CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION

Education is a mirror in which the entire development process finds its reflection. It is education, which determines the level of prosperity, welfare and security of the people and national reconstruction. Education leads to individual creativity, improved participation in the socio-economic, cultural and political life of society and hence to a more effective contribution, to human development. Education is both a process as well as a product. As a process, education performs and functions the act of developing all qualities and abilities in someone else or in himself. As a product, education is the sum-total of what is received through learning, knowledge, skills, values and ideals, which are the outcomes of learning. Education is the only instrument by which a nation transforms itself from what it is into what it hopes to be. It is this social instrument through which we can guide its destiny and shape its future.

Education is widely accepted as a necessary tool for attainment of developed goals. The role of education in development is related with its three functions viz. literacy, information and skill inculcation. Firstly, people need education to acquire a broad spectrum of knowledge, attitudes, values and skills, which they can develop later on. Secondly, as a means of meeting other needs, education influences and is in turn influenced by access to the other basic needs like adequate nutrition, safe drinking water, health services and shelter. Third, as an activity that sustains and accelerates over all development as a consequence of trained manpower development to manage capital technology, services and administration in every sector of economy. Thus, we see that educational process as well as other aspects of society operates simultaneously. As education is intended to lead to qualitatively improved ways of behaviour, any change in individual behaviour in other dimensions of society can be result of education. In this sense, any qualitative improvement in education is indicative of development by itself.

In confronting the many challenging that the future holds in store, humankind sees in education an indispensable asset in its attempt to attain the ideals of peace,
freedom and social justice…..education is not a miracle cure or a magic formula opening the door to a world in which all ideals will be attained, but as one of the principal means available to foster a deeper and more harmonious forms of human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war (Learning: The Treasure Within, UNESCO, 1996).

The Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000) stated, “Education is a fundamental human right. It is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century, which are affected by rapid globalization.”

The emphasis on education as a source of enhancing prospects of opportunities and capacity of human beings has come to dominate the development paradigm. Development economists like Dreze and Sen (1995) stressed on the need for ‘participatory growth’. Education comes to be identified as one of the most ‘enabling change agents’, whether for an individual or society as whole. It has been cited as a source for developing a community and individuals because education leads to equity. ‘It provides knowledge, skills and values which enable people to add economic value to their labour beyond that necessary for mere subsistence’. It ultimately makes possible a ‘rational, sustainable and humanistic’ national development. Education is a powerful instrument of national development-social, economic and cultural. The highest priority should therefore be accorded to the development of a national system of education, which will provide adequate and equal opportunity to every child and help him to develop his personality to its fullest. Social justice and equity are by themselves a strong argument for providing basic education for all. It is an established fact that basic education improves the level of human well - being especially with regard to life expectancy, infant mortality, and nutritional status of children/etc. Studies have shown that universal basic education significantly contributes to economic growth.

Today, the world is going through rapid changes in all dimensions of development. In this era of rapid social transformation and technological revolution, education has become the cornerstone and main machinery of development in many
countries. In broad view, development aims at the holistic improvement of physical, social and spiritual attainment in human life leading to better quality of life and prosperity (Chaugh, 2004). Notable all the transformation and slogans taking place at the global level, such as human rights, fertility reduction, mortality reduction, liberty, democracy, welfare, and gender equality can be accomplished only by mass transformation through education. As education is a prerequisite for development. Educated and trained manpower is a major input for economic and social development. We cannot be prepared to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century without education. Education is the major element of change. The potential for prosperity of a country lies with the civilized citizens, energized by education, enlightenment, character, determination and dynamism.

In India, education has been accorded much importance since independence, as it has been perceived that educational development is necessary to ensure economic and over all development of the country. In order to develop human resources in a better way it is important that education is imparted to all sections of population in the country. This is the reason that plans were developed for the expansion of educational facilities across the country so that all people can have opportunity of participating in education irrespective of one’s caste, class, sex, religion or region. However, despite these provisions, it has been noticed that the spread of education is not uniform and there are disparities of all kinds in this field. These include gender disparities, regional disparities, social disparities and spatial disparities.

1.1 ELEMENTARY EDUCATION:

Elementary Education in India means making education available to children in the age group of 6-14 years in class I – VIII. It is considered as fundamental to all-round development of individual both at material and spiritual levels. It has an acculturating role, which refines and redefines sensitivities and perceptions and contributes to national cohesion. Elementary education is known to lead to better family health and slower population growth. It creates in the individual, the capacity to take advantage of technological change, leading to enhancement in productivity
and economic benefit. Researches have shown that increasing the average primary schooling of the labour force even by one year can increase output substantially (Primary Education in India, World Bank). Even at the macro level, social benefits of elementary education are immense. Educated parents send their children to school; elementary education leads to perpetuation of benefits from one generation to another.

Elementary education is one of the corner stones of development. As education is considered to be a booster agent for solving population problems, a catalyst for women empowerment and powerful tool for channeling a host of their socio-economically relevant issues in a positive direction, it is the prime aim of the governing bodies to provide basic education to the teeming millions.

The importance of elementary education has been very aptly described by J.P.Naik, an eminent educationist, an expert educational planner in these words, “The progress of primary education is one important index of the general, social and economic development of the country as a whole.”

Studies have clearly established that countries, which have made adequate provision for elementary education, are far ahead of those with inadequate provision. In this context it must be remembered that in developed countries, almost 99 percent of the population have access to elementary education.

A well planned and properly implemented system of elementary education plays a very significant role in laying down the proper foundation of child’s cultural, emotional, ethical, intellectual, moral, physical, social and spiritual development.

1.2 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY:

Education alone is a means of progress, development, change and stability. It takes experience from the past, knowledge from the present and tries to make the future beautiful. It sharpens the intellect, widens vision, helps in the wholesome and balanced development of man and above all, it leads to social, political and economic development of a nation. Education is not limited to contribution in terms of economic returns alone, but has much wider ramifications with implications for poverty reduction, improvement in income distribution, health and nutrition. The
progress, prosperity and development of democratic country mostly depend on the education of its masses. Hence, accessing quality education to all children, regardless of caste, creed, colour, sex, race or region is essential for democracy.

Elementary education in the age group of 6-14 in the Indian national perception is essential for all. A well-planned and properly implemented system of elementary education plays a very significant role in laying down the proper foundation of child’s cultural, emotional, ethical, intellectual, moral, physical, social and spiritual development. It has an acculturating role, which refines and redefines sensitivities and perceptions and contributes to national cohesion. Elementary education is known to lead to better family health and slower population growth. It creates in the individual, the capacity to take advantage of technological change, leading to enhancement in productivity and economic benefit. Studies have clearly established that countries, which have made adequate provision for elementary education, are far ahead of those with inadequate provision. In this context, it must be remembered that in developed countries, almost 99 percent of the population have access to elementary education.

The Indian Constitution, under Article 45, specifies the resolve of the State to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years, which has subsequently been the focus of various education policies and plans. In spite of such an emphasis, quality elementary education for all children has been a difficult goal to attain. The rapid modernization and globalization of India, adds to the pressure for universalization of education in a more forceful fashion.

There is no doubt that India has made considerable progress in the field of elementary education as far as the quantity is concerned but it has been lagging behind on qualitative front of education. Inspite of the overwhelming increase in Gross Enrolment Ratio, the learning outcomes are dwindling day by day. The emerging situation in the country in the field of elementary education shall become more and more critical not only for the teaching community of the elementary schools but also for the education planners and administrators of the country. If the situation is not tackled well in advance, it may damage the spirit and policy of our national goal that seeks universalization of elementary education on the one hand and quality
education on the other. Therefore, there is a dire need to look into the various problems confronting elementary education and to suggest remedial measures to tackle these problems. Only then, the long cherished dream of providing qualititative elementary education to all children can be realized.

Gandhiji, as a social philosopher, wanted education to be a powerful medium for social change and development. He was of the firm view that, without the change of individuals’ personality, social development is impossible. Gandhiji with his ‘Divya Chakshu’ excelled in understanding the Indian people, the Indian nation and Indian national heritage. The entire world accepts the clarity of his perception and his assessment of the shape of future trends so much that with the passage of time the relevance of his thought and ideas is gaining greater significance globally. With a scientific attitude of mind, he observed facts, sorted them before accepting them and after weighing them well, he drew his conclusion. In the field of education, he made different experiments for a quite long period and finally formulated a scheme of education named ‘Basic Education’, which was primarily concerned with the education of children at primary level. He minutely analyzed the various aspects related with the education of the children and find out how the right kind of education can be imparted to develop the children to the maximum possible extent.

Most of the studies conducted so far deals with the general educational philosophy of Gandhiji and some of them are comparative in nature. A very few studies have been conducted regarding the relevance of Gandhian philosophy in relation to current education problems. The present study was undertaken with the aim of studying the relevance of educational philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi in the context of problems of elementary education in contemporary India. A fresh re-look of his educational ideas would help in finding a novel solution to the problems faced in providing quality elementary education to all.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

‘RELEVANCE OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF MAHATMA GANDHI IN THE CONTEXT OF PROBLEMS OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA’
1.4 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE TERMS USED:

1.4.1 ELEMENTARY EDUCATION:

The Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Education, in its Annual Reports includes Class I to VIII under elementary education (Primary I to V and Upper Primary VI to VIII).

In the present study, Elementary Education implies education of children of Class I to VIII in the age group of 6-14 years of age.

1.4.2 CONTEMPORARY:

In the present study, the word contemporary India implies India in present time.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the general philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi.

2. To study the educational philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi with reference to aims of education, curriculum, role of teacher, methods of teaching, discipline, women education etc.

3. To find out the various problems related with elementary education.

4. To study the relevance of educational philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi in relation to the problems of elementary education in India.

1.6 METHODOLOGY:

The study was mainly philosophical in nature and it was based on documental analysis of the works on Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy of education. Content analysis was used in this study both as a tool and as technique to analyze the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. Content analysis in this study consists of documentary analysis and thematic analysis. For content analysis, primary and secondary sources were consulted. The primary sources included the autobiography, books written by Mahatma Gandhi, his published articles & papers, reports of
different education policies, commissions, committees, five year plans, policy documents and research studies related to elementary education and secondary sources comprised of literature on Mahatma Gandhi by other authors, his biographies, articles on Gandhiji, different books on problems of elementary education and other related material from websites and print media.

1.7 CHAPTERISATION:

The present study is divided into seven chapters.

CHAPTER-I: This chapter throws light on the introduction of the study. It tries to find out the importance of education, the role and significance of elementary education in current scenario. Further, it also includes justification of the study, its objectives and methodology adopted to carry out the study.

CHAPTER-II: This chapter is concerned with review of the related literature having studies conducted on Educational philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and different aspects of Elementary Education.

CHAPTER-III: This chapter throws light on the life history of Gandhiji, the various influences on him which shaped his philosophy and the cardinal principles of his general philosophy.

CHAPTER-IV: This chapter deals with the educational philosophy or ideas of Mahatma Gandhi regarding various aspects of education like meaning of education, aims of education, curriculum, role of teacher, discipline, methods of teaching, women education, adult education, early childhood care & education and community participation etc.

CHAPTER-V: This chapter throws light on various current problems related to Elementary Education in India.

CHAPTER-VI: This chapter highlights the relevance of educational ideas of Mahatma Gandhi with reference to the problems of elementary education in India in the present time.
CHAPTER-VII: This chapter deals with the main findings of the study, education implications and suggestions for the further studies.

SUMMARY

BIBLIOGRAPHY