CHAPTER - 2
ROLE OF WOMEN AND THEIR CURRICULUM

“Education is what survives when what has been learned is forgotten”

- B. F. Skinner

UNESCO defines its objective very clearly and says that since the idea of a war, distrust and hostilities begins in the minds, it is here that respect for peace must be instilled. It proposes to use education, development of science, social science, culture and communication as the means to establish peace in the world.

2.1 Smart Parents Tend to Make Smart Kids.

Author of Mind Maps for Kids, Tony Buzan in her book “Brain Child, How Smart Parents Make Smart Kids” writes about the nature – nurture debate. Are all mental, physical, personality and social traits and skills determined by genetics? Are they unchangeable and predefined? Traits in children are or are they not the result of education and training? In her opinion both play a role but it is to be noticed which one is the dominant influence.

Her book holds that the genetic potential for the average child is a universally large template with individual variations such as those to be found in thumb prints. On this gigantic instrument, an infinite variety of ‘melodies’ or ‘tunes’ of intelligence and behaviour can be played, and it is these that are determined entirely by the environment. She has proved this with many examples.

1. Raise your child in a Spanish-speaking environment and she will speak Spanish perfectly. Raise that same child in a Chinese-speaking environment and she will speak Chinese perfectly. Genetics have nothing to do with the language the child learns. Environment is everything.

2. Expanding on the language example, surround your child with the languages of mathematics, music, art and physical culture, etc. and the child will learn these languages. Keep your baby’s brain totally isolated from them and she will learn nothing at all. Environment is everything.
3. Feed your child on the diet of a Sumo wrestler, and her body will become like a Sumo wrestler. Deprive your child of the proper nutrition, and she will become skeletal and all her organs especially her brain, will be stunted in their growth. Genetics has nothing to do with this. Environment is everything.

4. Force your child to use the wrong mental formulae and she will increasingly self-destruct. Encourage her to use the appropriate mental formulae and she will increasingly self-create and self-generate. Genetics has nothing to do with this. Environment is everything.

5. Deprive your child of light for three years, and the development of her visual system, will be terminally stunted. Genetics has nothing to do with this. Environment is everything.

6. Feed your child poison and she will wither. Feed your child appropriate nutrients and she will flourish. Genetics has nothing to do with this. Environment is everything.

Of course, nature plays its part. The colour of our hair and eyes, many of our physical characteristics, and indeed the very brain itself are designs of Nature that are unique to each one of us. It is what we do with them and how we use them that determine our nature! The sad arguments of those who observe that all children are extraordinarily different and who therefore conclude that parents ‘seem to have little impact on their temperament, intelligence and development’ and that ‘the basic biology and psychology of the mind is fundamentally set in stone’ are both irresponsible.

She asks the parents to do everything and anything positive that you can do for your child can and will make a difference. Think of yourself as force for positive influence in your child’s life. Care for your child with love. Give yourself over to your child while she is young. Your efforts will be rewarded many, many times over. Common wisdom has it that anything that you do in the first five years of the child’s life, will bounce back in the teens. Her advice should be taken in true spirit because children learn maximum discipline and morality till the age of five and that is useful for them throughout the life.
2.2 Woman as Wife and Mother

“She who rocks the cradle, rules the world,”

With these words before us, let us consider the subject of the woman and her role as a wife and mother.

It may in the first place be remarked that it is an established fact that no nation can be truly great unless it has educated mothers, and thus the question of female education is inseparably connected with national advancement. The influence of a mother on the destiny of her child is admittedly all powerful. Medical science and the experience of all nations, lend their testimony in its favor.

The physical and mental characteristics of a mother pass to the child in her womb and her children learn of her automatically before even they are capable of speaking or intelligent thought. An eminent Italian who had the misfortune of having a bad mother though a distinguished father, said that ‘Races tend to take after the woman’. There may be a great difference in the mental capacity of the father and the mother but still the intellectual power of their children will follow the mother’s type.

The importance of prenatal maternal influences – Physiological, moral, mental, and psychical – cannot be denied. Medical science and universal experience is testimony to this fact and we must realize that motherhood is a big responsibility. At home the mother guides the children and as such there is an unrivalled influence in forming the character of children. Home is regarded “as the most influential school of civilization”.

Home is the woman’s domain, her area of work where things are under her control. She rules the home and executes power over everybody living there. She is their role model and children observe and do whatever she does. Unconsciously children follow her mannerisms, her style of speaking, her behaviour and her way of life. The habits follow suit and her character is imbibed in them. Children often imitate their mother and her concepts are repeated. Thus it is truly said that the mother is seen again in her children.

And George Herbert was perfectly right in observing that one good mother was worth a hundred school masters. Our Aryan Shastras describe the mother as the greatest of all instructors, and as a thousand times more venerable than the father, who is considered a
hundred times more venerable than a teacher. The Vedic injunction is: - “Worship every morning and evening thy God first, and next, that earthly goddess, thy mother.”

The training of children depends entirely on their mothers and their influence affects a person’s character for life. The oft-quoted remark of the great Napoleon may as well find a place here. He once asked, “The old systems of instruction seem to be worth nothing; what is yet wanting in order that the people should be properly educated?” The answer that he got was ‘Mothers’ which surprised him and he accepted the role of mother in the system of education. He also said that mothers should know how to train their children.

Once a French Minister of Education had declared that when you educate a boy properly, you are educating an individual but if you educate a girl, and you get eventually a cultivated family. It is the mother who first teaches her child how to learn. There is extensive utility of educating girls; in his words, “you educate, then, not individuals only, but families and nations.”

In their celebrated Educational Despatch of 1854, the Court of Directors observe – “the importance of female education in India cannot be overrated.” “By this means a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education of men.” It was clearly stated that the foundation of children can be laid properly at home only when they have educated mothers. It was observed at home was the best place for moral and religious training which is most essential for each generation and for the race to achieve greatness.

The biographies of the most illustrious men of all ages prove the truth of the remarkable fact that those who have been eminent for goodness, greatness or virtue, have generally owed their excellence to the teachings, the example or the influence of mothers. The lady of the house has the rearing up of her infant left to her in a family, in whose minds she sows the first principles of religion, trains their moral nature, directs their education and implants in them the germs of noble and high sentiments, that these may blossom out in all the luxurious and splendor, at their mature age.

A well-educated woman becomes a center of moral light radiating noble sentiments and high feelings in the family, which she is to rear and take care of in after life – a teacher of truths and principles to be assumed by her children, and linked in their memories forever.
with all that has been hallowed and revered in the past. The well-known proverb: - “She who rocks the cradle, rules the world,” is a popular testimony, founded on the experience of mankind, of the priceless value of the influence of a mother on her child. Posterity may be said to lie before us in the person of the child in the mother’s lap. The training of the child at home and the examples which he receives from his mother mold the future of the child and decides the kind of person the child will finally become. The mother is the first and the most influential teacher of the child and hence to educate a woman is similar to educating mankind, to develop integrity in her character is raising Nation’s integrity. As is rightly said that **Nations are but the outcomes of homes, and peoples are of mothers.**

Now, let us turn to woman’s position as wife or “Grahini” as the center of the domestic circle and in the social economy in general. “Grihastha,” or householder represent the two wheels or moving forces which carry the car of life, and it is necessary that both should be equally strong. Any disparity between them is undesirable. As remarked by Sir W.W. Hunter in his Imperial Gazetteer of India, Volume VI., page 78, with reference to the Aryans in ancient India, “Husband and wife were both ‘Rulers of the house’ (Dampati); and drew near to the Gods together in prayer.” Mr. A. O. Hume said that the male and the female are those two intellects whose equipoised interaction is indispensable to the evolution of a wise national conduct.

The common word which designates a wife (Ardhangini – half of one’s self) sufficiently indicates that man and woman co-exist as parts joined together; combined they constitute humanity. In an unmarried state, a man is only half a being. Hon’ble justice Sir Mathuswamy Aiyar justly observes “The very Sanskrit words that designate wife “Patni” and “Dharmapati” suggest the notions of partner in life and partner in duty. To inoculate the popular mind with these ideas, the image of Shiv is made to consist of both the images of man and of woman.”

Dr. R. Iyengar has also expressed the same view, thus: - “God willing, we shall go on – on in the onward march – to reach that ideal of man and woman, the ideal which the wise sages of India several hundreds of years ago had conceived, but unfortunately the Indians of the succeeding ages had lost sight of; I mean that perfect conception of man and
woman in one being, half man and half woman, in the incarnation of Shiv and Parvati, “Ardhnareshvar”.

To this it may perhaps be added that in designating god-heads, even precedence is, in some cases, given to the gentler sex; for example, Ooma-Maheshwar, Sita-Ram, Radha-Krishna, Laxmi-Narayen, Girija-Shanker, Gowri-Shanker.

Our Hindu Shastras say: - “With an agreeable wife, heavenly happiness exist here on earth.”. A goodwife is also described “as her husband’s greatest riches,” “a helper in accumulating righteousness,” “unequalled medicine or remedy in all afflictions,” “a partner in his journey through the world when he has no other comrade,” “half of man and the best of friends.”

Miss Mary Carpenter described a good wife as one who can comfort and counsel her husband; “one who can reason and reflect; and feel and judge and act; one who can lighten his cares, soothe his sorrows, purify his joys, and strengthen his principles.”

Another writer says that a true wife is a woman who soothes anxiety by her presence, who charms and allays irritability by her sweetness of temper, is a consoler as well as a true helper. The true wife is a staff to lean upon in times of trial and difficulty, and the wife never lacks in sympathy or solace when fortune frowns.

It is a woman who can surround the people at home with an all pervasive atmosphere of cheerfulness and contentment which is suitable for the growth of the family and happy families make happy nations. An educated woman is directed by intelligence and is guided by morality, good temper and kindness to fill the family with security.

With a good wife by his side, a man may be poor, but he feels cheerful and happy. A wife is the home of comfort and happiness. She is a shelter from the storms of life and a sweet resting-place after a laborious day.

Dodsley’s interesting description of a good lady of the house in high circle may be here usefully reproduced:-

“She presideth in the house, and there is peace; she commandeth with judgment, and is obeyed. She ariseth in the morning, she considers her affairs and appointeth to everyone their business. The care of her family is her whole delight, and elegance with frugality is seen in her mansion. The prudence of her management is an honour to her husband. She speaketh
and her servants fly; she pointeth and the thing is done; for the law of love is in their hearts, and her kindness addeth wings to their feet. In prosperity she is not puffed up; in adversity she health the wounds of fortune with patience. The troubles of her husband are alleviated by her counsels, and sweetened by her endearments; he putteth his heart in her bosom and receiveth comfort.”

A wife is the life-long companion of her husband and is the presiding genius of his household and it all depends upon the wife whether or not she will make his home a real blessing, a place of repose and contented enjoyment of the sweets of life, a refuge where, after the arduous and anxious labours of the day, a wearied soul may seek comfort, consolation, domestic happiness, heart-felt sympathy, and the pure delight derivable from the intelligent companionship of his better-half. In domestic and social life, the influence of the lady of the house is, generally speaking, paramount.

2.3 The Consequences of Neglect of Female Education

We have thus seen how extremely precious, immensely powerful – influential, and vastly useful woman is in all her various relations of life. Could she ever be left uneducated, without the gravest consequences of a painful character? A negative reply is only possible. A society can be progressive if only its women are not ignorant. An emancipated woman can lead to development in the society instead of stagnation and decay.

A society composed of educated men and uneducated women can never be a progressive society. There has to be an earnest effort to tackle the question of female education without which we cannot expect the society to develop, decay will set in.

Another thinker gives a warning which is still more emphatic: “Our fields may be laden with rich harvest; our commerce may thrive; our manufacturing industries may flourish; and the material comforts and political benefits that we enjoy under the protecting aegis of the British rule, may steadily grow; the University may set its stamp annually on Masters of Arts by the dozen and Bachelors by the hundred, but this I say, that if our women, who have to keep our homes clean and well ordered, and to sweeten our repose after the toils of the day – who have to sympathise with us in all our pursuits and double
our joys and halve our sorrows – who have to bring up our children in a pure and healthy way; who are our sincerest friends and advisers through all the changes and chances of life – who have to cheer up our drooping spirits and nurse our faltering arm in the hour of trial and distress – if, I say, those who are so near and dear to us, are allowed to remain in a lower state of intellectual and moral development than ourselves, and are unfit to discharge the duties that the new order of things may impose upon them, then our boasted ancient civilization is a great name inherited without the desire to live up to it – our education defective and lopsided, our social activity a mere attempt to draw water in a sieve, and our national progress in any real sense, a pretense and a delusion.”

A third voice, that of the Honourable Justice Sir Mathuswamy Aiyer, asks, “just think of the extreme injustice of keeping one-half of the members of the community in ignorance. Think also of the incalculable loss, intellectual, moral and spiritual, sustained by us by compelling the minds of our women, who admittedly possess many noble and beautiful traits of character, to remain uncultivated. “If we are to rise, we must raise them first.”

A man is known for his strength and womanhood signifies tenderness and faith. Both, man and woman make up and complete the humanity. It will be selfish to keep the nectar of knowledge restricted to men only. The wives, our sisters and daughters should share the knowledge and if we do not do this, we will have to pay the penalty.

The laws of our nature are inexorable; you cannot split humanity in two. We cannot expect to attain for men alone, moral and intellectual completeness. That which god has joined together, let no man put asunder. As far as family is concern, we must recognize the fact that man and woman are mutually interdependent. We cannot forget this union and should accept it as part of our knowledge and culture. Only in this case can we expect social well-being and moral advance.

It was said by the ruling authority in Baroda in late 19th century that the women of the society were left behind for unknown reasons, while some of our men press forward, that the revolution which is occurring in our midst is uneven and unsatisfactory. Let us, therefore approve all steps that are taken to cultivate the minds of our women. Let not the minds of our men be active abroad and stagnant at home, owing to the absence of
sympathy in our helpmates. As our public life is changing, let our family life change too for the better.”

In the late 19th century explicit views were expressed in the Deccan also. It was said that it would be unjust, short-sighted, and suicidal to keep one-half of the Hindu race in dark ignorance. Dr. R. G. Bhandarker, asserts that one-half of its intellectual, moral and spiritual resources was being wasted. If we educate the boys alone and not the girls, it is like lighting half a room and leaving the rest in darkness. The education of females is an important factor in the advancement and happiness of any community or nation.

It is to be noted that similar opinion has been given by our remarkably progressive Asiatic neighbor – Japan. It is well known that in Japan the women are highly respected and honoured and this definitely has been one of the great factors ensuring the exaltation of that nation to its present high rank in the civilized world.

It is a pleasing fact, well authenticated by history, that when our country was in the full enjoyment of its well merited grandeur in ancient times, the culture of our females was very great. Any nation would be proud of ladies like Gargi, Maitreyi, Arundhati, Damayanti, Lilawati (a celebrated mathematician), Sita, Draupadi, Savitri, Sakuntala, Taramati, Madalsa, Wishwa Devi Ganga (authoress of Vakya Wali), Laxmi Devi, (who has written a commentary on Mitaxara), and Madan Mishra’s wife Sarasvati, who had a philosophical discussion with the great Shankaracharya.

In ancient India women enjoyed a very stirring intellectual life. They impressed and astonished men by the depth of their knowledge. They could solve questions related to sacred subjects. We find songs attributed to poetesses and queens. There were among the women of India, poets, authors, philosophers, and commentators on law, a time when great consideration and reverence were accorded to women.

It was said ‘strike not a woman even with a blossom’ because if a virtuous woman sheds a tear drop, that family is sure to perish. We find mention of females unsurpassed in reasoning powers and in all walks of astronomy and mathematics, in literature and science, theology and philosophy. It is beyond controversy that the brilliance of intellect exhibited by some of our ladies has, in the opinion of admiring European Sanskrit scholars, shed an almost unrivalled luster on our country.
Our Hindu Shastras show that the education of girls was regarded as a necessity. Just like a son a daughter had to be protected and educated with extreme efforts. The moral of these facts is obvious. It is the opinion of intelligent and educated leaders of the Hindu Society that “if the regeneration of India is ever to be effected, women must be restored to the position and power which by their nature and by means of education, they were fitted to fill and exercise.”

Even in the late 19th century the stories of intellectual ladies in India had reached America. They knew that Indian women once enjoyed high position in the society and were given the benefit of education. “Is it not true,” says Mrs. Howard, Secretary to the Society formed in America for Promoting the Education of the Women of India, “that when India was a happy and prosperous nation, the wife was the valued companion of the husband and intelligent mother of his children. Surely, the educated gentlemen of India are not ashamed of the names of Gargi, Maitreyi, Damayanti, Lilavati and others, whose names and greatness have reached even to the Western world?” “There cannot be any true greatness of a nation while the women are in ignorance.”

The name of Miss Mary Carpenter as a philanthropist, who did so much for advancing the cause of female education in India, is well known. As experienced an educationist as she was, has left on record a distinct opinion that if India is to rise in the scale of nations, women cannot be left behind and they must be raised to their true sphere.

Lord Sandhurst, said: “I have before expressed my sense of the importance I attach to promote education, and my belief that any society which neglects to educate one-half of its members, is seriously handicapped in the race of life.” He had heard about the heroic ages of Indian history where women were educated and he wanted that state of things to prevail again. Female Education is the surest road to our national greatness. If the Indians apply themselves earnestly to the work of restoring their women to their former position, India would once again become a great moral and religious nation.

We have a glorious and instructive past to look back upon. Among the “Rishis” of the “Rig Veda hymns, several ladies, such as Vishwavara, Vak, Lopa-Mudra, prominently figure, is itself a circumstance which can leave no room for doubt as to the depth of learning reached by the best specimens of our women in old days, and should certainly
encourage us in our conscientious endeavours to advance the intellectual culture of the present generation.

The Education Commission of 1882 stated that the intelligence of Hindu females was certainly far in advance of the opportunities given to them even before obtaining school instruction, and promises well for their education in the future. In a paper headed “India and its Women” read at the Imperial Institute, January, 1895. Mr. S.E.J. Clarke of Calcutta testifies “to the admirable administrative powers of the Hindu women, their religious tendencies, and their household dexterity.” If the benefit of education, to an appreciable degree, were added to the natural shrewdness, intelligence, and many other good qualities of the Hindu women- we may safely predict a very bright future for our community and a national regeneration on the best and most permanent basis.

The above discussion proves the necessity and importance of female education. The boys may advance in education but their partners cannot be left behind in intellectual progress. Today the question is not only the number of women being educated but how the mind is being awakened and trained to be in tune with ancient India. It was the concerted efforts of our social reformers that women got opportunities to study. But today genuine determination and fixedness of purpose has to be shown towards the moral rearmament of the women.

2.4 The Complex Role of the Mother

“In a completely rational society, the best of us would aspire to be teachers and the rest of us would have to settle for something less, because passing civilization along from one generation to the next ought to be the highest honor and highest responsibility anyone could have.’

- Lee Iacocca, Iacocca, 1986

In this section we shall see that the mother in the capacity of the first educator of her child has a huge task in front of her. A new mother is usually seen singing alphabets to her infant thinking that she will make her child more intelligent if he knows the alphabets beforehand. She does not realize that there is formal schooling to take care of the languages, math, science, history and geography. Her duty is to develop the higher
functions of the mind in her child. She has to teach him discipline, morality and ethics before he takes up formal education.

Robert Fisher in his book ‘Teaching Children to think’, 2nd Edition, 2005 says in the Preface of his book that there is a great need to put the habit of thinking at the heart of education. This should become a common vision in schools, educational communities and organisations. The principles enshrined in his book became the basic for the ‘thinking skills’ element in the National Curriculum for England and Wales (1999) and are reflected in many other curriculum guidelines developed in recent years. There have been huge changes in education during this time, including the use of new information technology, changes in curriculum content, tests and examinations, and in home and school environments. With so many new initiatives in recent years, it is easy to forget what is really important in education. What is heartening and a cause for optimism is the new focus on thinking and creativity in education in countries across the world. A huge amount of effort has gone into finding ways of helping teach children to think more creatively and effectively. And there is good reason for this.

He goes on to say that teaching to think should be the focus of education. Teaching for thinking is essential if we are to improve the functioning and development of society and of schools. Teaching for thinking is developed through intellectual engagement, purpose, energy and interactive session with others. It results in children better ability to communicate what they think, to benefit from the thinking of others, and to be resourceful in solving problems and flexible in the face of new challenges. These positive, creative attributes are essential to citizens living in an increasingly complex and changing social environment. A true democracy requires critical and creative citizens. The moral life requires imagination. Thoughtfulness should not only be the intellectual but also the moral aim of education. We have good reason, therefore, to invest in the development of children’s thinking at an individual, at the level of the society and national levels.

**Thinking and intelligence**

The debate over the role of genetics and environment in the development of the child’s mind is continuing even today. Intelligence is believed to be largely inherited and hence
cannot be altered. Thus special attempts to improve children’s thinking are not made. The IQ test scores prove the point that intellectual performance is the result of inherited genes and cannot be modified. Some believe that 80 per cent of intelligence is hereditary whereas 20 per cent is due to environment and upbringing.

But I believe and Robert Fisher wants us to believe the part played by the social environment. Many psychologists have emphasized the importance of the social environment. The Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1897 – 1934) argued that social and cultural interaction is very important for the psychological processes to begin. Thinking develops essentially through social experience when the child interacts with the adults around him. Thinking is seen as a ‘higher function’ of the mind and originates when actual interaction takes place between individuals. Vygotsky claimed that culture and education are responsible for the development of speech and writing. A child at birth knows no language and when brought up takes the language which he hears the most. It is this language which controls his thinking and the world becomes meaningful for him. For Vygotsky intelligence is dynamic and hence is always changing, it is not static. Every child develops according to his potential. But this potential he can develop when he collaborates with others. When the child completes the learning, he can do the work all by himself.

**Creative thinking**

Education should make the men capable of doing things. Repetition of work is not the work of creative men. What other generations have done should not continue as such but should be adapted to the present circumstances. Invention, innovation and discovery – these are the traits which should be developed through education.

Critical analysis is another aim of education. The learner should not see the world and the things only negatively. Education should train the mind to see both sides of the coin – right and the wrong, negative as well as positive. Learning to analyse critically is very important in life. Everything should not be accepted as it is offered but first it should be weighed to see its pros and cons.
What is a problem?
The child has to learn to identify the problem and then assess its magnitude. The world ‘problem’ covers many areas of difficulties. A problem can be big – life-threatening or small – a minor irritant. The scale of the problem should influence the decision-making process. A bigger problem takes more time to sort out and a minor issue may be solved in few minutes. But in some cases it happens the other way round. A minor irritant may disturb continuously for a long time and a major issue is solved swiftly. Thus the identification process and the decision-making process of a child are of great help in his life.

Problem solving is applied thinking. Real problems are often ill defined and multifaceted. They are open to a range of possible solutions, not closed like puzzles. Every problem has an obstacle and an objective, and requires conscious effort. Any educational activity can involve a real, realistic, tangible, contextual or abstract problem. Children need to develop skills and strategies of problem solving. Problem-solving strategies involve formulating, defining, implementing and reviewing possible solutions. Success in problem solving requires positive attitudes, cognitive skills and knowledge, including the ability to remember. Problem-solving skills are developed through tackling a wide range of problems.

Why do children fail?
It is a very amazing finding that the reason for failure of children is maladjustment with a culture. It is seen that when a child is brought up learning his culture and values from his family, he is stable and confident. But if the tools of learning are not transmitted in the frame work of his inherited culture, the child is imbalanced and in a dilemma. Integration in one’s own society is most essential and if this is not done the child continuously feels neglected and is not able to perform. As the children grow up, the dilemma between his own culture and the foreign one continues. He is not able to grasp reality and has low levels of perception.

Cultured children are not impulsive and frustrated. They are calm and use the information around them to deal with their life situation. Ethics and values provide a structure and strategy to the thinking of a child. Children who lack cultural values need specialized
help. Children who are well adapted to their lives show great capacities for learning. Culture brings certainty and says the children from the feeling of being uprooted and scattered. If the traditional values of the parents are not transmitted to the children, the children reject them when they grow up. Cultural roots can be given at home only.

**The role of mediation**

A mediator can be any knowledgeable person who is usually an adult and who stays near the child. This person will shape the way the child will perceive the world. Sensory stimulation is needed for the intellectual growth of the child. When the interactions with the world of the child are processed, the mind develops. The processing in the mind helps the child to absorb new levels of information. Thus close interaction with the child has become very important in his education.

The question is – who is the stimulant? Sources of stimulation can be parents, siblings, caretakers and teachers. Besides them there can be other sources of stimulation as decided by their parents. The mother will transmit a culture which will determine the child’s attitudes and behaviour. Parents are closest to the child and in this capacity play an important role in determining the ethics and values to be passed on.

“As you sow, so shall you reap” – A Proverb. This proverb clearly defines the issue. The child takes after his parents, more so in the company of his mother. Whatever she does is automatically absorbed by the child, it is necessary also. This hidden curriculum serves the child throughout his life.

There are many learning experiences which the child has with his parents. This develops the basic thinking skills of the child. The mediator (read mother) gives a direction to the learning experiences towards a specifically intended goal or purpose. A ‘yes’ or a ‘no’, ‘do it’ or ‘do not do it’, ‘good’ or ‘bad’ are means of transmitting values to the child. The small stimulants are of great moral significance. The Jesuit Fathers asked a child at seventh year of age to be given for training. My father often said while interviewing candidates, ‘catch them young’. Both examples show the power of molding.

A person needs to be present with sound cultural background to make a learning experience into a moral lesson. A child left all alone may learn or may not learn from his
experience. But if the mother or the accompanying adult explains the experience and gives it a direction, the experience becomes memorable.

Another characteristic of useful mediation is that immediate result may not be seen but it may teach the child the principle of cause and effect. An outing with the family will be fun for the child but in the course he will learn planning, punctuality, cooperation and problem solving. An important general principle can be taught to the child by stimulating his mind through simple questions. Every situation provides an opportunity for the child to learn something new. It is how that situation is manipulated or interpreted. Each opportunity has the potential to become a significant learning experience for the child, if mediated by a person of value.

An incident comes to my mind when my elder son learnt that the iron is hot. For many days while I was ironing the clothes, he wanted to do the same without realizing the danger of getting burnt. One day I put his hand on a freshly ironed garment which was still hot. After that day he understood that iron is hot and he never threw a tantrum again.

‘What we call a mind is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions, united together by certain relations, and supposed, though falsely, to be endowed with a perfect simplicity and identity.’

-David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature

Ways to foster cognitive development

There are many ways to foster cognitive development in the child. Some of them suggested by Feuerstein are given below –

The ability to ‘see’

It is very important that the child is taught how to see clearly. The child from birth is able to feel and see the environment around him. As he grows his ability to ‘see’ has to be developed very carefully. They need help in developing their ability to focus and pay attention. The mother from the beginning guides her child through gestures. If the child is not guided properly, it will mean that the child grows up with poor perceptual skills. The mother helps the child to recognize shapes and patterns and teaches him to differentiate objects around him. The child who does not have effective mediation will find it hard to
focus on an object. The child when guided with gestures is able to categorize the objects and identify them.

The parent helps the child to look at the objects more precisely and a child learns accuracy. He cannot by himself learn these techniques.

‘There is no slave out of heaven like a loving woman: and, of all loving women, there is no such slave as a mother.’

- Henry Ward Beecher, Proverbs from Plymouth Pulpit

**The ability to ‘select’**

The next important thing to teach the child is to select. The child today is exposed to various sensory stimuli, whether audio or visual. He has to be taught to select the correct stimuli and shut off the rest. He should not respond randomly without thinking. If his response is haphazard and he is unable to select, the child will be confused. The guidance or mediation of adults helps him to learn the skill of selection. He is encouraged to think and as such he is able to concentrate. Conscious efforts have to be made to help the child to seek out correct information and use that information in the correct manner.

**The ability to ‘plan’**

It is very important that the child should learn to plan. As is often said: ‘If you fail to plan, you plan to fail’. Performance is bound to improve when children learn to make a plan. But they will never engage themselves in planning spontaneously. Here again mediation is required. The children need to learn to order their lives, learn routine things and develop healthy hygienic habits. When they follow a particular routine they do not realize that the things have been planned for them, they automatically do one thing after another. Customs and conventions have to be internalized.

Planning teaches a child to schedule his activities leading to his goal. This process of planning can be reinforced by the parents by encouraging the child to plan his day to day activities and his holidays. The child learns positive anticipation when he plans his activities.
**The ability of ‘Self-control’**

Another important thing to be taught to the child is to control oneself. Self-control is the ability to think and then act. Impulsiveness does not always yield results. More time and energy should be spent in identification of the problem than reacting to it without thinking. First thoughts and the first reflex are always not correct. Children should learn to control their first thoughts and impulses so that they do not jump to a wrong decision. Whether at home or in school, acting with inhibition is advisable. A cautious approach should become a habit with the child so that he does not suffer in his life. In the absence of adult company, children are often ruled by impulse and as such want to do whatever they want. They become short tempered and enter into conflicts with others very quickly. Awaiting your turn is the convention of courtesy, not grabbing or snatching. Self-control helps the child to control his impulses and thus to control their lives.

It has been observed that juvenile delinquents had failed to grasp the consequence of their action. They could not foresee the future of their action and their behaviour was situational. They had responded on impulse and failed to see and conceive the result of their actions.

Cultural values and ethics help to develop self-control. In Indian culture ‘Fasting’ is observed on particular days for particular reasons. I think it is the best way to develop self-control. One must always pause before reacting so as to ascertain the consequences. Here again the concept of cause and effect is being taught.

**The ability of ‘precision’**

Precision I believe is a key to success. Beating around the bust leads to delay and confusion. Adult help the children to learn precision by asking them to pin point exactly what they mean or want. Parents usually insist on coming to the point and say the thing rather than mumbling in confusion. Accuracy saves time and energy and decisions are quickly taken. Children should learn to say precisely what they want to say rather than wasting their time.

Children may mumble in confusion when they are afraid. Parents should take care that their children give them respect out of love and not out of fear. Precision is also lacking when there are too many options in front of the child. Adult mediation helps the child
choose the correct option. In the process of learning precision the child learns to sift unnecessary information and is able to make the right choice in much lesser time.

**Importance of discussion**

Dialogue and debate have been related to wisdom since the time of Socrates. When one looks for answers about the important questions about life, philosophy comes to his aid. Children also should engage in deep discussions. There are many puzzling questions in life which can be sorted out only by debating. Dialogue and debate with adults help the children to attain a higher intellectual level.

The best way to involve children in a philosophical discussion is through moral stories. There is always an alternative end to the story and the children like to discuss about the end at the writer has given to the story. The child develops the habit of thinking and concentration while he debates about the moral of the story. He may ask series of questions which again helps the child to learn logic. Throughout the life, logic and philosophy enables the child to take correct decisions. Children become reflective and always abide by philosophy.

Children should learn to talk out their problems thoroughly. Isolation and solitude does not help a child because it is important to interact. A child needs to ‘talk’ and not just waste his time in babbling. This ‘talk’ can be held only with a cultured person and only then will it be fruitful for the child. Traditionally, children are thought to be innocent and too small to talk about philosophy but it is in the young age only when logic, reasoning and righteousness can be developed.

**To speak the truth**

Almost every day the child goes through the dilemma of telling the truth or not to tell the truth. The child also observes that there have been times when he lied and he got good results. Thus he learns to lie whenever it suits him. He also sees adults or his parents lying at times, but he does not and cannot differentiate in the situation. Hence the habit of telling the truth has to be instilled with great care. The importance of truth has to be emphasized and also the wrongness of lying.
The child has to learn the necessity of telling the truth first and then he may learn to identify where sometimes lying can be tolerated. A white lie is detrimental to one’s image and children should learn to appreciate the intelligence of the people around him. He should not think that others do not understand when he is lying. The feelings that he has after lying should be identified and if somebody has told a lie to the child, the feelings should be discussed. Thus he will be sensitive to the feelings of others.

It is truly said ‘if your foot slips, you can regain your balance but if your tongue slips, you can never recall your words’.

**Factors that hinder thinking**

Children are often seen complaining about their inability to think because of confusion. Patience and tolerance are values which must be taught to the children from an early age as they alone help the child to think and act. There are certain factors which block children’s thinking.

1. The fear of failure is the most common factor inhibiting children’s thinking. The art of positive thinking has to be internalized so that whenever life raises difficult situations, the child deals with them with confidence. An optimistic view increases the chances of success as the child moves on undaunted. Optimism also helps the child to take failure in his stride and he is saved from depression. Negative thinking will turn the child in a pessimist who will keep on making a number of excuses before taking on the task. Excuses do not lead to success. One cannot always wait for the right time and the right opportunity; sometimes you have to create them. Thus decisions should be made and then action should follow to prove the correctness of the decisions.

2. Stress and anxiety has become very common in children of today. The quick pace of life and the burden of the task on hand lead to high levels of stress and anxiety. Both can block thinking of the child and the child will turn away from the task he was working at. When stressed out, children think about failure more than success. They lose confidence in themselves and believe in the notion that he is ‘no good’. Arguments ensue and parents and children come to loggerheads. Unnecessary issues are raised and the real task is lost in the process. It is the duty of the parents to teach the child
the art to cope with stress and anxiety. Physical inactivity may also be the cause of stress. Here again mediation and discussion is required on the part of the parents. Stress and anxiety leads to feelings of anger and frustration. The positive aspect then has to be accentuated and the negative should be dealt with. The child should be made to understand the futility of anger and dire consequences of frustration. Ambiguity can also lead to stress. Conflict and confusion block thinking in the child. Morality helps the child to be focused and helps him to find a way out of conflicting alternatives. Sometimes the child fails to grasp the importance of the situation and yet again culture comes to his rescue. Traditions and beliefs lead him on the path of righteousness and in future he understands the correctness of his decisions.

3. Fatigue in a major way blocks thinking in a child. ‘Beauty sleep’ is essential for our body metabolism and health in general. Lack of sleep inhibits learning and this habit of relaxing the body can be inculcated only by the parents. Sleep is essential to relax our nerve cells and synapses. It is often observed that children are active for long periods during the day and do not get enough sleep to rejuvenate them. Long periods of sleep can also lead to laziness and hence a balance has to be made in activity and relaxation. A regular and consistent sleep schedule should be made for the child. Mood swings and hyperactivity in children create cognitive problems which in turn affect their ability to learn in school. Nightmares are yet again results of lack of sleep which have become common in children. Sleep is essential for body as well as brain. It is essential to avoid being cranky and tired. Lack of sleep can affect growth and immune system also.

4. We are living today in the age of Machines. But here we must understand that they have been made to decrease our burden or increase it. All of us have written essays on ‘Science – a blessing or a curse’. The conclusion always is the correct method of using the machine. Calculators and computers have made our task very easy. But, given to the children at an early age, blocks their thinking. Brain needs stimulation and becomes sharper with stimulation. The biggest block in creative thinking in a child is the television. Television keeps the child away from books and readings. This denies them the opportunity to develop skills and imagination.
Many programmes on television appeal to people of lowest intellectual quotient and are thus not beneficial for the children. The language use in the programmes is full of slangs and clichés which are not suitable for children. Another thing that can be avoided is the violence shown on television. Physical conflict comes to be accepted in daily life which is not a good learning experience for the child. Commercial advertising is aimed at children as they are seen as perpetuators for their parents. They are not meant to develop ethics and values in the children.

The time spent on watching television can be spent usefully to develop reflective thinking of the child. The child learns passivity and takes the child away from healthy activity. Television watching makes the child sleepy due to inactivity. TV should be seen under control and the time spent on it should be minimal. The child should be encouraged to select and plan his viewing schedule, whereby his wishes are fulfilled and the time is not wasted.

Television delivers a great deal of relevant news and information. Children should be encouraged to view channels related to general knowledge and their country. TV can help the child develop ideas and understand significance of many issues and thus mediation is required. TV can also stimulate curiosity and interest in children. TV programmes also provide situations and points for discussion. The important thing here is when to switch on and when to switch off the television.

5. Children’s diet also seems to be related to their behaviour and academic performance. Fast-food or junk-food and health-food have been debated over the last many years. Anything eaten in moderation cannot be harmful and excess of everything is bad. If this is kept in mind, the child understands and cooperates with his parents. Modern processed food is often looked down upon but children seem to enjoy it very much. They should be made to understand the importance of nutrition and they should realize the importance of nutrients for optimum health.

Bad eating habits lead to malnutrition in children which in turn lead to low academic performance. Monitoring of food regularly is required for the children. The relation between a healthy body and a healthy mind cannot be overemphasized.
2.5 Gandhi on Women

I visited Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad and found the serenity absolutely engulfing and mesmerizing. One may think that he knows enough about Mahatma Gandhi but a visit to the ashram tells you otherwise. There are many facets to Mahatma Gandhi and each one requires in-depth study. I found a book compiled by Pushpa Joshi, ‘Gandhi on women’ (2011) which is a collection of Mahatma Gandhi’s Writings and Speeches on Women. It throws light on the views of Gandhi on women’s position in the society, her role in the society and efforts to be put in for her meticulous upbringing.

Ela R. Bhatt in the Foreword writes that Mahatma Gandhi was a man of action. Whatever he spoke and wrote always had a purpose and it was a guide to action. His utter honesty and purposefulness is singled out as a major quality. His insistence on women participation in the freedom struggle made a breakthrough in the lives of Indian women forever.

Mahatma Gandhi considered Freedom to be the birthright of every human being and this human being included women also. His vision of a society meant a moral character of high order. He was most concerned with the re-building of human beings. He had great faith in women’s strength and entrusted the task of moral re-armament to the women.

Mahatma Gandhi may have been constrained because of his background and generation in his attitudes and ideas. But the women’s question is dealt with great dexterity by him. His writing on women stimulates many researches and thoughts.

Vina Mazumdar in the Preface writes that Mahatma Gandhi’s philosophy of non-violence is known to everybody but his views on women’s rights and her role in the process of social revolution are not well known.

In the early twentieth century girls have to know the use of needle and the scissors and ways to keep their home tidy. It was thought that order in the home will be reflected and influence the village, the town and the country ultimately. Women were expected to learn to use money properly and be a good mother to their children. It was not considered enough to learn to read and write. Their minds had to be cultivated in such a manner that they would and could provide the real training for her child. These thoughts match the thoughts given in my work here.
In ‘The Last Phase’ (Second Edition), Vol. – 1, Book 1, pp.305-307, the Mahatma pours his heart out. He said that the modern girl loved to be Juliet to half-a-dozen Romeos. The girls love adventure, dresses and to attract attention. She wants to look extraordinary. But Mahatma Gandhi wants her to dedicate herself to the service of her family and the country. Domestic work and family responsibility should not stop her from her education to increase her capacity for service and self-discipline. Mahatma Gandhi wants all girls to add to their qualities, the knowledge of rearing and bringing up children so that they become true servants of humanity. The women who were in dilemma were advised not to ape the West and conserve the best that was in India’s culture.

Mahatma Gandhi was impressed with what M. Lavis said in his address to school girls in Paris. He said that education should not be designed for selfish ends because that would need changing one’s dress. The outside may change but the soul inside must change also. Good education should be given to the womenfolk and the aim of women education should be kept in mind.

Speaking in Indian Women’s University on February 23, 1916, Mahatma Gandhi said that there should be equality of rights for women but their education should be different from that of men. The reason is their nature and their functions in the society. Women in our country do not have the economic responsibility as their primary function in the family.

In the Second Gujarat Educational Conference held in Broach on October 20 in 1917 Mahatma Gandhi expresses his opinion that the education of women is improper. The place of women in Indian society has not been kept in mind while planning her education.

Education of men and women could be same till the primary level but at all other levels it has to be different. He said that it is mandatory to maintain difference in the education of men and women as by nature they are different. They are equal in status but their functions are different. The woman rules the home and it is her prerogative to spent money thriftily. Women look after the children and shape their future by building a strong character. A women is the children’s educator an in this capacity is like mother to the Nation. A mother will be by the side of the child throughout his life and influence him
even after the children attain maturity. Nature has made this scheme and it should remain in this way only.

Thus the arrangements to educate women after the primary level should be separate. Techniques of home management and responsibilities of motherhood should be taught to the girls. Men and women of integrity, who are well informed, should make a suitable plan for women education.

Mahatma Gandhi was very much against child marriage. He did want women to be mere cooks and means of pleasure but to become life-companions in the real sense who could be partners in the struggle of life and close enough to share our joys and sorrows.

He argued that the general impression of women being inferior is due to the misinterpretation of scriptural precepts. He did not want women to be regarded as beautiful dolls but as cultured inspiring life-companions like Uma was to Shankar, Sita to Rama and Damayanti to Nala who would join in deliberations of life, nourish aspirations, understand the anxieties of life and bring in peace.

He said that literacy alone in women will not the sufficient and should be accompanied by changing of attitudes towards women in the whole society. If we want to give women their real status and let them perform their role in society.

Addressing people at the All-India Social Service Conference in Calcutta on December 31 in 1917 Mahatma Gandhi said that the question of status of women is very important. For them to be able to play their full part in the plan of regeneration, they must be enfranchised. Women cannot be allowed to remain in a condition of social paralysis. He reasserted that women’s freedom cannot be achieved only by educating them but by bringing about a change of attitude in men. Only literary education cannot restore our womanhood to its proper state. Our women are cultured even without literary education and thus their betterment requires much more.

Speaking at Bhagini Samaj, Bombay on February 20, 1918 Mahatma Gandhi said that when we talk of the regeneration of women, we presuppose that there has been degeneration and thus we should find out what led to degeneration of women and how. He wanted the Bhagini Samaj to help in the upliftment of the masses in India which he found living in absolute ignorance. In his tour of India he saw that 85 per cent of the
people were ignorant of the agitation against the British rule. People in faraway places were detached from the happenings around them. 

He was of the opinion that women were placed at an inferior level due to the injunctions in the smritis. He wanted to rid Hinduism of its defects and return to the earlier glory. The blemishes represented in our shastras should be removed, thereby promoting the regeneration of women. He wanted the women to be pure, firm and self-controlled as their predecessors as Sita and Damayanti. When the women will be raised to that standard, then their words would have the same authority.

He was practical enough to realize that this monumental task of regeneration could not be done so easily and hence realized that few would reach the status of yesteryears. For all other women he wanted the first thing to be done was realization of their condition. Education alone can do this. There are some women who without education have realized their condition and hence they should take big steps further.

Woman, for him was gifted with equal mental capacities as that of man. Thus she should be given her supreme place. He held the condition of women responsible for the failure of movements of Freedom Struggle and appropriate results were not achieved. All women, according to him should be acquainted with religious, political and social activities.

He said that the knowledge of reading and writing alone was not responsible to develop and sharpen one’s intellect. The society at large should give women its proper place and should not deny them their natural rights. True knowledge of self can be attained by true education. Home life is completely the sphere of women and thus she should have more knowledge of domestic affairs and upbringing of children.

Mahatma Gandhi speaking at the Foundation Laying ceremony of Vanita Vishram in Ahmedabad in 1919 said that the need of the hour were teachers who were learned. He laid emphasis on Dharma and said that without knowing Dharma learning is not fruitful. Learning to have utility in life should be in tune with Dharma. He then questioned the definition of learning. He stated that learning should include religious instruction also. For him, religion or dharma was not only philosophy but a matter of conduct. Religion is not only meant to debated on, it should be included in conduct and shown to the children.
A true understanding of Dharma can only bring about a spirit of patriotism. For Gandhiji devotion towards Nation was of primary importance. Body, mind and one’s wealth should be dedicated towards Dharma or Nation. One must strive towards relieving the suffering of others and bring peace to the distressed.

Mahatma Gandhi asked the students to bring credibility to their education by bringing credit to their home and country when given the opportunity.

Speaking at Bhagini Samaj on his birthday in 1919 he called the education of women as the paramount task in India. Chastity in women will come with education. Character building according to him is the main task of education for which more than money learned teachers were required. Helping themselves and being able to earn were important for women.

In his movement for the freedom of India, he wanted women to participate wholeheartedly. He said that while at home and may be not very literate but yet self-reliant, women can help the freedom struggle by being a part of Satyagraha. Satyagraha needs one to be brave at heart rather than show the bravery of arms.

While travelling the length and breadth of India, Mahatma Gandhi described scenes which he saw. He described the station called Bahuddin where many men and women gathered together to catch a glimpse of the Mahatma. Women offered him yarn which was spun with their own hands.

He was overwhelmed at Dhinga which was a small station because the women standing behind the men threw balls of hand-spun yarn. He was overwhelmed because he could gauge the feelings of those women and the spirit of doing something for their Nation. It showed that they could rise from home and participate in the work of Nation building.

He explained that Swadeshi did not mean only to protect India’s wealth but also women’s honour. For him if the women achieved a high status and honour, it was a form of Ishwar Bhakti and it was the best way to country’s freedom.

Mahatma Gandhi was impressed by the deep understanding of Dharma in illiterate men and women. He came across men who believed deeply in Dharma and in enhancing women’s honour. These men were not educated, were simple, were far away from the cities but still understood the importance of women and the spinning-wheel.
Once speaking on the role of women in the society, he said that going to the temple is important as it strengthens one’s faith, but this should not be the end of Dharma or religion. Visits to temple alone cannot complete the meaning of religion; in fact it becomes a superstition and will ultimately harm the Nation. He questioned the women of Punjab why going to temples could not prevent General Dyer from firing the innocent people. This meant that religion is much more than physical proximity to God.

He wanted the women of India to cherish the idea of freedom as a part of their Dharma. He wanted the freedom of the nation to be in their prayers every day. He also wanted women to work among other women and enlighten them towards their duty. He understood that once women grasped the importance of freedom, they could easily pass it on to the others.

He also emphasised the nourishing of mind and body of children by their mothers. He said that a woman should not only nourish the body of a child but also develop qualities of independence, bravery and integrity in their minds. He believed that if the minds of the children had the quality of firmness and dedication, then leading a good life will not be a problem.

Mahatma Gandhi appreciated the deep understanding of peaceful non-cooperation in the women. He was offered a piece of jewelry by a woman who made a living by grinding flour for others. This made him realize that even though poor, the lady had heart enough to give something for her county. This proved that Indian women in learning Dharma had succeeded in learning patriotism.

He was proud to see such women in his country and believed that Swaraj would be attained if the country had such patriotism. He could see the women in the country passing ideals of Satyagraha and peaceful non-cooperation to the sons of India and then nobody could stop India from getting freedom.

He made an important statement where he said that Dharma has always to be preserved through women. If women understand true Dharma, then they have woken up to the truth. These awakened women would bring up brave men for the country. He believed that Nations can win their independence if women brought up brave sons. He associated the purity of character and Dharma. He had seen women who had sacrificed their belongings
and saved other people. He was proud to say that women when had come alive to the situation and demand of the country, India’s suffering would not prolong.

Speaking at National Education Conference in 1924, Mahatma Gandhi went on to say that the knowledge that a woman was more than a man, was in itself true education. He declared the task of educating women as a monumental task and out of bounds for men in the country. He did not believe in graduates of a University and did not consider graduation alone as true education.

Speaking at Women’s Meeting, in Coimbatore in 1927, he said that we would not get Ramarajya in India if the women could not live like Sita. He appreciated purity of heart and body and said that use of foreign cloth was not right for the women of India. He also spoke with sadness about human beings treated as untouchables. He was hurt that people who served us and tilled are fields, were not worthy of touching us. He said that untouchability is against religion and we should get rid of this stain of untouchability.

He also spoke about the problem of Devadasis. He considered the occupation of Devadasis to be immoral. It was a blemish on the society. He wanted these unfortunate women to be pulled out of this occupation and taught their duty towards their country.

Mahatma Gandhi was very much against child marriage. He could not understand the reason behind giving away daughters in marriage before they could even comprehend the meaning of marriage. He wanted the girls to be married only after the age of sixteen and considered it a sin if married earlier than that. He wanted young girls to involve themselves in acts of service of society. They should receive proper education and get married only when they desired. He believed that upliftment of women was the task of women themselves.

He wanted every woman to understand that the beauty did not lie in the clothes or jewelry but in the purity of heart.

As a result of the All Parties Conference’s resolution, a committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru to draft the principles of a Constitution before the date 1-7-1928. The report of this committee was known as the Nehru Report. A point
from the text of the resolution read by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said that measures would be taken to remove disabilities of women and they would be invited and encouraged to take their due share in national building. In reference to this Mahatma Gandhi said that when women lend their support in the freedom struggle, they should be the queens of the household –

“Running a home efficiently, caring for and educating children property, steadily seeking to conceive and transmit new, proper, and higher ideals before they come under the influence of others of the opposite sex – all these things represent work of the highest, most important and most difficult kind that can be performed in this world”.

(Young India, 18-10-1928, vol. X, No.42, p.350)

Speaking at D.J. S. College Hall in Karachi in 1929, Mahatma Gandhi spoke against the Dowry system. He ridiculed men who wanted to travel to England at the expense of their father-in-law. He defined wife as the better half of man and spoke with contempt about men who reduced their wives’ status. He equated such men to men with paralysis. He also said that the suppression of women was responsible for the state of our society. He wanted to know the impact of Western education and said that if wives were not treated properly then it was a matter of great shamed.

He gave a four point programme to the people: use of mother tongue, wearing only Khadi, ameliorate the position of women and help the poor.

In his letter to Horace G. Alexander from Sabarmati Ashram in 1929, he made a very important point regarding the status of women in India as understood by the British. He was all praise for Kasturba Gandhi and highly appreciated her loyalty and duties as a wife. He clarified that Indian men, many if not all, revered their wives in the same way as in the west. At the same time he was critical of laws, husbands and parents who were heartless towards their daughters.

Mahatma Gandhi was of the same opinion as of Ruskin. He agreed that woman’s duty was twofold, her duty to her home and her duty to the state.

To sum up the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi on women and specially her education, as given above, I can only say that he believed in the morality of women and her role in creating a
polite society. He believed that the girls of today are the mothers of tomorrow. A young girl, with a tender heart, needs love and guidance and she should not become a victim of obsolete social rules and conventions. A girl child should be taken very seriously and her mental and physical development should be given utmost thought. She should be made to understand the basic facts of life so that she does not suffer in her later life. She should spend a carefree and happy childhood but here education including food, dress code, her conduct and conversation should be carefully monitored. Mahatma Gandhi dreamt of a race of ideal women who would be the pride of India and lead India to a bright future.