

EDUCATIONAL POURINGS OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND MAHATMA GANDHI: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL AIMS

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Abstract: Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi who are hailed as two great men from the Indian subcontinent, have not only contributed into the field of societal and political development of the country but also in literary field. Tagore was a genius who did not only get fame for his literary work 'Geetanjali' but was a versatile genius; a man in whom many muses have blended together beautifully to contribute in the field of music, Arts, sculpture and many more. He has also contributed in the field of education as both Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhi believed that social regeneration of the country would remain a far cry without the inclusion of value education. So both worked in their own way to bring certain changes in the educational field to make it better to suit the purpose of social reformation. This present paper will in brief detail the contribution by both the reformers in the field of education.

Keywords: *Harmonious development, basic education, concept of universal man*

INTRODUCTION

Rabindranath Tagore, India's greatest poet, seer, mystic, sculptor, musician and composer, the recipient of Nobel Prize in the field of literature, was the first Asian to win this coveted award in 1913. He was a man of versatility as he did not confine himself to one art only rather his feelings found expression in different genres of art. He painted so beautifully that people marvelled, he carved statues so wonderfully that all praised him to skies, he played on instruments that enticed all and when he wrote, the muse itself seemed to be singing through his pen. Such was the personality of the man whom M.K. Gandhi brought on a high pedestal by calling him "Gurudev", a term meaning in Hindi "Mentor" as he was truly a mentor in the real sense of the word; he was the "pole star" to use P.B. Shelley's phrase when he admired William Wordsworth for his guiding spirit to show the true path to all. Like Wordsworth, Tagore also showed the right path to all Indians as he brought the arts out of the rust of age old practices.

Aims of education:

Education as wisdom: Education must be conducive enough to make man wiser than before. Wisdom should be dawned through the process of education. This wisdom should not remain only confined to the theoretical base rather it should be practical enough to solve the many impediments in the course of one's life; making man self-reliant and ready to gear up to face all the obstacle in his life.

Physical development aim: Rabindranath Tagore paid attention to the aim of education as to create a sound body for the individual. Without a healthy and sound body, a man has not the capacity to develop his personality. Discussing the importance of education as the development of physical fitness of the individual Tagore has categorically opined:

"Even if they learnt nothing, they would have had ample time for play, climbing trees, diving into ponds, plucking and tearing flowers, perpetrating thousand and one mischief's on Mother Nature, they would have

obtained the nourishment of the body, happiness of mind, and the satisfaction of the natural impulses of childhood.” (Tagore, 1351 B.S., pp. 9- 10).

Democratic Aim of Education: Education must promote the democratic values. These values are essential for the propagation of democracy as the country is associated with the philosophy of democracy. Education must instil these values in the mind-set of the learners as without them it is quite impossible to have greater values before the people in the country. The people of India and even world must possess the unwavering faith in the high ideals of democracy and its standards of living, they must have dignity of labour, they must respect others, and they should have a sense of freedom. Apart from this, they must have the feeling of equality and must believe in justice. They must be tolerant to one another and must live peacefully acknowledging and respecting mutual differences.

Vocational Aim of Education: In the modern age it is generally said that education must be goal oriented. There is greater impetus being given to the education which is oriented to the inculcation of some skills which turn a man into self-independent individual. Educational as preparation for the vocation is a great enterprise. It is to be undertaken for making the people self-reliant so that they could be able to earn their bread and butter. What is the role of education if a man after getting qualified is not able to earn his living. Most of the modern education is just adding up to the degrees but fails to provide any skill set required for a particular job. Students even after being educated do not get qualified for jobs rather they add up to the total unemployment in the society. This mounts their frustration level. Many of them are so depressed that they end up their lives. That is why Rabindranath Tagore focused on the vocational preparation of the individuals so that they can prepare themselves for earning the livelihood of their families. This is also known by other nomenclatures like Bread and butter aim of education. Rabindranath Tagore emphasised the fruitlessness of education if it does not ensure economic independence of the child though he has acquired education and is competent enough to brag that he possess the vast amounts of knowledge and culture.

Character Aim of Education: Man’s character is the one which shows the habits and education of the person. According to T. Raymond character building should be the final goal of education. Russell has also urged upon the significance of the character formation goal of education. Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, too, great philosophers of Indian origin emphasised on character building of the individuals through the mode of education. Character can be best defined as the sum total of the cumulative ethical qualities in an individual that can be in a nutshell summed up as: the quality of tolerance, the higher virtue of walking on the path of truth which Gandhi thinks of as one of the fundamental values of human being, being humble and courteous, then is the duty of being sincere to whatever is being done, the quality of courage and the feeling of recognising others as one’s brothers and sisters and so on. Education must be envisioned in such a comprehensive. Discipline is one of the fundamental values for the building up of good and moral character. Discussing the importance of discipline, it can be noted:

“if the boys and girls do not learn discipline in their school days, money and time spend on their education is a national loss.”¹

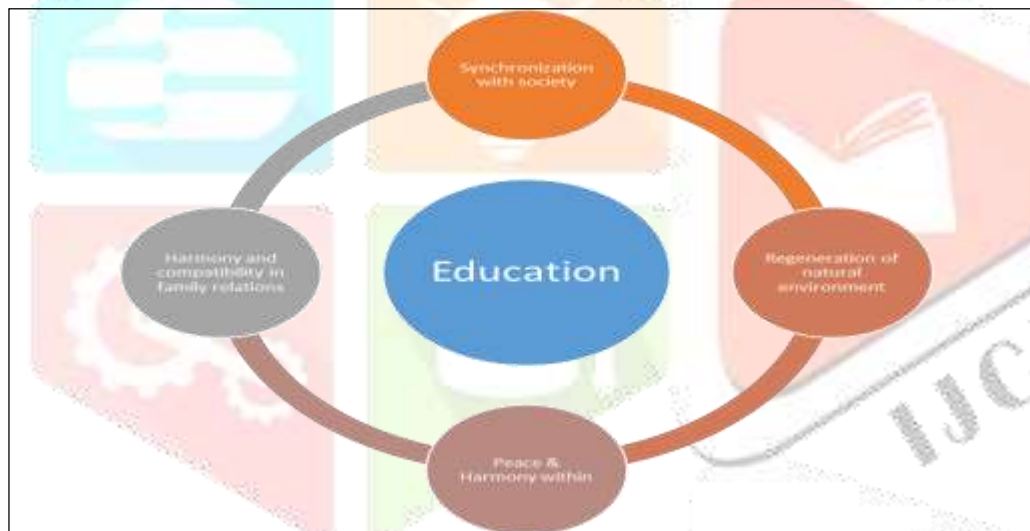
Spiritual aim of education: Idealism believes in the development of spirituality in an individual. Idealism believes that spiritual aim of education is the most significant and critical one. Sri Aurobindo has advised us: *“The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble cause.”²* The burning question of the day is to protect humanity from jumping headlong into the abyss of dilapidation and colossal wreck by holding the hand of spiritual values. The image of the country can be restored back by the instillation of the spiritual values in the hearts of the young minds who are known as the asset of the country. Tagore has remarked that spiritual aim of education is linked with the surge in self-determination and self-control, developing the ideas of peace and getting oneself free from the clutches of slavery. He believes that education is the one which does not overpower man with redundant burden rather

believes in setting the man free. Thus spirituality must be developed in man so that the qualities of head and heart be improved upon and the country on the whole can resurge on the international plane.

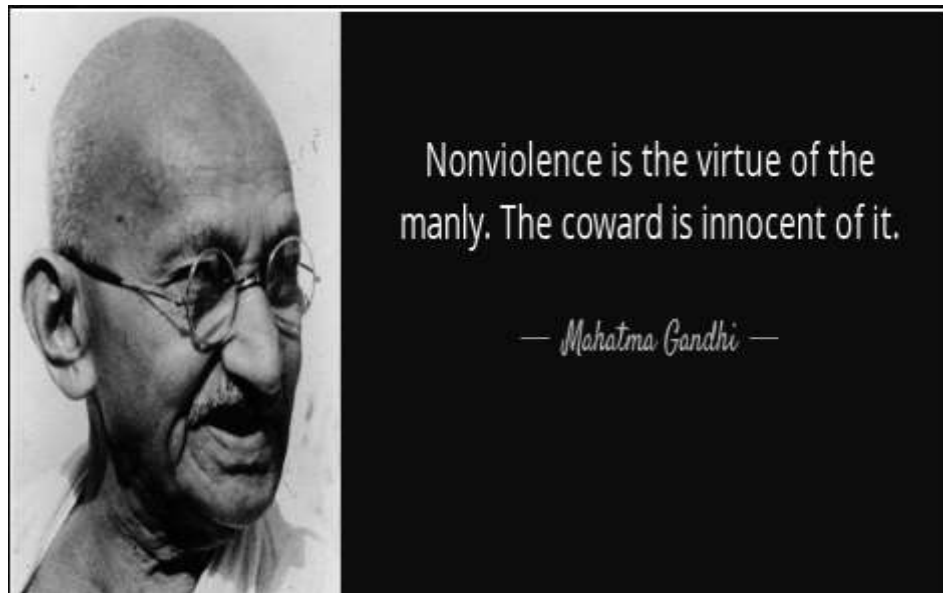
Education as harmony: Education must forge the feeling of peace not within oneself but at all levels of human existence. An individual lives at four levels of existence and education must ensure such an insight that man becomes so wise enough to have penetrative ability to see that he has to maintain peace and harmony at these four levels of human interaction and existence:

1. Harmony and peace within one
2. Harmony and compatibility in family relations
3. Synchronization with society
4. Regeneration of natural environment

It is not the aim of education to just fortify us from the knowledge grounds but also to forge a feeling of brotherhood and mutual understanding. One must be able to recognize one's relationship in terms of his interaction with society so that he may live with peace, cooperation and respect. Apart from it, one must recognize the importance of nature and must know that one should never harm the interests of nature at the cost of one's own personal profits. According to him, education not only provides information and knowledge to us, but also promotes harmony, love and fellow feeling between us and all around the world.



Mahatma Gandhi, one of the most predominant political figures of 20th Century, is also known as a great revolutionary in education. Born as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, he dominated the political scenario of India for more than three decades. He was named 'Mahatma' by the great seer and philosopher Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore for his spiritual and austere life. A man propelled by his inner purity and integrity to fight for the country's independence from the clutches of the British rulers; seeking not less than Swarajya for his motherland and not hankering after any political office; being devoid of all the avarice for self-ends, is truly hailed as 'Mahatma' or 'saint' as no less titular nomenclature could have been conferred to him commensurate with his abilities and inner truth which found adequate and ample expression in his deeds, thoughts and words.



Aims of Education-

In order to fully grasp *Nai Talim*, it is predominantly important that we understand the aims of education as per Gandhi because he tried to bring the same in his scheme of education. Philosophers right from very beginning of Aristotle to Vivekanand, have been pointing out to one or the other aims of education. But the aims of Gandhian education are impacted by high ideals of truth and non-violence, more so as Gandhi was committed to social service, his education was influenced by the societal aims too. Let us understand what is education for Gandhi:

Gandhi classified the educational aims in two fold mould. On one hand the aim of education is to develop the individual and on the other hand education is linked to social service. Education is by and large should be committed to seek out the best in the individual, groom and inculcate the highest spiritual values in the individual should; transforming the overall personality and build good character. On the other hand, it must pave way for the societal changes. Education should conflate the individual to the service of society so that the individual after getting drilled in certain aspects of his personality, must embed himself to the service of society and to Gandhi there is no contradiction or conflict in this very perspective. A good person with a good character will always work for the betterment of the society. Rousseau also favoured that education must first make man a human being that's it must cater to the aim of character development. He states:

*“Man is neither mere intellect, nor the gross animal body, nor the heart or soul alone. A proper and harmonious combination of all the three is required for making of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education”*³

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AIM: *“The end of all knowledge must be the building of character; personal purity is to form the basis of character building. Education without character and character devoid of purity would be no good.”*⁴..... Gandhi Vehemently remarked in one of his speeches. Gandhi was of the opinion that character development should and must be very much imperative aim of education. Without a good character of the individual, neither individual nor the nation can progress by leaps and bounds. A strong character ensures development of one's own and if the individual develops, the country also advances. Even one of the prevalent saying is:

*if wealth is lost, nothing is lost,
if health is lost, something is lost,
but if character is lost, all is lost.*

He was of the opinion that no education can be true if it does not cater to the character building aim. He further opines that:

“All our learning or recitation of 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.”⁵

Character building aim of education has been put forth by many of the scholars and seers of education. Gandhi is one of the predominant figures among them. Even after independence Secondary Education Commission fully recognised the character building aim of education when it stated the significance of education as character building.

SPIRITUAL AIM: Gandhi was a firm believer in spirituality but for Gandhi spiritual reality did not mean the petty concerns of the religion that he professed rather it endowed a comprehensive wisdom and prudence on Gandhi to tackle the problems created by different religious sects. He believed in the fact that religious tolerance is what is the solution but such a concept or solution can be given by the one whose soul has immersed himself in the world religion who has believed that cosmopolitan religion or religion of the world is far more significant than being morosely engrossed with the pettifogging concerns with the interests of one's own religious sect. To Gandhi that is not true religion as he anticipated religion as endowing the right perspective and to develop the vision in such a way that one can sift what is truth and what is false. Talking about his faith and being a Hindu he wrote to a friend:

Spiritual aim of education is the self-realisation. Education is thus, an awakening of the soul. Without education spiritual development is not feasible. Underlining the significance of the spiritual development aim of education Dr. Radhakrishnan, the eminent Indian philosopher affirms that the aim of education is neither national efficiency nor world solidarity, but making the individual feel that he has within himself something dew than intellect, call it spirit if you like. Spiritual development implies to find our and seek the element of godliness in us. All other aims of education lead us to the ultimate aim of spiritual development.

Spiritual development and moral development are the ultimate aims of education. Education must work to draw out the latent inner voice and make it manifest. Spiritual development implies the identification of the self. Realization of the inner self and developing our consciousness of it should be the aim of education. Self-realisation means identification of our duties, responsibilities.. Gandhian education is not divorced from religion but to take religion in a very narrow sense will be fully misunderstanding Gandhian education. Gandhian religion is chosen from multifarious religions and sects, In fact wherever Gandhi could find anything valuable he picked it up. To reiterate, Gandhian education is spiritual in nature and religion like Vivekananda's philosophy finds a vital place but the very basic tenants of Gandhian religion is truth and Ahimsa. Gandhi believed education must prepare the child for self-awakening and ultimately the child must identify his dharma. This dharma is correlated with societal transformation.

LIBERATION: Liberation is another aim set by Gandhi in his philosophy of education. Gandhi believed that the people who undergo education must be fearless individuals whose main personality trait is fearlessness; fearlessness does not however imply arbitrariness or defiant nature of the individual that they are so reckless to that extent that they can throw the whole order out of gear. Fearlessness is to be taken and considered in a very positive manner. Positively taken it is a trait which is akin to true spiritual being. Individuals must be fearless to oppose any wrong doing that they experience in the society. They should be fearless to raise their voice against injustice meted out to the masses. Like Gandhi himself has inculcated the principle of fearlessness. Shaking the burden of manacles, he exerted to let the country be free from the bondage of British rule. Setting a very high aim before him; working to realise that aim, Gandhi in unison with the other Satyagrahis painstakingly raised their voice and protested against the rule of the Englishmen. But fearlessness should not have any element of violence in it. For Gandhi education creates in man a spirit of fearlessness and bravery to articulate any sort of injustice that they are subjected to. Liberation for Gandhi has two fold meaning.

1. Education must ensure liberation from the British rule. This was political colouring of education. Indians must be awakened to realise that the British empire must be shaken off their heads. There should be an awakening in the people from the slumber in which they have lulled to sleep by the English rulers.

2. Education must harbingers moksha that's liberation from the age old traditions which are decaying and have no relevance in the modern world. Education must end up all the superstitious beliefs of the people, it must ring the death bell of these age old traditional superstitions and customs which are of no use in the present day modern world. The people should be free from the five vices namely: *Kaam* (lust), *Karodh* (anger), *Lobh* (greed and avarice), *Mauh* (attachment) and *Ahankaar* (ego). Emancipation from all these is termed as true human being. These vices are also talked about by Guru Nanak Dev, the first gurus of the Sikh sect. If the individuals get emancipated from all these vices, education has nicely rendered its services and the people then are truly educated. Without emancipation from all these the people cannot develop their character and cannot attain spiritual awakening. Ultimately if people are strong enough to defend themselves from all these vices, Godly traits will be developed in them and they will lead the country to new heights which have been unprecedented till then.

EDUCATION FOR SELF-SUPPORT: Gandhi was of the firm faith that education must support the individual. After getting education the individual must be in a position to support financially so that he can become self-reliant and can serve his or her family. Self-supporting aim of education cannot be escaped. Gandhi was against the English form of education which was being imparted as that education does not make the individuals self-reliant rather instil in them repulsion for the dignity of labour and manual work. Gandhi was in a favour of some craft and wanted the individuals to be taught some sort of craft so that the individual can enhance their skills of manual work and can support themselves. So education for livelihood was a major aim of education for Gandhi. Not only the individual be self-supporting but even the educational institute which teach the students must be self-supporting as otherwise the government cannot be able to bankroll the schools and due to the paucity of funds the masses will by and large be illiterate. He was of the opinion that through the sale of the products being made in the schools through some craft the school will fund itself. Thus the education itself will be self-supporting in its very nature.

CULTURAL AIM: An individual must be able to articulate culture of his country when he moves and conducts himself in the society. This cultural aim finds predominance in Gandhian education. The way, a person behaves, reflects his very culture. Gandhi believed that culture must be expressed through the righteous conduct of the individual. Every Indian must show some good cultural values so that the image of the country is not be tarnished in the world. Cultural values and other higher values must be ingrained in the very conduct of the personality of the individuals. For the cultural training, school must work in unison with the parental guidance. Parents' home is the first school of the child and the parents should be under obligation to instil the Indian cultural and spiritual values to the children so that they are aware of their own cultural values and conduct themselves accordingly. A love for their culture and respect for its various forms must be instilled gradually into the children. Values like honesty, respect to the elders, care, trust, affection, equality, integrity of the soul are imperatives and must not be taught rather be inculcated in the children so that their very conduct becomes the epitome of these very cultural values.

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