

A study based on Mahatma Gandhi's life philosophy and educational philosophy

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Abstract

Gandhi is internationally esteemed for his doctrine of non-violent protest (Satyagraha) to achieve political and social progress. He was arrested and imprisoned many times. Mahatma Gandhi's greatest gift is known as "the wardha scheme of education" or "Nai Talim". Gandhi says "Purity of personal life is the one indispensable condition for building a sound education." According to T. S. Avinashlingam "Basic education is the last and perhaps the greatest gift of the father of our nation." according to T. N. Siqueira "The Wardha scheme was first sketched in 1937 by M. K. Gandhi in the Harijan published at Wardha." He dedicated his whole life to the service of the motherland, and service of humanity. However, he studied the Bible, Geeta and Quran and came to the conclusion that the principle tenets in all religions are the same. Gandhiji says about mass education as "Mass illiteracy is India's sin and shame and must be liquidated." Gandhi focuses on establishing Sarvodaya Samaj. Gandhi did not receive the Nobel Peace Prize, although he was nominated five times between 1937 and 1948. Gandhiji wrote, "My life is indivisible whole and all my activities run into one another, and they all have their rise in my insatiable love for mankind". Mahatma Gandhi was a practical philosopher and an apostle of peace and non-violence. Gandhi ji believed in simple living and high thinking. Gandhi used fasting as a political device, often threatening suicide unless demands were met.

KEYWORDS: philosophy, education, religion, educational experiment, non-violence, satyagarh.

Introduction

Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869, at Porbandar, Kathiawar, in Gujarat. Gandhi was youngest of the three sons of Putlibai and Karamchand Gandhi. His childhood name was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. His father was diwan of Rajkot. Gandhi's father, were popularly known as Kaba. Kaba Gandhi was an honest, upright, a strict disciplinarian, and very hot tempered. Gandhi's mother was an extremely religious, very loving and hard-working woman. At school, first the primary at Porbandar, and later the Albert High School, Rajkot. Gandhi showed no particular brilliance, played no games and avoided company. At school, he was slow, hesitant and shy. He read little beyond text books, but respected his teacher, though, even at his bidding. He would not copy from his neighbour's answers. To be at school at the stroke of the hour and to run back home as soon as the school closed- that was his daily habit. According to him he literally ran back, because he could not bear to talk to anybody. He was even afraid lest anyone should poke fun at me. He wore the traditional Indian dhoti and shawl, woven with yarn hand-spun on a charkha. Thus, he took for granted ahimsa, vegetarianism, fasting for self-purification. Gandhiji was married with Kasturba at the age of 13 Years. The values of truthfulness, honesty, integrity were instilled in him from the very beginning. He was mortally afraid of the

dark, of ghosts and spirits, and also of snakes and scorpions. His father died in 1887. He passed the matriculation examination in 1887. After the matriculation Gandhi joins the Samaldas College. But everything was difficult for him in that college. At the end of the first term, he returned home. When 18 years old (in 1888), he was sent to London to study law where he remained for three years. He had promised his mother that he would not eat non-vegetarian food, or drink alcohol, and he remained true to his word. He returned to India in 1891, after the completion of his studies. He thinks forward to meeting his mother, and giving her the good news, but he was to be sorely disappointed. When he was away in England, his mother had passed away. The news of her death had been withheld from him because his brother thought he would be mentally disturbed, and his studies would be affected. After qualifying as a Barrister, he set up his practice as a lawyer, in Rajkot. As he did not get much work there, he came to Bombay. Even in Bombay he did not get any cases. Finally, he got one case. He prepared well for it, but in court he was unable to present it satisfactorily. Disappointed, he felt that he would never make a successful lawyer. Just at that time Gandhi's elder brother managed to get him a case. He was asked to represent Mr. Abdulla, a rich businessman in South Africa. After much deliberation, Gandhiji agreed to accept that case. In April, 1893, he went to South Africa in connection with a civil law case of a firm Abdulla and handled it very well. He remained there for 21 years. Gandhi in South Africa developed his political views, ethics and politics. In 1915 Gandhi returned for India. At the request of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, his "Political Guru" he joined the Indian National Congress. In 1930 Time magazine made him "Man of the Year". In 1934 Gandhi resigned from Congress party membership. Gandhi returned to active politics again in 1936, with the Nehru presidency. M. K. Gandhi is also called Bapu (Gujarati: endearment for "father", "papa") or Gandhiji or Nekad Fakir or unofficially called the Father of the Nation or father of the modern India. Origin of this title is traced back to a radio address (on Singapore radio) on 6 July 1944, where Subhash Chandra Bose addressed Gandhi as "The Father of the Nation". On 28 April 1947, Sarojini Naidu during a conference also referred Gandhi as "Father of the Nation". He wanted to establish Ram Rajya which he identified with justice, peace, happiness and welfare of all. Gandhi always loved his people- Muslims as much as Hindus. Even when Pakistan was formed, he spoke for the Muslims of India who were comparatively so few in numbers. Many Hindus thought that he favoured the Muslims too much. Nathuram Godse held misguided ideas of this kind. On 30th January 1948, in Delhi, when Gandhi set out to attend a prayer meeting, he was shot dead by an assailant Naathuram Vinayak Godse advocate of Hindu nationalism. His last words were 'Hey Ram'. People all over the world paid rich tribute to Gandhi. He was murdered, yet he was calm and peaceful even in death. It seemed as if he were sleeping. The great Mahatma's life had come to an end! The place near Yamuna River where he was cremated is the Raj Ghat memorial in New Delhi.

Objectives of the Study

A brief study based on life, philosophical views, educational views and works of Mahatma Gandhi.

Research Method

The research method which is used in present study is based on Philosophical research method.

Factors That Influenced Gandhi's Philosophy of Life and Philosophy of Education

Following were the chief influences which had a great effect on Gandhi's philosophy of life and philosophy of education.

1. **Mother's Influence:** Gandhi was influenced by his devout Vaishnava Hindu mother. She taught him the lessons of simplicity and piety.

2. Three great thinkers

i) Rayachand bhai patel who taught Gandhi the first lesson in non-violence.

ii) Ruskin, through his book 'Unto the last' drew his attention to the principle of dignity of labour.

iii) Leo Tolstoy's 'The kingdom of the God is within you', greatly influenced his spiritual outlook.

3. **Gandhi's Ashram or Farm:** The Phoenix settlement, the Tolstoy Farm and the Sabarmati Ashram etc.

4. **Other influence:** The stories of Shravana and king Harishchandra, Ramayana, Advaita Vedanta, Hinduism, Vaishnavism, Buddhism, Christianity, reforms and teachings of the Swaminarayan tradition of Hinduism. During his stay in South Africa Gandhi read translated texts of Bible, and Quran. The Bhagavad Gita works as his spiritual dictionary and greatest single influence on his life. He called the Geeta as Geeta mata. He also read the translated form of Manusmirti in his childhood.

Gandhi's Philosophy of Life

Two words are fundamental in his philosophy of life: 'Truth' and 'non-violence'. Mahatma Gandhi has observed, "Ahimsa and truth are like two sides of a coin". According to him "Ahimsa is the means, Truth the end." Gandhi's thoughts, values and principles of life have been well reflected in his scheme of Basic education in particular and in his philosophy of education. Gandhi was greatly respected for his simple living, high thinking, and fearless attitude. Gandhi was believed in "one God" and in his absolute control. The fearlessness is essential for truth and non-violence. Gandhi believed in the human brotherhood and in the establishment of "a universal community of free persons without artificial barrier of caste, creed, wealth and power". This community will be a "spiritual society" based on love, truth, justice and non-violence. Mahatma Gandhi sacrificed his life for establishing Rama Rajya- a classless society in which there will be no distinction between high and low, rich and poor. His philosophy is known as Gandhi philosophy, Gandhism or Sarvodaya philosophy. Service for humanity was the core of his philosophy.

Gandhi and Idealism

Like all other idealists, Gandhi believes in the harmonious development of personality and advocates that different types of social culture and physical activities may be undertaken to achieve this end.

Gandhi and Naturalism

Gandhi agrees with Rousseau that the child is good by nature and this face must be kept in view by us while planning his education. He advocates freedom for the child. He greatly stresses the importance of educating the child in natural surrounding. He minimises the importance of text-book. The Basic system is based on activity of the child.

Gandhi and Pragmatism

He has an experimental approach towards life. Like Dewey, Gandhi believed that reality is that which can be verified. He says the child should learn from the experiments of life. The project method of the pragmatism and the Basic scheme of Gandhi have many common points.

Gandhi and Realism

Gandhi thoughts about the Progress of men, society and countries physical development was necessary. Education related to life, education made to behavioural, education made with the help of any industry, education made to self dependent etc., made him realism.

Gandhi's Educational Experiments

Gandhi was highly pragmatic in his outlook. He believed that truth is that which bears out in testable situations. Likewise, he tested all his educational ideas through experiments in education and then advocated them. His educational philosophy evolved through these experiments. They are the outcomes of long years of his sustained thinking and experience of nearly 40 years both in South Africa and India.

Gandhi's Philosophy of Education

Gandhi's Philosophy of Education is a dynamic concept. He believed that education should bring about the development of the whole man. He regarded as one of the masters of the mankind, one of the great teachers of the human society. His educational thoughts were relevant to life, needs and aspirations of the emerging Indian society. He wanted that all teaching should be carried on through concrete life situations relating to industry or to social and physical environment, so that whatever the child learns becomes assimilated into his growing activity. A unique feature of Gandhi educational philosophy was the "application of the law of non-violence in the training of the child as a prospective citizen of the world." He criticised the existing British colonial system of education, determined the true nature of education and its purpose, suggested a new pedagogy and also build a comprehensive system of education suitable for the uplift of the masses which is known as "New education", "National education", "Basic education"

or “the rural education” or “ the wardha scheme of education”. Basic education system is the behavioural form of his educational philosophy. The word ‘Basic’ is derived from the word ‘Base’ which means the bottom or the foundation of a thing upon which the whole thing rests or is made.

Gandhi and Religion

According to Gandhi “life without religion” Gandhi held “is life without principle is like a ship without a rudder; and just as a ship without a rudder will be tossed about from place to place and never reach its destination, so a man without religious backing....be also tossed about on this stormy ocean of the world, without reaching the destined goal”. His idea of religion was not totally esoteric. He said by religion, I do not mean formal religion, or customary religion, but that religion which underlies all religions.

Conclusion

Gandhi educational philosophy is found to be sound and scientific psychologically as well as sociologically. It is also quite adequate pedagogically and biologically. By emphasising craft and manual work in his scheme of education, Gandhi felt whole personality of the child can be improved. Any kind of productive craft would involve planning, experimenting, coordinating and evaluation. This would develop his intellectual powers along with physical ones. Learning by doing is immensely conducive to the coordinated development of the child. This will enable students to fulfil many of their psychological needs and creative urges like satisfaction, security, self-confidence, self-respect and self-expression. The vital principle of correlation will promote a well-integrated and well-balanced education as well as an all-round development of the personality. Gandhi educational philosophy was fully in accordance with his nonviolence and democratic social order. Gandhi’s democratic society will be a “Sarvodaya Samaj” in which there will be social justice, peace, non-violence and modern humanism. M. S. Patel has rightly observed, “Gandhi ji’s philosophy of education is naturalistic in its setting, idealistic in its aim and pragmatic in its method and programme of work. All these tendencies are not separate in its philosophy. These fuse into a unity, giving rise to a theory of education which would suit the need of the day and satisfy the loftiest aspiration of human soul”.

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