



SPIRITUAL EDUCATION IN GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

The paper deals with the spiritual education with special reference to the Gandhian Philosophy in which Gandhi's life and social philosophy influence spiritual education. The paper also deals his truth and non-violence which are the integral part of spiritual education. The paper concludes 'spiritual education' as "it is education which enhances capabilities, capacities, competencies and skills of the individuals through faith in Universal Spirit, love and sympathy, truth, honesty, non-violence, social justice, patience, toleranence, and wisdom to solve the everyday problems creatively and constructively in the new situation of the socio-psycho-physical environment for attaining ultimate aim of education."

Keywords: *Spiritual Education, Gandhian Philosophy.*

His Life

Why does the journey start from the Gandhian Guidelines to Spiritual Education necessary?

Mohan Das Karam Chand Gandhi (1869-1948) –Father of the Nation, was one of the greatest statesman -educationists of India. He was a writer, a nation builder, a social worker, a social reformer, a political leader, a prophet, a statesman, a freedom fighter, a great educator, an educationist, a capacity builder, a practical psychologist, an experimenter, a mastermind of educational renaissance, a thinker, a philosopher, a karmayogi, a great humanitarian, a leader of thought and action, and above all, a great spiritualist.

Mahatma Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869 at Porbander in Kathiawad. His father was the Dewan at Rajkot. He matriculated in 1887 and was sent to England for studying law for four

years. He returned back to India in 1891 and practiced law in Bombay. In 1893, he went to South Africa as a legal advisor for twenty years. He returned back from South Africa in 1925, he started a non-violent struggle against the British rule in India. In 1942, he started 'Quit India' Movement against British Government. Finally, the British Government left India on 15th August, 1947 and declared its independence.

His publications on education are; Autobiography (My Experiment with Truth), Basic Education, True Education, Towards New Education, To the Students, India of My Dreams, Medium of Instruction, Tasks before India, Tasks before Indian Students as well as 'Harijan' and 'Young India' are the papers founded by him.

On his death, the first Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru significantly remembers, "The light has gone out of our lives, and everywhere it is dark. The father of the Nation is no more. The best prayer we can offer is to give ourselves to Truth and carry on the noble work for which he lived and for which he died----He lives in the hearts of millions and he will live for immemorial ages."

In the words of the First President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad significantly remarks, "Indians, remembering the great service, supreme sacrifice and ultimate martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi must rely upon truth, service and love as the inexhaustible sustenance of life. They must march on towards the glorious goal of establishment of social justice and human equality in India and in the maintenance of the peace in the world. His soul would rest in peace when the learning millions of rural India understand the benefits of democracy. It is only possible through education which must get the highest priority among national building activities."

His Life Philosophy

His philosophy of life is mainly based on 'Veda', 'Upanishad', Mahabharata of Ved Vyas, and 'Bhagwad Gita', 'Buddhism', 'Jainism', 'Patanjali's Yogasutra', and last but not least the teachings of Islam and Christianity as well saturated with idealistic and spiritualistic doctrines and assumptions.

Gandhi Ji was very much influenced by 'Gita'. He had always been keeping 'Holy Gita' in his hand and called it as 'Mother' who nourishes us smoothly, solves the difficult problems of everyday life and helps in decision making in unevenly and curvy circumstances after reading the same. Gandhi Ji was influenced by his mother, Putalibai, who taught him the lesson of simplicity and piety, and also by three great thinkers-firstly Rayachand Bhai Patel who taught

him the first lesson in non-violence, secondly, Ruskin, through his book 'Unto the Last' drew his attention to the principle of dignity of labour, and thirdly, Leo Tolstoy's 'The Kingdom of the God is within you' greatly influenced his spiritual outlook (Gupta (2007)). In addition to this, Gandhi Ji learnt concept of non-violence from the Upanishads, Buddhism, Jainism, and Christianity, concept to become a karmayogi from the Bhagawad Gita, concept of Self-realization from the 'Gita', concept of Brotherhood of Mankind from teaching of 'Islam' concept of 'Satyagraha' from the teachings of Christianity- in this connection, Gandhiji says, "It was the New Testament, especially the Sermon on the Mount, which really awaken me to the rightness and value of Satyagraha." and the concept of Civil Disobedience from the Henry David Thoreau, an American philosopher anarchist.

Thus his philosophy of life is based on God Realization, Truth, Love, Non-violence, Brotherhood of Mankind, Simplicity, Humanity, Peace and Harmony, Tolerance, Social Justice (Welfare of All), Swadeshi and in addition to all this, spiritual being. On the basis of these Gandhi Ji wanted to recreate and reconstruct an ideal spiritual society as a whole.

Gandhi Ji writes in 'My Experiment with Truth', "What I went to believe, what I have been striving for and pinning to achieve these thirty years, is self-realization, to see God face to face, I live and move and have my benign pursuit of the goal. As the individual has divine origin, has also a divine density. His aim, therefore, is spiritual and not material. Surely he has to work out his divine in a society but his highest goal cannot be achieved through a particular social order, he has the right, may the duty, to revolt and cut a new path."

Gandhi Ji has always said that God is Truth. He further asserted that Truth is God. In his own words, Gandhi Ji observes, "For me, Truth is a sovereign principle which included numerous others principles. This Truth is only truthfulness in word but truthfulness in thought also, the Eternal Principle that is God."

As an experimenter, Gandhi Ji started his experiment at Tolstoy Farm with ultimate aim of education such as knowledge of Universal Spirit, self-realization, spiritualism and oneness with Universal Spirit, in this connection, he significantly remarks, "Long before I undertook the education of the youngster at the Tolstoy Farm I had realized that the training of spirit was a thing by itself. To develop the spirit is to build character and to enable one to work toward a knowledge of God and self-realization and I held that this was an essential part of the training of

the young, and that all training, without culture of the spirit was of no use and might be even harmful.”

Spiritual Education Regarding Mahatma Gandhi

His educational philosophy for spiritual regarding the spiritual educational aim, the spiritual curriculum, the method of spiritual teaching, the spiritual discipline, the spiritual teacher, the spiritual students and the spiritual environment are derived by his philosophy of life- both general and social philosophies

With respect to the spiritual education Gandhi ji gave more importance to self – preparation, self-training, self – development, self-realization etc. for the development of the spirit. To be more specific in the role of strategies for spiritual development, Gandhi Ji (1926) writes, “I made the children memorize and recite hymns, and read to them from books on moral training. But that was far from satisfying me. As I came into close contact with them I saw that it was not through books that one could impart training of the spirit. Just as physical training was to be imparted through physical exercise, and intellectual through intellectual exercise, even so the training of the spirit was possible only through the exercise of the spirit. And the exercise of the spirit entirely depended on the life and characters of teacher. The teacher had always to be mindful of his Ps and Qs whether he was in the midst of his boys or not. ”

In his quest for the responsibility of the teachers to regulate spiritual sense in students, he observes that “It is impossible for a teacher situated miles away to affect the spirit of the pupils by his way of living. It would be idle for me, if I were a liar, to teach boys to tell the truth. A cowardly would never succeed in making his boys valiant, and a stranger to self-restraint could never teach his pupils the value of restraint. I saw, therefore, that I must be an eternal object-lesson to the boys and girls living with me. They thus become my teachers, and I learnt I must be good and live straight, if only for this sakes. I may say that the increasing discipline and restraint I imposed on myself at Tolstoy Farm was mostly due to those words of mine.”

Gandhiji believed in the spiritual aims of education and emphasized all round development of mind, body and soul. In his own words, Gandhi Ji (1937) defines education as “By education I mean an all - round drawing out of the best in child and man- body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education. I would therefore begin the child’s education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins

its training. Thus every school can be made self-supporting, the condition being that the state takes over the manufactures of these schools. I hold that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education. Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today but scientifically i.e. the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process. I am not writing this without some confidence, because it has the backing of experience. This method is being adopted more or less completely wherever spinning is being taught to workers. I have myself taught sandal-making and even spinning on these lines with good results. This method does not exclude knowledge of history and geography. But I find that this is best taught by transmitting such general information by word of mouth. One imparts ten times as much in this manner as by reading and writing.”

Modern education, however, lays great emphasis on moral education. Perhaps, this is precisely the cause why the learner seeks only to learn and study about the Great Soul. With this consideration of mind, the Gandhian Philosophy is purely and surely to please the modern learner. It is, however, a spiritualized education in which there is emphasis on all round development of body, mind, heart and spirit. Therefore, Gandhian Philosophy helps a lot in curriculum development and transaction in modern education regarding spiritual learning.

Gandhi Ji (1937) remarks, “I hold that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs, e.g., hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, etc. In other words an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect. But unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor lopsided affair. By spiritual training, I mean education of the heart. A proper and all round development not of the mind, therefore, can take place only when it proceeds pari passu with development of the physical and spiritual of the child. They constitute an undivisible whole.”

With regard to the development of intelligence, Gandhi Ji (1937) observes, “The utterly false ideas 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 artisan’s work being learnt in a scientific manner. True development of the mind commences immediately the apprentice is taught of every step why a particular manipulation of the hand or a tool is required. Regarding complete freedom in thought and expression of child, Gandhi Ji says, “As regards

children' curiosity about the facts of life, we should tell them if we know, and admit our ignorance if we do not".

Horace Alexander (1961) analyzes, "It was not in Gandhi's nature to use words, even in hymns, or chant, that his mind did not consent to. So the question whether Gandhi, the Mahatma, the Great Soul, was a Christian as well as a Hindu will be answered differently according to the definition one may make of what it constitutes to be a Christian. A theologically trained American Christian told me, after visiting Gandhi, that he thought him "the truest Christian he had ever met". Others, not only from America, thought the same".

Horace Alexander (1961) significantly remarks regarding Gandhi's true concept of human brotherhood, fraternity and equality in 'Consider India: An Essay in Values' as "Gandhi is the central figure in the new Indian culture; and one essential thing about him is that, while remaining a Hindu all his life, he welcomed and tried to made his own the best in every religious tradition. A century before Gandhi, Ram Mohan Roy, the first inspirer of Indian social reform, gave himself to the study of Persian and of the Koran in his early manhood. It might fairly be argued that Ram Mohan Roy did more to Islamic the Hinduism of Bengal in the early nineteenth century than to Christianize it. At any rate, as far as he could, he did both. But when we come to Gandhi a still more potent Muslim influence suggests itself. Gandhi, in the last phase of his life, began to use a word Sarvodaya to express his social philosophy. This word, as far as I know, was coined by him to translate the ideas conveyed in the title of John Ruskin's essay, "Unto this Last". At least it means the same thing: the good of all, as opposed to the ideas of the greatest good of the greatest number; not the majority, says Gandhi; not even a ninety-nine per cent majority, but all must be the concern of the true welfare state. Where did Gandhi get this idea? He may have found it in many places- Ruskin, Rousseau, the New Testament, the Gita, and so on; but surely in part, perhaps even principally, it stems from the Islamic conception of human brotherhood, in which every man is equal in the sight of God. This conception, so alien to the Hindu caste structure, can hardly have come to India from Western Christianity, though it is easy enough to find it in the Gospels. Politically, India no doubt has derived the idea of equality largely from the influence of the French and American Revolutions; but in the modern fundamental human and religious sense, it has come through Gandhi, and it would seem that he derived it primarily from Islam".

In his quest for education for spiritual from the standpoint of ethical and aesthetical senses Gandhi Ji (1927) makes a very significant remark, “Purity of personal life is one of the indispensable conditions for building a sound education. Any my meetings with thousands of students and the correspondence which I continually have with students, in which they pour out their innermost feelings and take me into their confidence, show me quite clearly that there is much left to be desired. I am sure that all of you understand thoroughly what I mean. In our languages there is a beautiful word, equivalent for the word student, that is, brahmachari. And I hope you know what the word brahmachari means. It means searcher after God, one who conduct himself so as to bring himself nearest to God in the least possible time. And all the great religions of the world, however much they may differ, are absolutely one on this fundamental thing that no that no man or woman with an impure heart can possibly appear before the Great White Throne. All our learning or recitation of the Vedas, correct knowledge of Sanskrit, Latin, Greek and what not will avail us nothing if they do not enable us to cultivate absolute purity of heart. The end of all knowledge must be building up of character.”

Gandhi Ji (1921) observes, “It is not our kamadhuk. In its place it can be of use and it has its place when we have brought our senses under subjection, and put our ethics on a firm foundation. And then, if we feel inclined to receive that education, we may make good use of it. As an ornament it is likely to sit well on us. It now follows that it is not necessary to make this education compulsory. Our ancient school system is enough, character-building has the first place in it, and that is primary education. A building erected on that foundation will last.”

Gandhi Ji (1921) says, “To teach boys reading, writing and arithmetic is called the primary education. A peasant earns his bread honestly. He has ordinary knowledge of the world. He knows fairly well how he should behave towards his parents, his wife, his children and his fellow-villagers. He understands and observes the rules of morality.”

Promoting the ‘cultivation of Absolute Purity of Heart’ Gandhi Ji recognizes Truth and Non-violence which is the true meaning of religion. Therefore, in the Gandhian Guidelines of education for spirituality, Truth and Non-violence are the essential component of education for spiritual wealth.

Gandhiji (1928) prescribes, “To me religion means Truth and Aihmsa or rather Truth alone, because Truth includes Ahimsa, Ahimsa being the necessary and indispensable means for its discovery. Therefore, anything that promotes the practice of these virtues is a means for

imparting religious education and the best way to do this, in my opinion, is for the teachers rigorously to practice these virtues in their own person. Their very association with the boys, whether on the playground or in the classroom will then give the pupils a fine training in these fundamental virtues.”

Regarding the eternal law of suffering Gandhi ji (1938) observes, “Non-violence comes to us through doing good continually without the slightest expectation of return.... that is the indispensable lesson in non-violence--- In South Africa---I succeeded in learning the eternal law of suffering as the only remedy for undoing wrong and injustice. It means positively the law of non-violence. You have to be prepared to suffer cheerfully at the hands of all and sundry and you will wish ill to no one, not even to those who may have wronged you”.

In his address at the UNESCO seminar, the former Hon’ble Prime Minister Narasimha Rao (1995) remarks, “The triumph of non-violent protest over racial discrimination in South Africa or colonial domination in South Asia does not exhaust the creative potential of satyagraha as an instrument of revolutionary action and social transformation. Instead, in its depth and comprehensiveness, Gandhian thought and action reach out to life in all its rich diversity; to questions of social production and the distribution of wealth; the nexus between the state, civil society and the citizen; to the manner in which the basic unit of the society, namely family, relates to the individual, on the one hand, and to the social order, on the other; and last but not the least, to the character of the sacred and the profane as a guide to human beings for their journey across life to the worlds which lie beyond. The sheer range of Gandhian thought and practice, therefore, makes it one of the richest sources of reflection and guide to action today, across the decades which separate us from the vibrant and living truth of the Mahatma. Its only limitations are those inherent in the society and the State. But who, except God, is immune to limitations? ”

Any inquiry into the contemporary relevance of ‘satyagrahi’ thought and practice should locate itself in Gandhi’s understanding of social power as the basis of political action. The Mahatma repeatedly observed that non-violence, in his view, was the weapon of the strong rather than of the weak, just as it was also a weapon which drew victor and vanquished into a common association of reconciliation and moral regeneration. Gandhi’s concept of power was of a piece with his understanding of non-violence. Not surprisingly, he looked askance at the power which grew out of the barrel of the gun, or rested upon the ephemeral calculus of wealth. For the

Mahatma, the most legitimate form of power came through welding together popular aspirations and the life of truth into a movement of social transformation and moral upliftment. The struggles which he set in motion in South Africa, and later in India, were excellent examples of the aggregation of non-violent power and its use in the social and political domain for the good of the people.”

Regarding a flexible curriculum for religious studies, As Gandhi ji (1928) significantly observes, “A curriculum of religious instruction 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 doctrines of various great religions of the world in a spirit of reverence and broad-minded tolerance. This if properly done would help to give them a spiritual assurance and a better appreciation of their own religion. There is one rule, however, which should always be kept in mind while studying all great religions, and that is that one should study them only through the writings of known votaries of the respective religions. For instance, if one wants to study the Bhagavata one should do so not through a translation of it made by hostile critic but one prepared by a lover of the Bhagavata. Similarly to study the Bible one should study it through the commentaries of devoted Christians. The study of other religions besides one’s own will give one a grasp of the rock-bottom unity of all religions and afford a glimpse also of that absolute and universal truth which lies beyond the ‘dust of creeds and faiths’.”

In the word of Humayun Kabir, “Of Gandhi Ji’s many gifts to the nation, the experiments of New Education is one of the greatest. It seeks to prepare citizens for a new society by teaching young people to live together as a community on the basis of co-operation, love and truth.”

“Developing Moral Authority—Mahatma Gandhi” The Learning Centre with Franklin Covey, John Meredith, A UK Partner of Franklin Covey, writes, “ The need to develop humility, courage, integrity, discipline and vision by the leadership is felt throughout the ages. Mahatma Gandhi was living example of the process of developing moral authority by subordinating all his intelligence to conscience. In the movie Gandhi there is scene which tells us a story of how an imperfect man developed enormous moral authority over a billion people by simply using his birth gift. This is an example of leadership developed through vision, discipline and passion governed by conscience. Gandhi subordinated all his intelligence to his conscience, his spiritual intelligence and won a relationship victory with his wife before he could develop the freedom,

power, and moral authority to guide a large gathering of angry Indian people to a Third Alternative. People were willing to lay down their lives for the cause they jointly espoused.

The world is different because of Gandhi and India; the second largest nation in the world, is free nation because of him. What is truly amazing that through he was never elected was had no formal authority he inspired Indian people through moral authority. Gandhi maintained that what he did could have been done by other people who used their powers.

Covey suggests each one of us should buy or rent this video, which is an Academy Award Winner, to understand nuances of Gandhi's words and facial expressions, of initiatives and reactions, of the development of mores, norms, values, goals and vision. Gandhi followed the ancient Greek wisdom of "Know Thyself, Control Thyself and Give Thyself" in a perfect sequence. The power of this sequence which is recommended in "The 8th Habit" could help any ordinary person to become a great source of moral authority."

Conclusion

After reviewing the related literatures on Gandhian Philosophy, it is felt that there is a great deal has been done by Mahatma Gandhi to trace the development of philosophical and non-material thought and action with special reference to spiritual doctrines and assumptions, much has also been done to spiritualize education at Tolstoy Farm, and then at Sabarmati Ashram and Sewagram Ashram to draw in broad an outline of spiritual wealth and much has so far been also done to investigate the spiritual intelligence of children's work at Wardha Scheme of Education or best known as Basic Education for recreating and reconstructing a spiritual society in our country. Gandhi Ji introduced basic craft, as the centre of education, the correlation and co-ordination of curriculum of education related with everyday life, the methods of teaching such as learning by doing, correlation technique, and learning by experience, non-cognitive tasks viz- a sense of responsibility, initiative, love and sympathy, co-operation, social –justice and a great importance was given on experiment as the means of discovering truth. Greater emphasis is being paid to spiritual world and a great deal has also been done. Thus, the Gandhian Philosophy is itself, a knowledge-hub of spiritual education. All the books and writings of Mahatma Gandhi, of course, yield useful information regarding spiritual learning and training, and also give details of spiritual basis of education as well as help in progressive basis of education for the betterment of the pupils of the society as a whole. Although, the author has no much intelligence, competence and skill to evaluate the Gandhian Philosophy with special respect to spiritual

wealth and essence and its subsequent doctrines and assumptions as well as its development, yet when he thinks of the Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of life (his both general and social philosophy), the feeling science arises in his mind that his religion based on virtues of love, truth and non-violence significantly remarks, of course, he was religious-spiritualist. Keeping in view the Gandhian Philosophy, the author concludes the 'spiritual education' as "it is education which enhances capabilities, capacities, competencies and skills of the individuals through faith in Universal Spirit, love and sympathy, truth, honesty, non-violence, social justice, patience, toleranence, and wisdom to solve the everyday problems creatively and constructively in the new situation of the socio-psycho-physical environment for attaining ultimate aim of education." That is why, therefore, it may be said that Mahatma Gandhi appears to have made a considerable progress and development with spiritual instruction, spiritual learning, spiritual training and spiritual teaching as well as spiritual education. So, therefore, he was a great spiritually intelligent and competent personality not only in India, but also in the world.

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