

Humanistic Approach to Education and Gandhian View points on Values:

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Abstract: *Gandhian Philosophy and thought on education had brought a new dimension and fundamental changes for building up of a new social order based on tolerance, truth and non-violence. But a dismal picture in the sphere of education is seen today as we have been failed to follow his glorious thought in the field of education. Educational Institutions have been the breeding ground of violence, communal conflicts, racial discrimination and social disintegration. Moreover, education of today has become completely out of touch both with the realities of national life and the upsurge of national aspirations. It has failed to cope up with the socio-economic problem stirring up in our country. The morality and human values of the youth of our country have been decreasing day by day as the system of education gives the youth a little insight in their national heritage, culture and values. But if we go through the Gandhian thought, we will find that he categorically emphasized on the development of social, cultural, economic, environmental and aesthetic values through the adoption of 'Learning by doing' which will cause 'all round drawing out of the best in child and man –body, mind and spirit'*

Gandhi wanted to make our child to be more practical rather than depending upon the accumulation of bookish knowledge. He emphasized on the development of 3Hs (Head, Heart and Hand) instead of 3Rs(Reading, writing and arithmetic). Gandhian thought on education is thus the root of solutions of all present social, economic and educational problems. His thought on environmental education also makes us concern about the sustainable development and ecological balance to challenge all sorts of environmental threats in the 21st century.

Introduction: Gandhian Humanism is a new concept of humanism goes deeper into the problems of mankind and finds out solutions through the weapons of education. It is a concept of inner awakening of mankind. It gives emphasis on love and truth. Education to him is the exploration of inner consciousness. Education is the service with full sacrifice in the course of self- discovery, self-enrichment, self-evolution and self-askance. Human imagination is on the brink of Flourish or perish toyed with automation, super-computerization and Mega-machines. A robotized and computerized society is sacked with its computerized imagination. Purity of thoughts and perfection of imagination are waning today. Gandhian humanism shows the inner awakening of man. As a part of humanistic enterprise Gandhi gave emphasis on the strict principle of work and adherence to duty. He presents the example of birds singing hymns of praise in the early morning and has had their food on flying with rested wings. According to Gandhi, "I have had the pain of watching birds that for want of strength could not be coaxed even into a flutter of their wings. The human bird under the Indian sky gets up weaker than when he pretended to retire. For millions it is an eternal vigil or an eternal trance. It is an indescribably painful state which has got to be experienced to be realized"¹

Gandhi rejects spoon feeding or dependence of humanity drastically and inspires real awakening of humanism through self-activity and self-dependence. Spirit of work and worship humanity as Gandhi ardently believes is the worship of God.

Gandhi advocates self-respect self-discipline and self-honour to be achieved in performing one's duties and responsibilities. Thus the introduction of Charkha or the spinning wheel in schools was considered the way of reviving the inner consciousness of humanity.

The Basic education and Values: The basic Education a practical approach to Naitalim designed by means of spinning wheel is the key to Gandhian humanism. Gandhi emphasizes on the humanistic approach to education than mere accomplishments in scholastic Endeavour. Basic Education undeniably expand the heart and mind It fosters humanism and cultivate the spirit of total human welfare. A child receiving craft centric, purposeful, useful, meaningful education will be truly prepared for the peace and prosperity of the humanity. Education in course of undergoing Basic Education programmes will ensure total development of manhood. Gandhi elucidates this philosophy of making 'the full man' characteristically.

Gandhi wanted to make education a vehicle of transcendence of man and a means of evolution of human consciousness. Gandhi advocates such type of education right from the childhood for physical, mental, social, morals, aesthetic and spiritual uplift. Gandhi believes in that education of the heart and purity of thought and action can not be imparted by so called bookish knowledge. Teachers who are ethically and aesthetically sound can turn out pupils being worthy citizens of tomorrow.

He remarks: "I do not believe that this (the education of heart) can be imparted through books. It can only be done through the living touch of the teacher. And who are the teachers in the Primary and even Secondary schools? Are they men and women of faith and character? Have they themselves received the training of the heart? Are they ever expected to take care of the permanent element in the boys and girls placed under their charge? 2

Gandhi's humanistic pattern of Education: If education allows freedom for children to enjoy and experience truth directly and consciously through the hands on activities, it becomes more humanistic for the sake of their own development. He wanted children to broaden their mind and widen their outlook. Even to humanize education Gandhi advocated for introduction of sex education which is surely the way of sublimation of curiosity and sex passion of the adolescents.

He clearly elucidates:

"We properly control, or conquer the sexual passion by turning a blind eye to it. I am, therefore, strongly in favour of teaching young boys and girls the significance and right use of their generative organs. In my own way I have tried to impart this knowledge to young children of both sexes, for whose training I was responsible. But the sex education that I stand for must have for its object the sex passion. Such

education should automatically serve to bring home to children the essential distinction between man and brute, to make them realize that it is man's privilege and pride to be gifted with the faculties of head and heart both, that he is a thinking no less than a feeling animal, and to renounce the sovereignty of reason over the blind instinct, is, therefore, renounce a man's estate. In man reason quickens and guides the feeling, in brute the soul lies ever dormant. To awaken the heart is to awaken the dormant soul, to awaken reason and to inculcate discrimination between good and evil. Today, our entire environment—our reading, our thinking, and our social behavior—is generally calculated to subserve and cater for the sex urge. To break through its coils is no easy task. But it is a task worthy of our highest Endeavour.”³

Importance of Manual Labour: If education means awakening of the heart and soul manual labour is necessary then. For humanistic education, he has given more emphasis on manual labour to develop self-dependence and self-respect. The end of true education can be fulfilled through artisan work. He remarks:

“The utterly false idea that intelligence can be developed only through book-reading should give place to the truth that the quickest development of the mind can be achieved by the artisan's work being learnt in a scientific manner. True development of the mind commences immediately the apprentice is taught at every step why a particular manipulation of the hand or a tool is required. The problem of the unemployment of students can be solved without difficulty, if they will rank themselves among the common labourers.”⁴

To promote humanism Gandhi considers the dignity of work in education. He wanted to bring a radical change in the concept of education considering work as the worship to humanity.

To him, “Work done with integrity and intelligence, is ultimately the only proper medium through which human beings can be truly educated and that schools must become active centers of ‘doing’ and ‘learning by doing’ both organized in integral relationship with each other. This appreciation of the intrinsic relationship between doing, learning and living.....springs from the deepest sources of his thought. He has been a worker—and in contact with workers---throughout his life. He knows, through firsthand experience and observation, that real value is created through honest work and that true culture is even more emphatically a product of the field, the farm or the workshop than the library and the lecture room.”⁵

Man making and Character building Education: Gandhi wanted to develop inherent sense of humanity among children.

“He aims at exalting co-operation above competition, service above exploitation and non-violence above Violence. Above all, his educational scheme....is inspired by the hope that by making all children learn co-operatively through craft work, thus sharing the life and labour of the masses, it will not release their productive powers for the service of the common good but deepen their sense of humanity and kingship with their fellowmen all over the world”⁶

Education is the positive force of humanism. He appealed to this positive force which can bring about the complete change in man transforming character and elevating personality. Anibel del Campo observes:

“Gandhi advocated the complete transformation of men; and for this transformation, one of his important tools was education. He aimed at the re-education of character and he sought to achieve this by giving them an *Ashramic* or collective education. Gandhi felt that by training the personality of men one would achieve a true revolution, since all revolutions are based on a transformation of education. The two elements which formed its base—truth and non-violence—always went together, It is only in their perspective that Gandhi saw the liberation of India. The liberation of India was not based on material values or on historical co-existence, but on a moral or religious vocation which goes back to the Upanishads and the Veda. What is most important was education, because only education could get the upper hand over materialism, to which the people of India were exposed.”⁷

Unfoldment of Latent qualities through hands on Activities: Gandhi wanted to revolutionize education through the unfoldment of latent qualities of children. He correlates education with real life situation for rethinking and redesigning human possibilities in the world of wisdom. Gandhi elucidates on revolutionalisaton of educaton:

“Our education has to be revolutionalised. The brain should be educated through the hand. If I were a poet, I could write poetry on the possibilities of five fingers. And why should you think that the mind is everything and the hands and feet are nothing. Those who do not train the hands, who go through the ordinary rut of education, ‘lack’ music in their life. All their faculties are not trained. Mere book knowledge does not interest the child, so as to hold attention fully. The brain gets weary of mere words, and the child’s mind begins to wander. The hand does the thing it ought not to do, the eye sees things I ought not to see, and the ear ought not to hear the things it ought not to hear, and they do not do, see

or hear, respectively, what they ought to. They are not taught to make the right choice and so their education often proves their ruin. An education which does not teach us to discriminate between good and bad, to assimilate the one and eschew the other, is a misnomer.⁸

Basic Education and religion: Gandhi considered religion as an indispensable factor in the system of education. Gandhian system of basic education provides equal consideration to all religions. It teaches the broad moral principles common to all religions. Truth, non-violence, love for the country, moral uplift and so on are common in all great religions. The Gandhian system of education in fact develops all the good qualities of head and heart in such a way that there is an all-round development of the full personality of the child, making him a patriot in the real sense. In this way, we find a close relationship between basic education and religion".⁹

Gandhi opened new schools for imparting Basic education with a view to spread humanism. He clarifies:

"..in the schools I am opening, children under the age of twelve only are admitted. The idea is to get hold of as many children as possible and to give them an all-round education, a good knowledge of Hindi or Urdu and, through that medium, of arithmetic and rudiments of history and geography, knowledge of simple scientific principles and some industrial training. No cut and dried syllabus has yet been prepared because I am going on an unbeaten track. I look upon our present system with horror and distrust. Instead of developing the moral and mental faculties of the little children it dwarfs them.I shall endeavor to avoid the defects of the present system. The chief thing aimed at is contact of children with men and women of culture and unimpeachable moral character. That to me is education. Literary training is to be used merely as a means to that end. The industrial training is to be designed for the boys and the girls who may come to us for an additional means of livelihood. It is not intended that on completing their education they should leave their hereditary occupation but make use of the knowledge acquired in the school to refine agriculture and agricultural life. Our teachers will also touch the lives of grown-up people and, if at all possible, penetrate the purdah. Instruction will be given to grown-up people in hygiene and about the advantages of joint action, for the promotion of communal welfare, such as, the making of village roads proper, the sinking of wells, etc. And as no school will be manned by teachers who are not men or women of good training, we propose to give free medical aid as far as possible.¹⁰

Conclusion: An apostle of education Gandhi symbolizes education as a serene means of inner growth and for the advancement of radical humanism. Just seven days prior to the independence of India Gandhi advised to the students to lead a simple life being engaged in high thinking.

“They must stimulate the faculty of high thinking. I do not even remotely suggest that the student can force the situation by strikes and the like. They have to create the public opinion by offering constructive and enlightened criticism. The senators having been brought up in the old school are slow to move. They can truly be acted by enlightenment.

A student life has been rightly linked to the life of a sanyashi. He must be the embodiment of simple living and high thinking. He must be discipline incarnate. His pleasure is derived from his studies.¹¹

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