

MAHATMA GANDHI'S IDEA OF EDUCATION: THE NAI TALIM AND ITS RELEVANCE IN THE PRESENT TIMES

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ABSTRACT

India has a great reverence for knowledge. Colonial education system had many flaws. In 1937 Mahatma Gandhi proposed a holistic system on education named Nai Talim which promises physical, moral and intellectual development of students with productive work. It laid emphasis on self-reliance, dignity of labour and real life activities. It encourages creativity, practical skills and helping students becoming self sufficient and responsible citizens who would be capable of contributing positively to society and nation. The National Education policy (NEP) 2020 is influenced, to a great extent, by the Gandhian idea of knowledge and education.

Key words: Colonial education, Holistic development, self- reliance, Wardha scheme of education, National Education Policy.

INTRODUCTION

The period of Mahatma Gandhi witnessed the two debates on the education and its structure-traditional vs modern. Mahatma Gandhi was an ardent supporter of self reliance and self- sufficiency, so he witnessed such a system of education for India which would be helpful for them to attain self-dependence.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY:

1. To understand the relevance of Gandhian views on education in historical and contemporary scenario.
2. To study the programme of Nai Talim proposed by Mahatma Gandhi.
3. To take a look on the application of Nai-Talim and its impact on the National Education policy (NEP)2020.

METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on secondary sources like books, research papers, published reports, relevant websites and newspapers. This study presents the author's view point based on the existing material.

Mahatama Gandhi's Nai Talim:

Mahatma Gandhi's idea on education was a great departure from the British system of education. Mahatma Gandhi was greatly influenced by the Indian values and culture. In the Indian system the knowledge of tradition and culture has a great importance. India has guided the world with its knowledge. Education is essential for personal and social development of any person. Education promotes awareness, quality and better decision making .An educated society is more innovative and responsible. With the advent of British rule in India, education system witnessed a drastic change .Although British education system had cast some positive effects on Indian society and also broaden its outlook but the main aim of British education system was to create clerks and administrators to serve the government rather than to promote independent thinking, which was in contrast with the traditional Indian education system whose main emphasis was on character building. Colonial Education system neglected Indian culture, languages and traditional Indian knowledge system. The

goal of British education system was to create subordinates. The medium of instruction was English and moreover, education was limited to few people. A vast majority of Indian population was illiterate. Gandhiji wanted such an education system that would be based on holistic development of students. Education was given in their mother tongue and there was less emphasis on cramming of text books. Learning would be by 'doing' or to attain some practical knowledge of any vocation or craft. Moreover, the goal of education was to create self-reliant citizens. Gandhiji has expressed these views in his writings on a number of occasions. Following quotes by Gandhiji illustrate it clearly:

" Real education consists in drawing the best out of yourself. What better book can there be than the book of humanity?"(Young India, July 1926 issue). Similarly he was of the view that "Literacy in itself is no education literacy is not the end of education, nor even the beginning"(Harijan, July 31, 1937).

All that Gandhiji wanted to tell us that simply reading and writing does not mean someone is truly educated. Real education should develop character, skills and moral values, further he told us that education should help individuals discover and develop their inner talent and abilities. Gandhiji believed learning should bring out the best qualities within a person.

The phrase 'Nai Talim' is made up of two words 'nai' means new and 'talim' means education, this scheme was formalised at the Wardha education conference held in 1937 when Gandhiji outlined a scheme for free and compulsory education. The basic national education scheme was Gandhiji's idea on education which he had been voicing in his paper 'Harijan' for many years. Writing in Harijan in 1937 he explained as to what he understood by education, "by education, I mean, an all-round driving out the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning, it is the one of the means where by men and women can be educated."

The story of Nai Talim was started in 1937 when 'Marwari Shiksha Mandal' was celebrating its silver jubilee. Sh. Narayan Aggarwal asked Gandhi ji to preside the conference. The conference was held at Wardha on October 22-23, 1937. Gandhiji proposed his ideas on education at the conference for consideration as they had appeared to him at that point. On the following points a resolution was put before the participants:

1. That in the opinion of this conference free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nationwide scale.
2. That the medium of instruction be the mother tongue.
3. That the conference endorses the proposal made by Mahatma Gandhi, that the process of education throughout this period should be centre round some form of manual and productive work, and that all their abilities to be developed or training to be given should as far as possible be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child.
4. That the conference accept that the system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers.

On the second day, discussions were made and the resolutions were put to vote. On the acceptance of resolution, a committee of ten members was constituted under the chairmanship of Dr Zakir Hussain to prepare a detailed syllabus on the lines of resolutions. The committee was to submit its report within a month. On December 2, 1937 committee submitted its report. Later, the Indian National Congress (INC) endorsed the resolution at its Haripura session in 1938 and requested Dr. Zakir Hussain and Sh. E.W Aryanayakam to take immediate steps under the advice and guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, to bring an All India Education Board into the existence, so that plans would execute in proper and consolidated manner. This Nai Talim is also known as Wardha scheme of education.

Main features of Nai Talim:

1. Education would be craft centred. It should be based on handicrafts such as spinning, weaving, agriculture or other skills.
2. Students should gain knowledge through practical activities, instead of only book learning.
3. Schools should be self-reliant i.e they produce useful goods through crafts, so that education can support itself financially to an extent.
4. Teaching should be done in the child's mother tongue so that learning be made easier and more meaningful.
5. Teaching should focus on the overall development of body and spirit. In other words, Holistic approach should be followed while imparting education.
6. Dignity of labour should be respected so that students should learn that all types of work are valuable.
7. Children of the age group 7 - 14 years should be provided free and compulsory education.
8. Nai Talim gave emphasis on social and moral values such as co-operation, truth, non-violence, discipline and community service.
9. Emphasis on integration of subjects was made. Various subjects and languages to be taught through the craft or some activity.
10. Education was to be linked with moral life. Curriculum should relate to village life and local needs.

In short Nai Talim aimed to create practical, moral and self-sufficient individuals by combining education with productive work.

The Application of Nai Talim:

In the independent India the influence of Nai Talim can be seen on many government schemes, policy or private initiatives. The Majhihira National Basic Education Institution (MNBEI) is such a private initiation. It was founded in 1940 by Sh. Chitta Bhusan. He was an ardent follower of Mahatma Gandhi and believed in his Nai Talim philosophy. He established MNBEI. In this institution Gandhian concepts of Determination, Devotion, Discipline, Community Service etc. were followed. Similarly Mahatma Gandhi National Council for Rural Education (MGNCRE) actively promotes Nai Talim by encouraging colleges to incorporate experimental learning and community service into their curriculum. Several alternative educational initiative like Puvudham in Tamil Nadu and Anand Niketan in Sevagram continue to use Nai Talim philosophy by focussing on democratic education, hands on learning and environmental awareness. The Skill India Mission is also aiming to create skilled manpower rather than just degree holders. If we see the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 many of its features are greatly influenced by Gandhi's Nai Talim. Nai Talim emphasized practical learning through activities and craft. Similarly NEP 2020 promotes experimental and activity based learning instead of just memorization. Nai Talim focused on handicrafts and productive work, also NEP 2020 introduces vocational education including internships and skill based training. Nai Talim taught dignity of manual work and NEP and encourages students to learn vocational skills and practical work, promoting respect for all forms of labour. Nai Talim aimed at developing body mind and spirit of students and NEP 2020 also stresses holistic and multi disciplinary education that includes arts, sports and life skills. Nai Talim supported teaching in the child's mother tongue and NEP 2020 also recommends regional languages as the medium of instruction. Nai Talim linked education with village life and community needs and NEP 2020 promotes local context, culture and indigenous knowledge in

the curriculum. Nai Talim laid stress on the moral values like non-violence, truth and mutual cooperation and NEP 2020 also acknowledges value based education ethics and morality.

CONCLUSION

Gandhiji's idea of education is based on the concept of holistic development of the students, so that they may become human beings with moral values and aware of their social responsibilities, not just degree holders who seek only job. His concept of Nai Talim emphasized learning through self-reliance, community work, dignity of labour and attain knowledge with practical skills. But education system either in Gandhi's time or in modern times often gave importance to the bookish knowledge, exam and competition and often ignores values, creativity and life skills. His vision encourages students to become responsible citizens who can address real world problems with compassion and integrity. The NEP 2020 tried to adopt many ideas of Gandhiji in its framework. As we are facing the challenges of a globalised world, Gandhiji's principles are more relevant than ever. As Gandhiji once said, "The future depends on what you do today." So it is the need of the hour to create such an education system that must be more than an academic pursuit rather it should serve as a tool for ensuring equality, social justice, individual empowerment and opportunity for all.

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