

Mahatma Gandhi ji Vision of Towards Women Education

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Education is the most influential instrument of modernization and socialization. It has been regarded both as an end in itself and as a means of realizing desirable ends. It is the safeguard against the narrow mindedness of all kinds. It is a process by which we conserve valuable elements in our culture and discard the wasteful. Education is both a stabilizing influence and an agent for the safety of the society. Education means all round and total perfection of the individual and the society. It develops the personality and rationality of individuals, qualifies them to fulfill certain economic, political and cultural functions and thereby improves their socio-economic status. It has been recognized as a major instrument which societies can use to direct the process of change and development towards desired goals. Therefore, education is the ultimate guarantee of national self-reliance.

General Perspective

The Indian women is often an object of admiration by people both in and outside the country for the role she plays in the country's public life as well as for certain qualities that she seems to possess in greater measure than women of other parts of the world. There are number of socio-religious customs and rituals which affect very much the social, economic and cultural status of women in India. The famous English saying, "The hand that rocks the cradle is the power that rules the world." is very appropriate from the view of women education. If one wants to have an educated generation, one must take care of women and educate them properly They can bring about renaissance in the country.

At present, there has been remarkable progress in the field of women education. All the commissions including the Kothari Commission stressed on the need for providing impetus to girls' education. Enrolment drives and motivation campaigns directed at the parents of the girls will go a long way in improving the status of girl education. Following factors necessitate girls' education:-

U.E.E. point of view

Universalisation of Elementary Education is possible when all the girls are educated along with boys. As it is a constitutional obligation, an all out effort is necessary in this direction.

Cultural point of view

Girls are distinguished from boys in terms of their roles and responsibilities. Girls' role is restricted to family while boys enjoy much more freedom. But in the modern context both need to grow economically and play multi-dimensional roles for success in life in everyday situations.

Political demand

There is a widespread feeling that girls need special attention in terms of providing educational opportunities. Democracy can't flourish politically without the education of girls.

Legal point of view

Many laws are enshrined in the constitution to protect the rights of girls. Providing education to them is mandatory.

Education for self sufficiency

To attain economic and social progress, girls' education is vital for human society. Human progress can't be attained without girls' education.

Historical Perspective

Education of women in India is nothing new. The position of women in the society is the true index of its cultural and spiritual attainments. In Vedic period, women enjoyed high position in Indian society. They not only studied the Vedic Literature but some women acquired such a great amount of knowledge in various 'Shasthras' that they acted as judges and mediators in the learned discourses

During the period when Buddhism flourished in India, women were assigned an honored place in society life. They were admitted to the Bhikshu-Samgha which opened socio-cultural avenue to them. It was during this period, education was the birth right of the women as much as man and education for them was properly planned. A remarkable sect of learned women was formed, known as sisters. After the decline of Buddhism even when the revival of Hinduism started, women education received a major set-back as Shankeracharya the leader of movement of the 'Revival of Hinduism', was against the education of women.

During Medieval Muslim period, pardha system among women became prevalent both among the Muslims as well as in Hindus. The system of child-marriage also became very much prevalent among the Hindus. There was, no doubt, provision of education for women of royal families as well as women of rich families at their homes. But there was no provision for the education of girls of common man. Higher education was received by a very few women during this period.

Even during the East India Company's rule the women education was neglected. Towards the later half of the 19th century Protestant as well as Roman Catholic Missionaries started schools for women. Some government and private institutions were also established for

the education of women. Women Bethune College of Kolkata was the first government institution started by the Britishers in India. The famous Wood Despatch (1854) and Hunter Commission (1882) recommended women education strongly. In the meanwhile, Arya Samaj in North India, Brahma Samaj in Bengal and Christian Missionaries all over the country aided the women education from 1887 onwards. In 1921, education came under the control of Indian ministers and hence more rapid progress was made in this field.

The greatest challenge to our country on the eve of independence was mass illiteracy. If democratic social order was to be built up in India, then top priority was to be given to the spread of education throughout the length and breadth of our country. If given proper facilities and encouragement, Indian women can participate in all the national activities on an equal footing with men. It is, therefore, not at all surprising to find this aspect stressed in all the reports of various Commissions and Committees on education.

University Education Commission (1948-49) States

University Education Commission after enlightened discussion made following major recommendations:

- Educational opportunities for women should be increased.
- Intelligent educational guidance by experts should be provided to girls according to their educational interests.
- There should be co-education colleges and much consideration should be given to the needs of women's life.

National Committee on Women Education (1957-59)

Another important committee appointed by government of India to study the problems of education of women was National Committee. The committee made the following recommendations:

- The existing gap between the education of men and women should be filled in a short time.
- Technical institutes for girls should be established and the government should give cent percent grant for 5 years.
- State government should also set up state councils for education of women.

Smt. Hansa Mehta Committee 1962)

The National Council for Women Education in its meeting held on May 10, 1961 appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Smt. Hansa Mehta to examine problems of curriculum for women at all stages of education. Major recommendations of this committee are:

- No differentiation should be made in curricula for boys and girls at the primary stage.
- Common courses for boys and girls should be included in curriculum at the middle stage.

Kothari Commission 1964-66)

The Indian Education Commission popularly known as Kothari Commission was appointed by government of India under the leadership of Dr. D.S. Kothari. The commission submitted its report to Education Minister on June 29, 1966. Kothari Commission recommended the following strategy for the development of Women Education:

- Expansion of girl education.
- Facilities of separate schools, hostels, scholarship, part-time and vocational courses for girls.
- Separate colleges for girls at the undergraduate stages.

National Policy for Education 1986)

The well-known National Policy of education was concerned about the status and education of women in the country. It opined that

national system of education must play a positive role in this direction. This relevant extracts from the national policy are

- status of women
- empowerment of women
- women studies
- removal of illiteracy
- women's participation in technical and vocational education.
- Programme of Action.

Women's Empowerment Year 2001

The Indian Government has declared the 2001 year as the women's empowerment year. It means that women will be provided with more powers by giving them more priority in every field as provided to men. Women are participating in almost every field and they are working very successfully. Government announced certain incentives to Women in various fields. From space to ocean, she marched towards them very honestly. The Haryana Government has fixed target of empowering 1200-2400 women of Sonapat, Bhiwani and Jind district through 600-1200 women's groups under Sewa-Shakti Paryojna, different states formulate a perspective plan for women's empowerment.

The Problem

To quote George J. Mouly,

"Research states with the identification of the problem. This is the first step in the sequence. It is also of importance of probably no aspect of study has a greater bearing on the success of overall venture than wise choice of the problem."

'Study past, if you wish to enlighten your future.'

Many scholars have studied Mahatma Gandhi's educational philosophy. But investigators to study related specially to the vision of Gandhi towards women education. Therefore, the investigator selected this research problem.

Objectives

The following are the objectives of this study:-

- To examine the importance of women education in India.
- To study the contribution of Mahatma Gandhi towards women education.

Gandhi's Educational Philosophy

According to Gandhi, education is not necessary only for social progress but for moral, political and economic growth. Gandhi Wardha Scheme for education is not all that he has to say about education, simply because this scheme outlines only a policy of education for children between seven to fourteen years of age while we have seen that he wanted to establish a social order based on truth, non-violence and justice. Therefore, he has carved out an educational philosophy based on his philosophy of life. The meaning of education according to Gandhi, is to promote the physical, mental and spiritual development of an individual. Reading and writing is only a means of education, and it is not all.

Therefore, we can say that Gandhi's contribution to educational theory and practice is outstanding. He was a great educational thinker of modern India. He is a revolutionary thinker in the sense that he wanted to bring about a new social order through his new scheme of education. GANDHI'S VIEWS TOWARDS WOMEN EDUCATION

Gandhi has been of the view that women have to perform their separate responsibilities which are as important as that of men. In

fact, both women and men are complimentary to each other none is superior to any other. So women also should be given education according to their particular roles in life. They have not to compete with men, but there should be no bar for them to any avenue which is generally considered as more suitable for men. The Wardha Scheme has been so planned as to be consistent with Gandhi's basic ideas regarding women education. Gandhi was very much worried about the deplorable condition of women in the country. He wanted to raise their social status. He desired that women should be given education according to their needs and aptitudes. He was of the view that as far as possible women teachers should be appointed for girls. He thought that married women would be better teacher than unmarried ones. Some other aspects of women education given by Gandhi are discussed below:-

I. Aims of Education

Defining the aim of education, Gandhi said, "By education I mean all-round drawing out the best-in child and man, body, mind and spirit literacy is not the end of education or even the beginning.

The ultimate aim of Gandhi's related to ultimate aim of life-the aim of self-realization, the knowledge of truth and God.

1. Harmonious Development of Personality

Gandhi advocated the perfect development of individual. For this, he recommends following aims regarding boys and girls:

a) Physical and Mental Development:-

Gandhi says, "True education is that which draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of the children." Gandhi has used the term 'faculties' in the sense of 'powers'

and it should not be thought that he was an advocate of faculty psychology which hold no water now. He also says, "man is neither mere intellect, nor the gross animal body, nor heart or soul alone. A proper and harmomious contribution of all the three is required for the making of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education." Therefore, an all-round development of girls means development of the head, heart and hand-nothing less, nothing more.

b) Spiritual Aim

Gandhi regards 'the knowledge of god and self-realization' as the highest aim of education. To him, self realization is the Summum bonum of life and education. Spiritual freedom provides knowledge of god and self-realization. Hence, education should provide spiritual freedom to girls. According to Gandhi, "Development of the moral character, development to the whole all were directed towards the realization of the ultimate reality-the merger of the finite being into the infinite."

c) Moral Aim

Gandhi sought to inculcate values which were basically opposed to the industrial ethic to be in accordance with the village community and family. Gandhi stressed that education should aim at developing moral values among men and women.

2. Earning Livelihood

Explaining this aim of education, Gandhi said, "The education ought to be for them a kind of insurance against unemployment." It is hence that he laid so much stress upon industrial training in basic education. Keeping in view the poverty of India. Gandhi suggested that education in this country should be craft-centered.

3. Freedom of Mind

Besides other aims, Gandhi made Sa Vidya ya Vimuktaya i.e. education is that which liberates one of the most important aims of education. The economic, political and intellectual freedom is the essence of the freedom of spirit which is the spring of all great art. Gandhi is of the opinion that spiritual freedom should be an important aim of all education. He says, "the motto of Gujrat Vidyapith is 'Sa Vidya ya Vimuktaya.' It means that knowledge leads to salvation.

4. Individual and Social Aim of Education

Gandhi Said, "I value individual freedom, but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to his present status by earning to adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress." Thus, Gandhi believed that individuality could be developed through a social medium. It is remarkable that he succeeded in achieving a proper synthesis between individual and society both in his philosophy of life and of education. Education provided to women should be such that they could adjust with the society in proper way. Therefore, Gandhi was conscious of both the individual and social aim of education for women.

5. Cultural Aim

Talking to the girls of the Kasturba Balikashram, New Delhi, on April, 22, 1946, Gandhi Says, "I attach far more importance to the cultural aspect of education than the literacy. Cultural is the foundation, the primary training which the girls ought to get from her. Inner culture must be reflected in your speech, the way in which you treat visitors and guests, and behave towards one another and your teachers and elders." Education with cultural aim will liberate the soul from pride, prejudice and encumbrances and enable man and woman to see things in their true perspective.

6. Character Building

Gandhi laid so much emphasize on character-building as an aim of education. He says, "I have always given the first place to the culture of the heart and to build the character. I regarded character building as the proper foundation for education." Gandhi is prepared to accept the value of knowledge and of scholarship if they help in building good character. He observes that the end of knowledge must be building up of character of men and women.

II. Curriculum

The curriculum is another means of realizing the objectives of women education. Gandhi advocated complete overhauling of the curriculum. He has recommended common curriculum for both boys and girls up to fifth class. The girls have been allowed to choose subject of home science from sixth class onwards. In spite of all this, Gandhi suggests the following studies:

1. Natural Sciences

Girls should be given education of general science including nature study, zoology, physiology, hygiene, physical culture, chemistry and a knowledge of stars. It should be taught for promoting an intelligent, appreciative and scientific outlook among them.

2. Social Sciences and Mathematics

Gandhi believed that both boys and girls should study social sciences. The course in social studies is to include history, geography, civics and current events. It attempts to adjust the child to his social environment both in place, which is the function of geography and in time, which is the function of history. Civics aims at giving of intellectual understanding of present day problems and at developing the right social and intellectual habits. Pupils are

expected to gain a knowledge of business practice, book-keeping and mathematics.

3. Medium of Instruction

Gandhi wanted that all education must be given through the medium of mother tongue. He said, "I must cling to my mother tongue as to my mother's breast, In spite of its short-comings. It alone can give me the life giving milk." He was strongly against English as the medium of education in this country. He said, "To inflict English on children is to stunt their mental growth and perhaps to kill originality in them."

4. Basic Craft

Education should consist of learning basic craft such as agriculture, spinning and weaving, cardboard work, wood work etc. The contents of the general curriculum can be effectively correlated with any of these crafts. Gandhi thinks, women should know well the process up to weaving from cotton.

5. Religious Instruction

Gandhi experimented with quite a number of boys and girls in his charge in order to understand the best way to impart religious instruction. Therefore, according to Gandhi, the personal character of the teacher is far more influential in the matter of religious instruction than that of mere book-instruction or preaching.

6. Music

Music should be taught to women for cultivating a love for aesthetics and beauty.

7. Domestic Science

Boys and girls are equal that is true. But there is a difference in the work they are assigned in daily life. It is a women's right to rule inside the home. Man is the master outside it. Therefore, after a certain

age, there must be arrangements to provide women with a kind of education different to that of men. Women should be taught the management of the home, the things they should or should not do during pregnancy and the nursing and care of children.

8. Drawing

Drawing should be taught for correcting reading and pictorial presentation to nature study and craft.

III. Methods of Teaching

According to Gandhi only a suitable method can help in realizing the objectives of women education. He believes that in order to train the humanity, following methods of teaching should be adopted:-

- Correlation Approach
- Activity Principle
- Teaching through Craft
- Lecture, Questioning and Project Method

IV. Awareness Towards Women's Rights

Gandhi always wanted to establish women's equal rights in the society. He said, "I am uncompromising in the matter of women's rights. In any opinion, they should labour under no legal disability not suffered by man. I should treats daughters and sons on a footing of perfect equality --- women must have votes and an equal legal status." Gandhi wrote: "women is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capabilities. She has the right to participate in every minute detail in the activities of man and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him."

Main Findings of the Study

In the investigator judgment the following have been the principle findings of this work:-

- Gandhi ji advocate for harmonious development of personality of girls through education.
- He stressed upon self-sufficiency among women which can be achieved through education.
- He recommends individual and social progress of girls through education.
- Gandhi recommends domestic sciences for girls as a part of curriculum.
- Gandhi was in favour of activity method for imparting instructions in educational institutions.
- Gandhi assigns an important place to hand work or craft in the scheme of women education.
- He stress that mother tongue should be the medium of instruction in schools.
- He was conscious about deplorable condition of women in country therefore, they were conscious about benefits of educating the women.

Conclusion

Education has always been regarded in India as source of illumination and power which transforms and enables our nation for progressive and harmonious development of our physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual powers and faculties. Only education can improve the people with knowledge and the confidence essential for building a dynamic, cohesive nation, capable of providing its people a purposeful life. We find a curiosity and urgent interest among the people in India and abroad that there is something unique about Indian women as they are seen to be participating at the highest level of leadership and decision making with confidence. In resented years, women in India and elsewhere have to identify themselves and press their case for a better place in society. In ancient times, during Vedic and Buddhism period, the

condition of women was satisfactory. They had freedom to get education like men. During Muslim period, the condition of women education deteriorated. British government did some work to promote women education. There was mass illiteracy when India got independence. Therefore, Indian government has undertaken measures to remove illiteracy. Though the Indian constitution and a number of progressive legislations have removed so many hurdles against women in Indian society but problems still exist. Dowry system, Pardha system etc. prove the lower status of women particularly in the traditional Indian society. Therefore, women education is pre-requisite for the development of nation as a housewife and as an educated mother; a women can significantly assist in reducing the incidence of illiteracy, poverty, ignorance and ill health of our youngsters. But this role transcends the frontier of her immediate surroundings. The concept of women education, first of all, introduced by Raja Ram Mohan Rai was supported by many Indian philosophers from time to time. The same idea was popularized by Mahatma Gandhi because they were worried about the deteriorating condition of women in India. And they considered women education as the only remedial measures to improve women's status in society.

Suggestions for Further Research

Research is never ending process. Every investigator after completing his research inevitably becomes aware of areas in which further research is needed and naturally feels motivated to indicate areas which may be taken up for research by another investigator. Present investigator has the following suggestions to make in light of his own experience of research.

- Comparative study of the views of different Indian and Western philosophers toward women education.
- A study of other social evils like child marriage, erosion of value etc. existing in Indian society related to girls.
- Historical study of the development of women education in India.
- A study of the problems regarding women education in India and abroad.
- A study of the problems faced by women of tribal areas.

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