignity of manual labour. He wanted to promote creative thinking from primary to higher level of education.

Many of the social scientists tried to define Education and its role which differ from each other. For the Classical Greek philosophy of education, proper education involved the search for the good life and good society. It was mainly limited to welfare of the upper classes. The Roman concept of education was designed according to the needs of the empire and given role to create a skill based cultured society. The concept of English education revolved round to teach young people good manners, etiquettes and thoughts. For the German, education is supposed to shape and create well recognized human beings. Hegel and Karl Marx both had emphasized the role of education to bring a humanized society. Karl Marx had stated the

importance of education as an instrument to become a human being. At the same time he wanted education to rescue from the influence of the ruling class. In the twentieth century John Dewey, an American philosopher, had given importance to the moral aspects of progressive education, linking education and democracy. He insisted on everybody's right to education because he assumes that without education democracy cannot work properly. To him, "Education is primarily a public and only secondarily a specialized vocation". Thus for Dewey, Education plays vital role in the success of democracy. According to Pestalozzi, education is a "rational, harmonious and progressive development of man's innate powers." The progress of society depends on the success of education. Thus the classical concept of education is aimed to create a just society.

Khan declares that if we do not ever interrupt nature, they do not agitate us. According to Thoreau's "Without the harmonious relationship between human and nature, human will have no chance to enjoy the prosperity and development of the whole ecosphere" (Das 88). Every thing on earth has some special phenomenon; we humans also become a part of the terrestrial nature. Through the title of the novel "*Thinner than Skin*" by UzmaAslam khan, analyzes that our earth covers a thin layer of gases which protect us from dangerous radiant from the sun is similar to how skin covers our entire body and protect our organs. "From Tashkent he descended into the Fergana valley, and now he was getting close. He was approaching the passes through the Pamir and Karakoram

ranges he knew so well he could have made the trek in his sleep, and might have, but for one event that required him to remain fully awake” (Khan 142). The high elevations of the Himalaya in Central Asia are characterized by extreme weather conditions that have unique landscapes and a large portion of glaciers. “The novel is also an explicit narrativization of the rapid extinction of ancient cultures, animal species as well as deforestation” (Makhdoom 3). However, due to the increase in temperature, the glaciers retreated, the hydrological conditions deeply changing in the ranges of Karakoram and the Pamir plateau. This particular region provides water to the majority of Central Asian countries.

### **Mahatma Gandhi's Concept of Education**

Mahatma Gandhi is a key figure in the history of Modern India. He has written extensively on education in ‘Harijan’ during the year 1937. He has given a scheme of education, popularly known as ‘Basic Education’ or ‘Wardha Plan’. He wanted a value based education, which provides a manual work along with intellectual exercise at all stages. He has realized the importance of education not only for overall progress of an individual but also for the socio-economic and political progress of the society.

Gandhiji's philosophy of education was based on his metaphysical and ethical ideas. His entire philosophy was based on the ideas of ‘Truth’ and ‘Non-violence’. His idea of education is not limited to formal education only but he wanted to bring all kinds of goodness among the child. He wanted to bring changes in the hearts and minds of pupils. His philosophy of education not only limited to a spiritual salvation of man,

but it is aware of the material dimensions of life. He said, “By education I mean an all round drawing out of the best in child and man body mind and spirit, ..... I would therefore begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the movement it begins its training.” He thus focused on the spiritual, intellectual and physical progress of the child through education. His idea of education was not limited to the progress of the individual but of the entire society. He emphasized on the development of individual by education and at the same time he should have vocational training to cater the needs of the society. He considered, ‘The education ought to be for them a kind of insurance against the unemployment.’

Gandhiji's concept of education comes from his own long experience; he believed education as an important tool to eradicate all kinds of evils from the society. He was aware of the fact that the educational system of the British Government was purposely created to cater the colonial interests; so he wanted to create a new educational system based on the needs of Indian society. Broadly, Gandhiji looked at education a tool to inculcate values of truth, non-violence, labour, non-stealing, non-possession, chastity, anti-untouchability, worship and prayer, fasting and service to humanity.

Gandhiji wanted a free and compulsory primary education to all boys and girls between 7 and 14. In his own words, “Primary Education extending over a period of 7 years or longer and covering all subjects up to matriculation standard, except English plus a vocation used as the vehicle for drawing out the minds of boys and

girls in all departments of knowledge, should take the place of what passes today under the name of primary, middle and high school education.” He wanted to combine primary and secondary education as per the conditions of the rural areas. He wanted to leave the higher education to private enterprise for meeting national requirements whether in the various industries, technical arts or fine arts. According to him, the State Universities should be purely examining bodies, self supporting through the fees charged for examination. He thus focused on the primary education rather than on the higher education. He said, “I think we can postpone the question of higher education for some time; but the problem of primary education cannot be postponed even for a minute.”

Mahatma Gandhi also wanted to make students aware of the importance of manual labour and dignity of the work and his idea was implemented by KarmveerBhauraoPatil throughout all the schools, high-schools and colleges of the Rayat Shikshan Sanstha, Satara established in 1919 in Maharashtra. It has 48 colleges and many primary and secondary schools. Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil started “Earn and Learn Scheme” for the students, which is appreciated by Mahatma Gandhi himself while visited Satara in 1924. He extended help of Rs. 500/- every year for Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj hostel from the funds of Harijan Sevak Sangh. The Earn and Learn Scheme is adopted by almost all the universities in Maharashtra and still providing a fixed amount to the working students.

Thus education to Gandhiji means inspiring the children with a new ideology based upon

personal purity and unselfish service, resulting in the creation of society based upon truth and love. This is the Buddha’s concept of society also.

### **Present Scenario and Gandhism**

Gandhism has much impact on the policies of almost all the governments in India since independence. His thoughts on education seem to be relevant in present scenario of the Indian society. Some of his ideas are adopted and incorporated into the present educational system of India. Some of them came very late due to the lack of proper attention towards education by almost all the governments. Gandhiji was very keen on the issue of free and compulsory education to boys and girls between the age of 7 and 14. The Indian Constitution adopted Free and Compulsory Education to the boys and girls below the age of 14 and enacted it in the Directive Principles. Though the resolution on new Policy on Education in 1968 already adopted it, but a law came too late in 2009 on this policy. The Right to Children to Free and Compulsory Education 2009 came into force only from 1st April, 2010. RTE may be raised up to grade 12 according to New Educational Policy, 2019. It also states that the highest body, being a permanent National Commission chaired by Prime Minister will be constituted to supervise educational system. It means that education will be given a proper attention in future. This is too late to understand Gandhiji though he has great impact on the policies of governments after independence.

According to Krishna Kumar, Gandhiji’s idea of Basic Education was not given a proper

attention. Gandhiji has proposed to introduce local crafts and production related skills and knowledge in the school; he was actually proposing allocation of substantive place in the school curriculum to the systems of knowledge, developed by and associated to the suppressed groups of Indian society, namely artisans, peasants and cleaners. It was a revolution in the system of knowledge in the schools. For centuries the curriculum had confined itself to the knowledge associated with the dominant castes. Gandhiji's plan of basic education was thus the revolutionary step to form the curriculum associated with the lower and the lowest castes; his plan expects children to clean the toilets. Effective implementation of his plan of Basic Education would have seriously affected the prevailing hierarchies of different monopolies of knowledge in our caste based society.

Mahatma Gandhi was also thinking education as a tool to inculcate goodness in the minds of the people to create a peaceful and harmonious society. His idea of political system also based on education. He thought that a good political system can be created only with goodness of the citizens and goodness can be inculcated with the proper education system. His idea of vocational training in education is followed by the Kothari Commission 1966. The Commission says, "We recommend that work experience should be introduced as an integral part of all India education-general or vocational. We define work experience as participation in productive work in school, in the home, in the workshop, on a firm, in a factory or in other productive system." Thus Kothari Commission was greatly impressed by Gandhiji's idea of work

experience while learning. Now the University Grants Commission (UGC) has started vocational degree courses (B.Voc) in most of the colleges throughout India. The Kothari Commission also brought 10+2+3 pattern, which aims at starting Industrial Training Institutes (it is) after 10th standard to make students self dependant. The Government of India also started a separate Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in 2015 to empower the youth of the country with skills sets which make them more employable and more productive in their work environment.

Gandhiji looked at education very seriously and given importance to create a society based on truth and love. But since we accepted Globalization, education has become a commodity and it is going beyond the reach of poor and lower cast people. The private schools and universities have been established in India giving education for the purpose of earning money. The quality of education is also not up to the mark as not a single Indian university is ranked among first 200 universities of the world. The Central Government and State governments are trying to reduce their responsibilities of imparting education to the masses. There should be at least 6% amount of the total expenditure of the Union Government allotted to the education; but it never happened in the history of post-independent India. The colleges and universities are being asked to take autonomy status so that it is said that the government will not take any of the financial responsibility in future. Many of the teaching posts from different universities and colleges all over India are being kept vacant since last 10 to 15 years. The most of the private

educational institutes are looking at the educational system as an earning source. Teaching posts are being sold out at very high rates in most of the institutes. There are many malpractices introduced in the Indian educational system. We must remember Gandhiji and his concept of education in the future as it is relevant and essential for the betterment of the Indian society.