



## Value Education: A Gandhian View

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### Abstract

*Mahatma Gandhi's name requires no introduction because of his invaluable contribution to the national liberation movement of India. It was he who awakening millions of people on the strength of non-violent activities, engaging them to an action, challenging the mighty empire of the world, ultimately threw the yoke of slavery. Those who believed that not a single country in the world history had achieved its freedom except by violent means, the action of Mahatma Gandhi compelled them to re-think and also to change their mentality. His reputation as a true nationalist as well as an internationalist shines like sun itself, but in the academic sense of term, he is not considered a great scholar or an educationist. We have not been enlightened by his views on education or on the problems relating to it, through any particular book written by him. Even there is no special research article available, which could have given us a glimpse of his ideas or suggestions on education system, except his occasional articles on the future of education in India written in a very simple and light manner. The same thing applies to the views he expressed on the subject now and then.*

*Despite this fact, the few articles that Mahatma Gandhi has written in the simplest manner, and the views he expressed on education as a common man are of utmost importance; they provide us a guide line to proceed towards value education. Not only this, if we apply them even in the modern perspective, they can, definitely, give a new dimension to our education system.*

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "**Education means all-round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit.**" [Harijan: July 31, 1937]

As such, education becomes the basis of personality development on all dimensions – moral, mental and emotional. Therefore, we can say that in the long run education forms the foundations on which the castles of peace and prosperity can be built. Since ancient times, it is said, “*SA VIDYA YA VIMUKTAYE*”, which means that with education, we finally attain salvation. This small *Sanskrit* phrase essentially contains the thought and essence of Value Education that is relevant in all perspectives. This very concept, when applied to the simple but refined approach of Mahatma Gandhi, can provide us with a new dimension of educational development. As such, while analyzing the views of Mahatma Gandhi, we can observe his views under two main points:

**A. Morality and Ethics:** Moral and ethical knowledge is the first point on which Mahatma Gandhi’s concept of value education is based. Any education system that lacks these two cannot be termed as good and sound. The reason behind such a thought is that, without morality and without ethics, no student, in real sense, can be considered to be healthy in mental and physical terms, because for it, self-control and good character is essential. A person, who is not a moralist and who does not differentiate between right and wrong, cannot rise to the essential level of a true student. Then, the attainment of spiritual growth that has been described by Mahatma Gandhi, as an essential part of education, can only be gained through morality and ethics. Seeing it through another viewpoint also proves the same thing because when we consider education as a means of attaining salvation and also as a support on the pathway to liberation, then we cannot differentiate it from Spiritualism.

Mahatma Gandhi laid down some rules for students so as to ensure that morality and righteousness always be considered as an essential and un-differentiable part of education so that every student shall gain in terms of knowledge and spirituality. He said that on the one hand where students should gain education under the strict regimen of high morals, self-control and right thinking, on the other they would also be expected to provide service to the society in general. This includes their respect towards mother, father, teachers and elders, adorations towards younger, following of worthy and exemplary social traditions and constant awareness towards their duties and responsibilities.

In order to strengthen morality and ethics in students, Mahatma Gandhi advocated the introduction of religious education. This kind of education brings the values of forbearance, tolerance and reverence in one’s character. And in turn, these values are an indivisible part of ethics. In this regard while explaining the importance, necessity and worth of religious education, Mahatma Gandhi writes, “*A curriculum of religious instructions should include a study of the tenets of faiths other than one’s own. For this purpose the students should be trained to cultivate the habit of understanding and appreciating the doctrine of various great religions of the world in a spirit of reverence and broad minded tolerance.*” [Young India: December 6, 1923]

Mahatma Gandhi calls upon all teachers to impart proper education of morality and ethics to students both at school and college levels. In this regard suggesting some guidelines for teachers, he says that it is the duty of teachers to develop high morals and strong character of their students. If teachers fail to do so, it means that they depart from their social and national responsibilities and as such they are also insincere towards their noble profession. He said that a teacher should lay an example, to be followed, before society and students. This can only be done when he himself leads his life with high standards of morality and strong character. An



ideal teacher should be free from any addiction. He needs to be polite and should set an ideal example of simple living and high thinking. He should also remember that wasting time is a sin; therefore, he should be aware of his duties towards students and society. Moreover, he should have a good reputation in the society. Therefore, it is the foremost duty of students, as well as of teachers to make it certain that moral and ethical knowledge continues to be the integral part of the education process. By doing so, they can definitely contribute to the development of value education.

**B. Buniyadi [Basic], Job-oriented or Technical Education:** Another important point of Mahatma Gandhi's value education is basic or technical education. No matter if the word '*buniyadi*' [or the basic], which Mahatma Gandhi used during the Third and Fourth decades of the Twentieth Century, meant the knowledge or education that could help particularly rural people in promotion of village handicrafts or to establish cottage industries, the ultimate purpose behind his attempt was to make young men and women self-reliant, therefore, prosperous in the economic field.

Even in modern perspective, his idea of *buniyadi* or basic education is well-worthy and it has no clash with the concept of today's job-oriented or technical education.

In fact, Mahatma Gandhi wants to prepare a student for technical knowledge right from the days of his primary level of education. In this regard, his logic is not only important, but adaptable. It can prove to be a milestone even in this era of technology in the direction of value education.

It is not so that Mahatma Gandhi has not talked of all-round or complete education on different occasions. He definitely spoke of imparting education based on curriculum; he, more or less wrote about graduate and post graduate levels of education. Not only this, as I have just discussed, he laid emphasis on moral and ethical knowledge, which is helpful for character building and for the physical and mental development of a student since the very beginning of his education. He clearly believed that without a healthy body, mind could not be developed fully. But even after that he, without any hesitation, has said that until and unless education makes a young man or woman self-reliant, it is of worth nothing.

It is but obvious that when a child starts his formal education, he enters at primary level and, step by step, at an age of twenty or twenty-two, or more, he graduates from a university. And after so many years, if he does not find a necessary goal or if he lacks a direction to begin with his career then what could be the use of such education. What is the use of the degree for him that he has in his hand?

Reality lies in the fact that after obtaining a degree the students should definitely have a clear direction for their future. They should be free from the state of uncertainty in their future goal. They should be full of self-confidence and enthusiasm. Side by side, they should be self-dependent and capable to tackle unavoidable day-to-day problems. They must not be worried for a suitable job.

But, in reality, in these days we see that our younger generation is directionless. Our youths are diverted and a feeling of helplessness and dejection is prevailing on them. According to a survey, there are millions of men and women who, even after completing their studies at graduation, post-graduation and doctorate levels, fail to seek an employment of their choice. Is it not a failure of our social and educational system?

Even after spending the golden years of one's life in attaining higher education, our youths are not self-dependent. They are not free of worries. As such how would they be able to get rid of their day-to-day problems and how would they contribute to their society and the nation? Therefore, it is a challenge not only before the youths of this country, but also before the educationists, scholars and those in the government.

To tackle this problematic challenge, Mahatma Gandhi's views can be of great support. In this reference, he has given us his golden words that there is a need of result-oriented education. He has said that every child has some special qualities in him that can also be termed as inherited traits of personality, so at the very primary level, a student's quality and worth should be identified by his teacher. A student should gain education according to curriculum and moral guidance and as such also improve his physical strength. But the teacher should watch and identify his quality that could be of help in his later life.

For that purpose it is necessary that after completing studies to a certain level, he must, in addition to three of education-general [according to syllabi], moral and physical- be provided facilities to gain technical knowledge in accordance with the special trait that has already been identified in his personality by his teacher. Since by nature he has interest in that knowledge, he will easily gain it; he will become an adept in that. Now, when he completes his study up to graduate level and with this extra knowledge comes out of a college or university, he would have a clear direction before him. As such, even if he does not get a private or government job, he would manage to get through some sort of self-employment on the basis of his technical knowledge. At least, then, his education would be considered as result-oriented.

This indeed is Mahatma Gandhi's view-point pertaining to value education if applied in a wider perspective. The worth of this lies in the fact that education should necessarily be helpful in employment. In this regard to quote from one of the statements of Mahatma Gandhi himself, ***"I hold that any scheme which is sound from the educative point of view and is efficiently managed is bound to be sound economically...The emphasis laid on the principle of spending every minute of one's life usefully is the best education for citizenship and incidentally make...education self-sufficient."*** [Harijan: April 6, 1940]

Along with this, to make the mind free from lust –the main cause of problems in human life and for to attain mastery over mind and passion, practice of ethical values and observance of morality is necessary, because ***"mind is a restless bird; the more it gets the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied."*** [Gandhi, Hind Swararaj] For this, foundations of education should be laid on morality and ethics. We all who are concerned with it need to think over it deeply. We have to apply Mahatma Gandhi's ideas according to present circumstances of our country and also as the demand of time. I can again venture to say that Mahatma Gandhi's unique and refined views about value education are not only important but are worth applying not only in India but also in the rest of the world.