

Protuberant Cultural System in India: Perspective of Mahatma Gandhi

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ABSTRACT: *This study explicates Gandhiji's ideas on education in a cultural perspective. It attempts to share the full range of meaning that Gandhiji gave to his non-violence concept based on humanistic philosophy. The purpose is to better understand Gandhian non-violence concept in a holistic manner and thus to have further basis for reflection. The study also makes an effort to compare the classroom ideas of Gandhiji and Humanism. We have to think whether the burgeoning humanistic culture could influence the coming generation to be finer one.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

First of all, we shall have to consider how we can realise the self and how serve our country...For realising the self; the first essential thing is to cultivate a strong moral sense. Morality means acquisition of virtues such as fearlessness, truth, chastity etc. Service is automatically rendered to the country in this process of cultivating morality...

M.K. Gandhi

In India, The father of the nation – Mahatma Gandhi was not only a political leader, social worker or a nation builder but an eminent educationalist also. His ideas about education were most prominent in today's society. Gandhi believed that if India has to remain herself and retain her vitality, the educational system has to be radically recast so as to reduce the emphasis on book-learning and to dethrone English from the central position it had usurped. His ideas on the subject were set out in some detail in his correspondence from Champaran with friends in Ahmadabad and in the prospectus of the National Gujarati School in 1920 with the slogan, "*Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye*", which means Knowledge is one that liberates.

The main motivation behind the school was his view that educational system then was not having a national perspective and as a consequence people did not get from it the benefit they ought to. This modern education aims the children to get a Job and make money. But these children are incapable of any great achievement and the knowledge they acquire does not spread among the masses and mostly not even in their families. So he believed that a change was imminent. But how it has to change? The syllabus he used in his National Gujarati School is now unavailable for reference. But ideas can be concluded from his views about educational philosophy.

II. GANDHI'S RELIGIOUS VIEWS

Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi was born in 1869 in the coastal town of Porbandar. He grew up in an eclectic religious environment. His parents consciously imbibed a variety of religious beliefs, but as such he had no deep knowledge of any religious tradition including his own. But after he became an influential national leader, he revealed his thoughts related to religion as 'Truth is God' (1926). Later in Gandhiji's life, religion was the basis which shaped all his activities. But his religious views were more concerned with how one lived, not with what one believed. It had therefore nothing to do with theology, which over intellectual religion reduced it to a set of dogmas, and privileged belief over conduct. For Gandhi, not theology but morality was the core of religion. Gandhiji's view placed the individual at the centre of the religious search, liberated religion from the strange hold of traditionalism and liberalism, encouraged fresh readings of scriptures, and made space for an interreligious dialogue. It also violated the historical integrity of the religious tradition, deinstitutionalised religion, and encouraged in the less competent hands an attitude of shallow cosmopolitanism. Gandhiji argues there were neither Christians nor Hindus or Muslims, only whole and unfragmented human beings who freely help themselves with the spiritual and moral resources of these and other great religious traditions which leads to a good society to create the conditions for Swaraj. A good society should appreciate reasoning, intuition, faith, tradition wisdom and emotions were all valuable resources of knowledge, and made their own distant contributions in the field separately.

III. EDUCATIONAL VIEWS OF MAHATMA

The nonviolence programme which Gandhi presented to Khilafat committee and to the Indian National Congress, however revolutionary seemed to the government and the people, represented features which had for long been a part of Gandhi's philosophy. He believed that his non-violent technique could end social injustice no less than foreign rule. For his experience in Tolstoy and Phoenix farms in South Africa, he concluded that the value of academic instruction is basically character building and that the acquisition of practical skills had not been given due recognition. In October 1937, Gandhi presented his ideas in an educational conference held on October 22-23, 1937 in Wardha and was later popularized as Nai Talim, and a detailed scheme of elementary education based on these ideas were proposed by a committee of educationists headed by Dr. Zakir Husain. Gandhi explained that the scheme is not to produce craftsmen but to develop a certain degree of skill was inevitable. Real education aims at drawing the best out of you. Gandhi fundamentally emphasised on aiming at the objectives of education by placing man at the centre of all activities for development. The ultimate goal of education is self realisation, which takes a major role in moulding an individual to be worthy of contributing his best to self and to the mankind.

According to Gandhi, to reach this ultimate goal, a student must be embedded with the following principles: truth, non-violence, vegetarianism, brahmacharya, simplicity and faith. Also a student must possess five criterions like care, common sense, courage, commitment and confidence. The main theme he wanted to circulate to the society through education was nonviolence and sathyagraha. *Sathyagraha* is the *Love for truth* and *Non-violence* is *Love of enemy*. It is the realisation of humanity of all people (Chandogya Upanishad). The fundamental concept of non-violence is to create a social dynamic movement that can affect social change without necessarily winning over those who wish to maintain the status quo. The seed of this nonviolence technique has to be proliferated in the field, is the mind of children within the premises of the school.

IV. HUMANISM

As we know, humanism is from the key term in Chinese philosophy "li", which represents the standard human reactions to life. But the method and place to live and the way to attain social prosperity is always under question. Within Marxism, the notion of Humanism is given a social and economic dimension as compared to religious interpretation. The Chinese thought reveals the notion of single mindedness in humanism. This disposition involves the process of constant moral effort and self cultivation, and embodies the idea that what a human being becomes is largely a matter of his own efforts. It leads to nonviolence. The Korean thinker T'oegye argued that everyone would be able to become a sage, which means to become fully human, through serious thought and correct self cultivation. According to Yulgok, single mindedness is a stage on the route to sincerity. Such sincerity is the source of our links with other human beings.

Humanism stresses to get away from religious control of knowledge, as an immense intellectual study, which cares the all-rounded personality by enjoying the happiness of his existence. Social good is the supreme ethical good of humanity. In India, the concept of humanism emerged in 1960s by demanding an integral approach to create a harmonious society by satisfying the bodily needs (hunger, shelter), the mind (traditions), intelligence (reforms) and the soul (common aspirations of the people that shape their unique culture). This principle really emerged from Advaita Vedanta.

V. HUMANISTIC VALUES IN EDUCATIONAL VIEWS OF GANDHI.

Humanistic Education through awareness of human values was what Gandhi greatly pines for in the welfare of global humanity. As we consider the lofty status of reason and rationality in Gandhi's approach, especially for appreciating the philosophical significance of life, the importance of peace education emerges, which he emphasised through religious education. God would not command anything that is irrational, and appeals to faith and to ultimate reality must be tested by human experience and human reason. Critical self reflection is essential for moral and spiritual development in which the individual self becomes integrated through harmonious relations as part of a meaningful coherent whole. Gandhiji's approach to education is seen to focus on character building and values on educational dangers of separating means from ends and becoming trapped in endless cycle of escalating non-violence.

The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi states that the education should be shaped based on the absolute ideals of ahimsa (non-violence) and satya (truth). It is possible by converting this vigorous society using absolute, ethical and spiritual norms to transform human relations in the direction of nonviolence, compassion, love, peace and truth. We have to include this peace Education to various approaches described as cultural relativism, post modernism, deconstruction, multiculturalism, feminism and other versions. Gandhi's ideas and reflections were finally formulated at Nai Talim or new Education of Gandhi which was an essential component of Gandhiji's famous constructive programme that presented his humanistic vision. It involved a list of sins which can be said to indicate the fundamentals of humanism. They are *Politics without Principles, Wealth*

without Work, Commerce without Morality, Knowledge without character, Pleasure without conscience, Science without Humanity and Worship without sacrifice.

Each of these principle items ensures the systematic, sincere society emphasising on individualism. Gandhi's objective was to combine and balance liberty with solidarity, individual freedom with social demands and independence and interdependence.

HUMANISM AND GANDHI IN CLASSROOM!

“Gandhiji's Philosophy of Education is naturalistic in its setting, idealistic in its aim, pragmatic in its methods and programmes”... Dr .Patel

THEMES	GANDHI	HUMANISM
Aims of Education	Complete Development of Personality a) Self-supporting b) Culture preserving c) Character building d) 3 H's development e) Value Education f) Self-realisation	A well rounded Personality Individual liberty and Social responsibility
Curriculum	Basic craft and Domestic science	Study of classics of Greeks and Romans Training for good manners
Method of teaching	Teaching through craft Must be manual and productive Cooperative learning, Initiative and individual responsibility are preferred.	Exercises should be given and should teach through gradual approach. Importance to style and vocabulary of literature. Lectures and Debate should be preferred. Maxim of teaching is Understand- Arrange- Repeat.
Role of teacher	Model to students Be a guide and facilitator	Dependable agent in case of success /failure Guiding students to find a unity in the multiplicity of experience Intuition and imagination, insight and sympathy, faith and charity and wisdom are the best qualities of a teacher.
Discipline	Self Discipline and Social Discipline	Self-Discipline
Target	Self –Reliance	To be free to enjoy the highest happiness in the world.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMANISTIC CULTURE IN PREVALENT CURRICULUM.

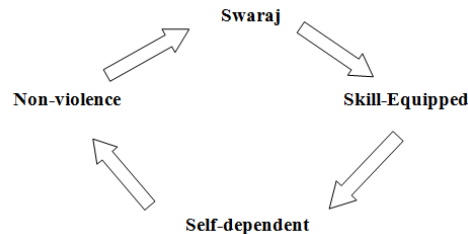
Gandhi's thoughts and actions are relevant for the curriculum of this generation also. A lot of unjustified murders, tortures, rapes and sadistic bullying are reported across nook and corners of our nation and in most of the cases the culprit is younger generation. Inside the premises of Educational institutions, increasing violence and criminal activities by students and academicians is also an increasing concern. Even language has become a weapon used to control, manipulate, humiliate, intimidate, terrorise, oppress, exploit and dominate each other. As Gandhi stated in 1919, Satyagraha is the only way to end such social hegemonies. He argued and demonstrated until nonviolent resistance to imperialism ended all attended forms of terrorism.

Nonviolence is more than the absence of overt violence; peace is more than the absence of overt war. Here the human beings have to affirm their commitment to Peace Education.

Peace education refers to character building that focuses on the development of courage, strength, fearlessness, virtue and the ability to engage in selfless work directed to moral and spiritual aims. Gandhi emphasized the vocational training and productive manual labour which focus on real needs and simple living, the development of nonviolent relations, greater emphasis on moral development than on usual intellectual development, and a holistic approach that involves integrated training of body, mind and spirit. In Gandhi's philosophy, peace functions in three levels: peace with oneself where Gandhi usually emphasise that one must start with his own self, peace with other human beings which always involves social, economic, cultural and other relations and peace with nature. All these three levels of peace must interact, mutually define each other and must be integrated as part of a dynamic, harmonious whole. This peace must involve active engagement. Peace Education is concerned with how a person should structure his life in terms of the nonviolence of thoughts, feelings, judgements and actions. To achieve this goal, we must primarily emphasize on the formative training and socialization of young children.

Now Education is an investment and students have become commoditised products, which reveal a basic moral and ontological position of the interrelatedness, interdependency and indivisibility of the social life. True Education should teach us how in this organic, holistic view, we rise and fall together. Peace Education emphasizes on all these aspects, and on their integral, mutually reinforcing relations. Noble result may be unattainable either because of unintended consequences or because they express ideals beyond our power of realization. Gandhi emphasized that we cannot use violence to overcome violence and to achieve nonviolence. If we educate students to use violent and impure means, it will shape violent and impure minds regardless of our moralistic self-justifying slogans and ideology.

Peace Education focuses on political, cultural, social, economic, linguistic, religious and other aspects of overall socialisation that contribute to the real ethical and spiritual needs and are most free to develop a compassionate and disciplined inviolate will. Humanism orients towards lessening ego-desires to attain greater freedom, self-determination, and control over our lives and destinies and, place primary emphasis on serving the needs of others. It leads to Swaraj through the realization of the unity and interconnectedness of all reality. In short we can say the educate-humanist cycle of Gandhi included the following



This cycle implies his views in order to lead a better life in society. If the Basic Education is implemented in an ideal manner; it helps a person to perform the work entrusted on him/her successfully. This self-equipment is what we aim by Quality Education. A self-equipped person always depends on himself/herself to have a healthy situation. It arouses one to be confident enough to lead a life of non-violence. The most important factor we need to have such a lane is patience. It has to be developed by adopting a strategy of non-violence. A society without violence results in loyalty. Loyalty earns Swaraj/Autonomy of life. The Autonomy is the ultimate goal of Education. Gandhi's strategy of non-violent resistance was a successful attempt in a way that if the authority ignored it, it gathered momentum. If they attacked it, it enlisted sympathy in India and abroad. Gandhi's educational approach, which handles the social issues in a more contemporary way by combining his insights and contributions, is of much value in twenty-first century since it focuses on our insecure world of multidimensional violence and violence of status quo for the sustainability of human beings and the society.

TWO PRACTICAL EXAMPLES FROM INDIA

Considering the humanistic culture in the educational system, two working examples could be highlighted from Kerala state. Mitraniketan Vishwa Vidyapeedam for Open learning and Total development at Vellanad and Pallikoodam School at Kottayam practices the same vision as that of Mahatma Gandhi and aim to develop active citizenship among students by developing their innate potentials. This type of academic and practical training, which involves integrated education, results in the self dependency of the child.

VII. CONCLUSION

There is a widespread belief that humanism is another version of socialism without central planning. It completely ignores the importance of knowledge and ideas. Again it dismisses socialism, communism, capitalism and individualism without providing any logical argument against any of these approaches. Modern society is comprised of many poisonous elements that results in violence. So no human can escape from sufferings, even though he/she can experience moments of joy and clarity that are absent in the normal experience. It is apparent that by evolving towards greater independence and productivity, the disturbed symptoms of modern life will cure themselves.

I hold that without truth and non-violence, there can be nothing but destruction of Humanity

M.K. Gandhi

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