



## Gandhian vision about higher education and its relevance in the 21st century

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### ABSTRACT

*British rulers in the mid-18th century had introduced the system of colonial education system in India, which was later rejected in India after its independence. Many eminent leaders, social reformers and scholars voiced their opinions on this rejection. However, it was Mahatma Gandhi who vehemently rejected colonial education and instead put forward an alternative. Gandhi criticized that the colonial education same as western civilization which had the agenda to negate truth and non-violence, two areas which were most dear to Mahatma Gandhi. As per the Gandhian vision, colonial education could never be treated as a symbol of progress and he wanted education which would help India move away from the western concept of progress, towards something which is suited to Indian culture and is more viable for the whole world. The basis his vision towards education in both theory and practice is to evolve the society which is based on truth, non-violence, justice and equality. His main emphasis has been on imparting practical knowledge in form of manual work and art and crafts.*

*In the present scenario, although, India has come a long way since independence, it still can choose an identity for its education system. Gandhian system can still be adopted in the country so as to promote practical education among students so that India can produce researchers, or scientists who are not dependent on bookish knowledge.*

**KEYWORDS : Culture, Society, Vision, Gandhian system, Spiritual**

### Introduction to Gandhian vision

Mahatma Gandhi had perspectives in every aspect of life like, socio economic, political and educational scenario. With respect to education, his thoughts carry a holistic view in the sense that he wanted that the people of India to develop an overall personality. He believed that every child had unique characteristics; and wanted that the best should be drawn from within every child. As per his vision, literacy is neither the end nor the beginning, it is only a means through which one can achieve education and there are many other means of acquiring education (Gandhi, 1937).

According to him, emphasis should be given to teaching art and craft so that the money collected after that craft can be used to make educational institutions self-reliant. For him, the development of mind and soul is of highest importance. He insisted that students be taught about applicability and practical approaches, and that they should know the why and wherefore of every process. His vision was not superfluous; rather it was based on his experience of teaching sandal making and spinning. His ideologies and vision were revolutionary as he emphasized on practical training of children and enable them to learn things in shorter span than if they are only being taught through books (Gandhi, 1937). His vision was also focused on education of rural India. He wanted that rural population of India be given the opportunity to exercise their physical, mental and spiritual power (Gandhi M. K., 1961).

### Basic Education Concepts Given by Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi's wrote about education in his book Hind Swaraj in year 1916 and explained his views on the education system which was introduced by Britishers in India. Although Gandhi himself acquired education from foreign country, he claimed that he unlearned in order to fulfill his dharma. As per the Gandhian vision, "education is important for the development of individuals as well as society" (Pareltank, 2006). He believed that, education should be aimed at the development of individual as a whole rather than just mugging up facts and figures. Also he believed that religion should not be taught in schools rather should only be imparted by religious organizations. He believed that education should be applicative so that people can get jobs which will not only promote progress of the individual but of the society as a whole. He also believed that young students should not be taught alphabets mechanically as it can appear quite meaningless to them (Prasadh S., 2012).

Other than describing the measures of imparting education, Gandhi also believed that punishment should be banned. Gandhi even devel-

oped a scheme known as National Programme in Basic Education. The salient features of this scheme were presented by him in year 1937. He acknowledged the importance of education and suggested that:

In order to improve the quality of life, education should be made free and compulsory.

### The medium of education should individuals mother language;

The education should be imparted in applicative manner wherein activities should be developed, such that craft models be adopted with respect to different subjects like; mathematics, science. Also he envisioned that these art works should be sold in order to make education self-reliant. This practice clearly indicated that Gandhi was against colonial education which relied only on books for knowledge (Gandhi. M. K., 1937).

According to him basic education has four main branches, i.e. art, craft, health and education. As per his vision, he emphasized that educating a child through manual work should be the prime concern of educators rather than treating it as a side activity. As per his vision, this would lead to the harmonious growth of body, mind and soul. Overall the scheme of basic education as imparted by Gandhi would produce self-reliant and good citizens. He emphasized on the importance of physical and social environment and craft work. This clearly reflects that this education system is broad based as Gandhi didn't want to limit education to merely classrooms (Gandhi M. K., n.d.; Soni R. B. L., 1998).

Although there is no evidence if the Indian education system today is based on the ideology and principals reflected by Mahatma Gandhi. However, his ideology resulted in education receiving higher priority in India, which made education system more progressive in comparison what was ongoing in the past.

### Relevance of Gandhian Vision in Today's Education Scenario

Gandhian concept of education still holds significance in the contemporary world. As per his vision, theory and practice of basic education would develop well balanced personality in individuals and promote self-reliance and progress in the country. This perspective of education is very important which holds relevance in existing conditions and societal attitudes. As per his vision, English should not be used as a medium of education which only produces white collar snobs who lack talent and expertise. Another important vision of Mahat-

ma Gandhi reflects that education should be based on craft and that maintaining a creative balance would lead to intellectual and practical development of individual, which holds true even in today's scenario (Safaya *et al*, 2007; Murphy S., 1991). Why do we say so? That is because; pedagogically speaking this form of imparting education is way better than passive academic education system which teaches with the help of books.

There are a number of advantages of imparting basic education system designed by Mahatma Gandhi, as it helps in developing the habit to critically inquire and judge in an objective manner. Sociologically speaking, social conflicts existing in the Indian society like untouchability can be eradicated. Economically, India would be able to create productive labor and also open different job opportunities. Further standard of living can be improved which is still lacking especially in the rural parts of the country (Murphy S., 1991).

Critiques of Gandhian vision on the principles of basic education can be considered gigantic and cannot be practically revived after 66 years of Independence. The Gandhian vision has been lost forever mainly because it was and has always been iconoclastic. The present day scenario of education in India is like, education in rural India is still inadequate, and still hasn't stabilized in last 66 years. As per the Gandhian principles, the child should be taught as per the community he belongs to. However, this scenario does not exist in today's scenario. For example, a farmer's son can choose a different career path if he wishes to which would also promote progress in the country.

### Conclusion

Gandhian vision is especially relevant today as education today in India is treated as a business, as more and more students are thronging on the gates of colleges, and returning disappointed. Not all applicants can be accommodated and even if all of them are accommodate there aren't enough job opportunities which only promotes unemployment. Also, finding and identity of Indian education system is the need of the hour. Following Gandhian philosophies although iconoclastic can be the answer to all the problems education system of India currently facing.

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