

# Gandhi: Ideology, Philosophy and Indian Politics



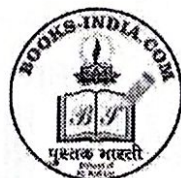
**Editor**  
**Dr. Pratima Gupta**



**Pustak Bharati**  
**Toronto, Canada**

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# Gandhiji: Idea of Education

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## **Abstract**

Education is a process of human development. It moulded and purified the learning experiences among children as well as human being. Gandhiji was a utopian who had reconstructed the new educational idea in India. His major principle of philosophy of education focus on activity and craft centered education; self-supporting and self-sufficient education; the medium of instruction is mother tongue; non-violence environment in education; the ideal of citizenship is an important feature of education, the spirit of citizenship is filled in the child. Gandhi believed in the total development of the human personality through education. He advocated that education should start with hand. It should promote dignity of labour; it should depend more on practice than theory; it should develop social awareness and the spirit of service. According to him the education should be practical which is craft based. Also he was focused on self-supporting aspect of education. Gandhi shown a keen sense for change in the education pattern and discussed at length as to the genesis and implementation schemes. He indicate to it as the synthesis between vocation and education as he had viewed it. Gandhi's concept of education is highly relevant to this day. He had clearly voiced the affairs of the deteriorating education system, about the necessity of craft-centred training, building up of character, issues of unemployment, student unrest and relevant message to the students. To this day, many of these issues have remained unaddressed, inspite of several educational reforms. Akin to the issue of



politics, Gandhi did not annul the relation between religion and education. Rather, it was a effective means to inculcate cultural and moral values as prescribed in various texts and the best way to practice the virtues.

Education is one of the most defining features in the life of an individual. It enables one to acquire literacy, to analyse the situations with logic and wisdom and also use it greatly for individual as well as social development. Education, in this context, is more a way of life, a crucial instrument in character-building which enables us to determine the course of our thoughts and actions and also achieve goals and ideals of life. It is this logic to which Gandhi attached greater importance. He was undeniably one of the greatest proponents of modern education in India and his scheme of education sought to further the moral, individual, social, political and economic progress of man. His scheme of education aimed at the truthful and non-violent way of life and the ultimate goal of self-realisation. His methods were simple and practical and this was evident in his scheme of education.

Gandhi's disclosure to realities of life in South Africa taught him about life much more than what he had learnt in formal institutions of learning. It is this considerate of life which gave shape to his views on the nature of education that a free India needed.

According to Gandhiji education means "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. I hold that the highest development of mind and the soul is possible under such 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.”

Gandhi's stayed at Africa 21 years and first experiments in education began at the Tolstoy Farm ashram in South Africa. It was much later, while living at Sevagram and in the heat of the Independence struggle, that Gandhi wrote his influential article in *Harijan* about education.

### **Educational Philosophy of Gandhi**

With the object of realising God in an ideal moral society Gandhiji evolved a dynamic philosophy of Education. He adhered that education should bring about the development of the whole man. He explored as one of the masters of the mankind, one of the great teachers of the human society. The main principles of Gandhiji's educational philosophy are free and compulsory education from 7 and 14 years of age; activity and craft centered education; self-supporting and self-sufficient education; the medium of instruction is mother tongue; non-violence environment in education; the ideal of citizenship is an important feature of education, the spirit of citizenship is filled in the child. Gandhi believed in the total development of the human personality through education. He advocated that education should start with hand. It should promote dignity of labour; it should depend more on practice than theory; it should develop social awareness and the spirit of service.

### **Aims of Education**

According to Gandhiji, “Physical, handicrafts drawing and music should go hand in hand in order to draw the best out of the boys and girls and create in them a real interest in their tuition.” He firmly believes that the true education of mind and heart can come through a proper exercise of the bodily organs.

According to Gandhi along with the development of body, mental and soul development is also being must. He said that



as the mother milk is necessary for the development of body, similarly education is necessary for the development of mental development.

Gandhi felt more urgency of the training of the heart than the training of the mind. In his opinion, "Culture of the mind must be subservient to the culture of the heart." Without education of the heart,

In the Harijan of May 27, 1939 Gandhi wrote "I value individual freedom, but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to his present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of last of the jun."

Gandhi considers that cultural aspect of education as more essential than its academic aspect. Culture is the main foundation and an essential spirit of education. According to him the cultural aspect of education is more important than then a literary aspect. Culture refines personality. Pulsar is not the product of intellectual work. A man's culture cannot be jazz by the amount of his knowledge and information. It is the quality of mind and of soul which is reflected in the daily conduct of a man and in all states of human behaviour, it is the reflection of life.

The Gandhian vision of education, as mentioned earlier, has character-building as one of its aims. It is the education that guides and enables an individual to develop into a better human being and provides direction in the diverse aspects of human development. Gandhi made considerable references to religion as the sole guide from which he drew various examples to mould his attitude and views. Education also enables an individual to develop tolerance, love and humaneness which are necessary preconditions to imbibing the virtues of non-violence. Love, according to Gandhi, is akin to non-violence and truth. In the Gandhian scheme of character-building, righteousness, passion for self-help and



attitude of peace are some of the astounding qualities that can be developed through right education.

Education makes it possible to develop a balanced personality and Gandhi rightly insisted on morality and spirituality as necessary ingredients for such development. No other leader has so passionately advocated the importance of moral and spiritual development as Gandhi did. Gandhi drew heavily from his life experiences and adhered to the notion of moral superiority throughout his life. He advocated faith in God as the first step towards the right education and often lamented the waning belief of the youth in God. Gandhi firmly believed that apart from imparting physical and mental training to a child, training in the moral and spiritual aspects are also crucial to personality development. While teaching the students at the Farms in South Africa, he made constant endeavours towards this training. He relied primarily on religious books and acquainted the students with a general knowledge of the scriptures; he strongly believed in the futility of imparting any training without the training of spirit and without any knowledge towards God and self-realisation. He trained the young minds through the recitation of hymns and verses from various scriptures and imparted moral training based on such readings. He realised the significance of a good teacher in imparting such education. He abhorred misconduct on the part of students and corporal punishment by teachers. His sole aim was to build moral and spiritual character through love, tolerance and non-violence. To set himself as an example, he often resorted to fasting to bring about a positive change in the attitude of the pupils.

Education for self-reliance should be job oriented to act as a safeguard against economic exploitation. They want all men to make self-supporting. So they forces in the fevour of craft-centered, self-supporting and industrial education. Gandhiji's scheme of education emphasises dignity of manual labour through active participation in productive



work. Manual labour is not at all disgraceful, it rather enlarges the heart and enriches the personality.

Gandhiji watch of the growing complexities of life in the present world and accordingly he formulated his scheme of education which would feed the child in later life. According to him education must prepare the child to face the dream realities of life and enable him to adjust with his immediate environment for complete living.

Basic education is based on the principle of activity centering round a productive and useful craft. It is activity-centred education. Here the child is not a passive recipient of knowledge but active participant in the learning process. It fosters learning by doing. Gandhiji had realistic and pragmatic view of education. He laid stress on imparting knowledge and acquisition of productive efficiency and practical skills through a craft. He followed the principle of practice preceding theory. Most of the time in the time table would be given to acquisition of practical skills and productive efficiency.

Another important aspect of the educational philosophy of Gandhiji is service and development of social awareness. Service includes love for the motherland. "The end of all education should surely be service", said Gandhiji. Social awareness and responsibility can be developed through the involvement of students in programmes of community service.

Gandhiji had synthetic view of life, education and culture. He synthesised all the three basic philosophies of education into his philosophy of education-idealism, naturalism and pragmatism. Like a naturalist Gandhiji emphasised self-discipline among children.

### **Curriculum**

Gandhi formulated a suitable curriculum which was intended for primary and junior Basic schools i.e., upto class V. The curriculum was same for both boys and girls. This



curriculum was mainly implemented in Basic education. This curriculum is an activity-centered. He was emphasised more on 3H's (head, heart and hand) than on 3R's (reading, writing and arithmetic). The content of education were basic craft in accordance with the local needs and conditions, mother-tongue, arithmetic, social studies, general science including nature study, botany, zoology, philosophy, hygiene, chemistry and physics, art work, music and domestic science for girls in place of general science after class-V.

### **Gandhi on Medium of Instruction**

Gandhi was totally averse to English education. Gandhi attaches greatest importance to learning in the language into which a child is born. He notes that 'English is today admittedly the world language. I would therefore accord it a place as a second, optional language, not in the school, but in the university course. We and our children must build on our own heritage'. Gandhi noted that by borrowing from another, we impoverish our own. His stress was on building knowledge in the languages spoken by people. 'I want the nation to have the treasures contained in that language and, for that matter, in other languages of the world, through its own vernaculars into Indian languages. Bringing knowledge from across the world and from within the country was to be addressed by good translations'.

### **Gandhi's Colonial Education**

As we have seen, Gandhi had not only rejected colonial education but also put forward a radical alternative. To understand the alternative system he proposed, we need to understand his disposition towards industrialisation, which was centric to western education. Gandhi through his writings and lectures has expressed his absolute opposition to modern machinery. In his collected works, he refers to 'machinery as having impoverished India and that it was difficult to measure the harm that Manchester had done to



them by producing machine-made cloth, which, in turn, ruined the internal market for locally produced hand woven goods’.

### **Gandhi on Higher Education**

Gandhi’s views on higher education are need based. To him, the aim of university education should be to turn out true servants of the people who will live and die for the country’s freedom. He was of the opinion that university education should be brought in line with basic education.

Gandhi planned to revolutionise college education and relate it to national necessities. Universities would offer only those degrees which are going to absorb the knowledge for the betterment of society. According to him graduates are to be attached to different industries which should actually pay for the training of the graduates they need.

### **Methods of Teaching**

Gandhi advocated the activity method— ‘learning by doing’. Education is through the medium of and in correlation with a productive work. The industry should be such that the child is able to achieve gainful work experience through practical work. He says “Children take in much more and with less labour through ears than through their eyes.” Follow-up (anukaran), lecture, explanation, question-answer, discussion, experiment, experiment, project project and shrawan, manan nidhhdhyasan (listening, thinking and practice) methods were given great importance by Gandhi in the craft-centered method.

### **School**

The school should be an activity school. It should be situated in a natural atmosphere. As M.S. Patel has observed “The school of Gandhi’s imagination will not be a place of passive absorption of information imparted second-hand, but will be a place of work, experimentation and discovery, because it will follow an activity curriculum. The child acquires his



knowledge activity and utilises it for the understanding and better control of his social environment”.

### **Textbooks**

He believed that the true text-book for the pupils is their teacher. He did not want to load the student with innumerable textbooks. Gandhi's views on textbooks are similar to that of Rousseau.

### **Women Education**

Gandhi especially focuses on women education. He says that women are not only our sister, mother, and wife but also human creature, social creature and God's super article (kriti). So they want to give safety to the women same as men. A wife is not a slave of the husband. Gandhi strongly favored the emancipation of women, and urged "the women to fight for their own self-development" development". He says that men-women are same as two wheel of any vehicle. He wants provide ideal form in women as Sita, Dropadi etc., with the help of education.

### **Co-Education**

Education He accepted co-education. According to Gandhi co-education can be arranged only on primary and higher education but not on adolescence.

### **Adult Education**

According to Gandhi the adult education is a type of mass education. Gandhiji were very unhappy because the most adults are illiterate. Gandhi wants to educate him with the help of Basic education. He wants to character development in the adult education.

### **Religious education**

Gandhiji attach great importance to religious education. He said "life without religion is life without principle add life without principle is like a say without a radar". Religion Gandhiji does not mean dogmas or rituals. Gandhiji emphasised the moral aspect of education. He said "True



religion and true morality are inseparable bound up with each other". Believes in the universal religion propounded by swami Vivekananda.

We can draw a conclusion that his concept of education is not only the eradication of illiteracy but learning by doing. He ambush the doctrine of simple living and high thinking. His education system are greatly emphasizing the culture of peace, sincere work, adherence of the cause of the nation, social minded, friendliness, right feelings, economic advancement, physical improvement and socio-cultural development. It is based on work-centre education which can give the necessary economic self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

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