CHAPTER-IV

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF MAHATMA GANDHI

Before dealing with the educational philosophy of Gandhiji, it will be pertinent to know the background of his educational philosophy. There were several factors that determined his educational philosophy: (1) His educational experiments at Phoenix Settlement, Tolstoy Farm, Sabarmati and Sevagram Ashrams; (2) His philosophy of life. Education being the dynamic side of philosophy, Gandhi’s philosophy of life determined his philosophy of education. He saw the realization and means of his ideal of life in education; (3) His dissatisfaction with the prevailing system of education. System of education introduced by the English did not suit the country; and (4) Another factor that determined his educational philosophy was the conviction that social, moral, political and economic regeneration of India depends on education. He wanted to create a social order in which the conditions should be such that each man should be able to realize the highest aims of his life. Gandhi believed that such a social order, based on truth and non-violence, would exclude every type of exploitation- social, political or even religious.

There is a growing tendency among some educationists to identify Gandhi’s educational philosophy which is popularly known as Basic Education or Wardha Scheme of Education. The Wardha Scheme of Education is no doubt, an integral part of Gandhiji’s educational philosophy, but it is a scheme, or a programme of education not synonyms with his educational philosophy, which aims at bringing about a revolution in the hearts and minds of men all over the world. His thoughts on education well cohere into a complete educational philosophy which is copingstone of his general philosophy.

4.1 CONCEPT OF EDUCATION:

Gandhiji followed a realistic approach to education, as he said; the aim of education should be to develop the full potentialities of every child at school, always in accordance with the general good of the community which he is a member. Gandhiji’s philosophy of education is a complete programme of social reconstruction
which appropriately addresses the needs of the individuals and society in the context of social problems of Indian society. He was of the opinion that education must touch every aspect of daily living and help every man and woman to be a better citizen of their village, and therefore a better citizen of India and the world.

What is education, according to Gandhiji? We have the answer in his own words. “By education”, says Gandhiji, “I mean an all round drawing out the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education.” The Literary training in a school lays more emphasis on the tools and subjects rather than on the personality of the educand which according to Gandhiji is the main concern of education. What does Gandhiji mean by “drawing out of the best?” This best is nothing but the inner voice of Truth. Education which draws out the best or Truth consists in development of the mind and body with a corresponding awakening of the soul. It is the function of education, therefore, to bring about a harmonious development of all the aspects of human personality, viz. body, heart, mind and spirit. “True education”, says Gandhiji “is that which draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of the children.” This concept of education is in conformity with the modern concept of education. It is universally admitted in the modern times that personality constitutes body, heart and mind, and it is the function of education, therefore, to bring about harmonious development of all these aspects of human personality. This explanation is perhaps based on inadequate understanding of human nature, because it neglected the most important aspect of human personality, namely the spirit. Any programme of education that puts exclusive emphasis on one of these four aspects of the human personality militates against the basic principles of education. Most of the ills of our educational system, from the dawn of civilization, can be traced to unique emphasis laid on one or more of these aspects and indifference to the others. A very great evil of the present day all over the world is the neglect of the spiritual aspects of human personality. Gandhiji revolts against this evil of the modern education and emphasizes all aspects of human personality. Thus, his concept of education is intended to remove the inadequacies of modern education and his definition of education seems to be more suitable than any other.
Gandhiji said, “Education does not mean knowledge of the alphabet. This type of knowledge is only a means to education. Education implies a child’s learning how to put his mind and all his senses to good use. Literary training by itself adds not an inch to one’s moral height and that character-building is independent of literary training. True education is something different. Man is made of three constituents, the body, mind and spirit, of them, spirit is the one permanent element in man. Hence, we can call that education which reveals the qualities of spirit.”

Although Gandhiji’s views on education are comprehensive in nature yet he didn’t ignored the importance of 3 R’s. He was of the view that although much good and useful work can be done without knowledge of the three R’s, it is my firm belief that we cannot always do without such knowledge. It develops and sharpens one’s intellect, and it increases our capacity of doing good. Again, the true knowledge of self is unattainable by the millions who lack such education. It is no exaggeration to say that a human being without education is not far removed from an animal.

In his views, education can also be understood in another sense; that is, whatever leads to a full or maximum development of all the three, the body, mind and spirit, may be called education. The knowledge that is being imparted today may possibly develop the mind a little, but certainly it does not develop the body and spirit. I have a doubt, about the development of the body too, because it does not mean that the mind has developed if we have filled it with a lot of information. We cannot therefore say that we have educated our mind. Real education consists not in packing the brain with so many facts and figures, not in passing examinations by reading numerous books but in developing character. He further said, “Real education has to draw out the best from the boys and girls to be educated. This can never be done by packing ill-assorted and unwanted information into the heads of the pupils. It becomes a dead weight crushing all originality in them and turning them into mere automata.”

Gandhiji remarks that real education should enable an individual with the power of discrimination between good and bad. He was of the opinion that an education which does not teach us to discriminate between good and bad, to assimilate the one and to eschew the other is a misnomer.
4.2 IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION:

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. This was the reason that he attached utmost importance on character building and change of values and attitudes through education. He was also convinced that no development is possible unless attempted through self-sufficiency. So, to him education is not only a means of change of personality but also a medium of self-sufficiency.

Gandhiji has visualized education as a means of awakening the nation’s conscience to injustice, violence and inequality in the social order. Gandhiji has been considered to be a revolutionary educational thinker of modern India. He wanted to establish a free and casteless society with no exploitation and racial discrimination. For this purpose, he devised a potential means and that was education. He viewed education as a potent instrument of social reconstruction.

Gandhiji wanted to make education an instrument of social change; by educating the masses, he wanted to establish a new society known as ‘Sarvodaya Samaj’- a classless, casteless society. This society will be based on the principles of Truth and Non-violence in individual and collective life. It really provides opportunity for character building, development of all round personality and prepares for effective and successful living through life problems and real life situations.

He said that if the children received the right kind of training and if the education was what it really should be, we could have great hopes of the future generation. The general situation at the present moment is so gloomy and the only ray of light in the gloom is through the children who, profiting from our mistakes and bitterness and jealousy, can leave the world a better place for being in it. Acc. to him, “Education is just a means. If it is not accompanied by truthfulness, firmness, patience and other virtues, it remains sterile, and sometimes does harm instead of good. The object of education is not to be able to earn money, but to improve oneself and to serve the country. If this object is not realized, it must be taken that the money spent on education has been wasted.”
Gandhiji says that we should readily realize how a country that invests in education with a noble purpose becomes prosperous. India’s star will shine bright when Indian children get such education. Parents should provide for excellent education, teachers should discharge their responsibility and pupils should recognize that mere literacy is not education.

Gandhiji valued social reform and development more than mere political growth and advancement. Acc. to him in an evil society, no concept of any good rule is possible. As such, he advocated social revolution and reform to go hand in hand with any political revolution. In this, the main role to be played was by education. The main aim of education was to purify the heart and mind of all people and create a society free from all exploitation and aggression. He was of the view that without the right kind of education, the community will not only remain backward, but become increasingly so. It is also necessary to learn how to put the knowledge acquired to proper use. In itself knowledge is only a means. It can be employed for good, for making money, and in the service of public causes. Knowledge is justified only when it is put to good use and employed in the public cause. Otherwise, as we pointed out once earlier and as every one will ready admit, it is like poison.

4.3 AIMS OF EDUCATION ACCORDING TO GANDHIJI:

Gandhiji’s aims of education are implied in the meaning of education, and are correlative to his ideal of life. The more we study Gandhiji’s addresses and writings, the more strongly we do feel that he has given two sets of aims- viz. the immediate and the ultimate. Among the immediate aims, we may mention the bread and butter aim, the cultural aim, the aim of harmonious development of personality, the moral or character development aim, individual and social aim and the aim of liberating the educand.

4.3.1 THE BREAD AND BUTTER AIM:

The exponent of this aim maintains that the child should be able to earn his living after finishing his education. What is the use of education, they say, if it does not help to provide the basic economic needs and unless we are able to satisfy them,
all talks about higher ideals of life fall on deaf ears? Gandhiji advocated this among other aims of education. It was in this context that he arrived at his theory of ‘self-sufficient’. He remarks, “This education ought to be for them a kind of insurance against unemployment”. Elaborating the same idea, he further says, “The child at the age of 14, this is, after finishing a seven-year course, should be discharged as an earning unit. Even, now the poor people’s children automatically lead a helping hand to their parent’s the feeling at the back of their minds being what shall my parents eat and what shall they give me to eat, if I do not also work with them? That is an education itself. Even so the state takes charge of the child at seven and returns it to the family as an earning unit. You impart education and simultaneously, cut at the root of unemployment”. It may be remembered, however, that Gandhiji never wants the child to be a little wage-earner, a boy-man. Really speaking, he wants him to learn while he earns and to earn while he learns. His labour is to be a part of his learning and is to fit him for the kind of society in which he would be expected to live. This aim of education may seem to be base and materialistic to some people, but it can never be denied that our primary needs must be satisfied, if we are to make any progress, material, moral, or intellectual. It goes to the credit of Gandhiji that he arrives at his theory of self-sufficiency in education independently of any authoritative book on education. He was of the view that by giving our students a course of self-supporting primary education we can make them true representatives of our culture, our civilization, of the true genius of our nation.

4.3.2 THE CULTURAL AIM:

As against the ‘bread and butter aim of education’ there is the cultural aim, according to which knowledge is worth having apart from any material use that it has for its possessor. Knowledge of this kind is the goal of liberal education. The advocates of the cultural aim of education tend to think that, because a person had been engaged in intellectual work, his mind is trained to behave better ever afterwards in all new situations. It should, however, be borne in mind that knowledge is not the same thing as culture.

Gandhiji does not neglect cultural aim of education. Being practical to the core, he would not enter into an academic discussion of culture. His conception of
culture is typically Gandhian, and he would not care what others think of it. Acc. to him, ‘Culture’ means refinement of feelings and ‘Education’ means knowledge of literature. Education is a means and culture is the end. He further says, culture refines personality. Mere acquisition of knowledge is not enough for a man. He should have the quality of mind, which may be reflected in his daily conduct. Gandhiji said, “I attach more importance to cultural factor of education than its literacy factor. Culture is primary and basic thing…… It should show itself in the smallest detail of your conduct and personal behaviour, how you sit, how you walk, how you dress, etc., so that anybody might be able to see at a glance that you are the products of this institution. Inner culture must be reflected in your speech, the way in which you treat visitors and guests, and behave towards one another and your teachers and elders”.

Gandhiji admits that culture is not the product of intellectual work, but the quality of the soul, permeating all aspects of human behaviour. It is, therefore, an important function of education that children must be taught to have winsome conduct and the career.

4.3.3 THE AIM OF HARMONIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONALITY:

The harmonious development of personality or perfection of nature is another aim that Gandhiji advocates. Acc. to this view, our various innate and acquired powers should be so trained as to bring about a harmonious development of all those powers. This aim accords well with Gandhiji’s concept of education- “an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man- body, mind and spirit”. Gandhiji put more emphasis on 3 H’s (hand, heart and head) than on 3R’s (reading, writing and arithmetic). Acc. to him, the development of the mind and body must go hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul in order to save it (education) from being reduced to a mere lopsided affair. It is only a complete development that can give us a whole man.

In the light of this aim, we can easily see how the present education is a lopsided affair. It consists mainly in the training of the mind. The training of the soul as well as the heart is necessary, because it can lead to the refinement of emotions and impulses; it can awaken our deepest feelings of love, sympathy and fellowship- the
qualities that constitute Ahimsa. Gandhiji claims that it is the harmoniously developed person that adjusts to this life and environment. Of course, when Gandhiji was referring to the education of ‘Heart’, it meant education for the refinement of feelings or emotions, which emanate in the thalamus region of human brain and have nothing to do with the physiological heart as such.

4.3.4 THE MORAL OR CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AIM:

Gandhiji also emphasizes the moral aim in the sense of character formation or character development. He regards the building of character as the chief aim of education. He makes this the central purpose of education, and everything else is subordinate to this one purpose. By character, Gandhiji does not mean merely a collection of certain skills, habits and principles of conduct. He regards character as the expression of ‘the whole personality including its ethical and spiritual aspect’.

Gandhiji is of the opinion that an individual lives his own life, the life of the society or the nation he belongs to as well as the life of Universal Man. Therefore, he must play his role in this drama of life well. He should conserve within himself the wisdom of the past, making full use of his national heritage. He should try to solve the problems that beset humanity. He must subordinate his own interests to the greater interests of society. Instead of working for personal gain, he must cooperate and collaborate with his fellow beings for bringing about a new social order. If he can do this, he is really a man of character.

To the question, “What is your goal of education when India obtains freedom?” Gandhiji promptly replied, “Character building. I would try to develop courage, strength, virtue, the ability to forget oneself in working towards great aims. This is more important than literacy. Academic learning is only a means to this greater end.” This character is to be built up in terms of non-violence and universal love according to him.

Gandhiji said, “I have been reading Emerson, Ruskin and Mazzini. I have also been reading the Upanishads. All confirm the view that education does not mean knowledge of letters but it means character building, it means knowledge of duty.
True education lies in serving others, to do well to others and serve them without any sense of egoism-this is real education.” He further remarked, “Character-building has the first place in it and that is primary education. A building erected on that foundation will last. Education is just a means. If it is not accomplished by truthfulness, firmness, patience and other virtues, it remains sterile, and sometimes does harm instead of good. The object of education is not able to earn money, but to improve oneself and to serve the country. If this object is not realized, it must be taken that the money spent on education has been wasted.”

In his opinion, “there is no true education which does not tend to produce character, and there is no true religion which does not determine character. Education should contemplate the whole life. Mere memorizing and book-learning is not education. I have no faith in the so-called systems of education which produce men of learning without the backbone of character.” He further remarked, “All your scholarship, all your study of Shakespeare and Wordsworth would be in vain if at the same time you do not build your character, and attain mastery over your thoughts and actions. Our aim is not just to impart education to children or teach them discipline, but to build character in them. Education, discipline, etc., are means to that end.” Thus to him, knowledge is the means and character building is the end. In brief, formation of character should have priority over knowledge of the alphabet.

4.3.5 THE AIM OF LIBERATING THE EDUCAND:

Besides character building, Gandhiji regards the aim of liberating educand as one of the most important aims of education. To a student, who seriously asked what he was to do after finishing his studies, Gandhiji replied, “The ancient aphorism, ‘Education is that which liberates’, is as true today as it was before. Education here does not mean mere spiritual knowledge nor does liberation signify liberation after death. Knowledge includes all training that is useful for service of mankind and liberation means freedom from all manner of servitude even in the present life.” Thus according to this aim, education should liberate the individual learner.
4.3.6 ULTIMATE AIM OF EDUCATION:

The realization of God or Truth, i.e., self-realization is the ultimate aim of education according to Gandhiji. All other aims are subordinate to this supreme aim of life and education. He regards self-realization as the Summum Bonum of life and education. This is the ultimate goal after which human beings out to strive.

Gandhiji is of the view that true education should result not in the material power, but in spiritual force. That is why, he lays great stress on religious education, which he thinks, should teach the children fundamental virtues of truth, love, justice and non-violence. Gandhiji believes that a man cannot achieve his ultimate goal of life, if his life is without religion. God, according to Gandhiji, could be achieved not by retiring into jungles, but by living in a society and serving it. He prefers to call the students as searchers after God. The means to achieve the knowledge of God are self-control, abstinence and character, according to Gandhiji.

4.3.7 INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL AIMS:

Gandhiji has no doubt in his mind that individuality should be preserved and developed if we are to achieve any progress, either material or spiritual. At the same time, Gandhiji believes in the good of the state whose service and interests should be the aim of its individual citizens. Service, he thinks, is an essential part of education.

Gandhiji thus, strikes a balance between the ideals of social service and individual development. He says, “I value individual freedom, but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to his present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirement of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. We have learnt to strike a balance between individual freedom and social restraint”.

Gandhiji believes that individual development and social development are, thus, inter-dependent. The individual can reach his highest development in and through a spiritual society. Any over-emphasis on the one at the expense of the other destroys the balance that a true and lasting civilization needs. Gandhiji succeeds in
achieving the proper synthesis between individual and society in his philosophy of life and education.

The essence of Gandhiji’s philosophy is, therefore, that individuality develops only in a social atmosphere where it can feed on common interests and common activities. He insists that individuality shall have free scope, within the common life, to grow in its own way, and that it shall not be warped from its ideal bent by forces “heavy as frost and deep almost as life”. He, therefore, wishes that we should transform our schools into communities where individuality is not damped down, but developed through social contacts and opportunities of service.

4.4 CURRICULUM ACCORDING TO MAHATMA GANDHI:

Gandhiji was dissatisfied with what was taught to students in the name of education. He says, “The curriculum is bookish, theoretical and overcrowded, without providing rich and significant contents. It is dominated too much by examination and it should include vocational and technical subjects which are quite necessary for making student self-sufficient in later course of life.”

In order to acquire the essential modicum of social and civic training Gandhiji propounds a syllabus which should enable the child to adjust himself intelligently and actively to his physical and social environment and to craft work which is their natural meeting point since it utilizes the resources of the former(physical) for the purpose of the latter(social). His attempt, therefore, is to plan an activity curriculum, which should transform the schools into places of work, experimentation and discovery. In his curriculum, he includes the following subjects:

a) Basic Craft- Gandhiji says that the craft or productive work chosen should be rich in educative possibilities. Agriculture; spinning and weaving; and cardboard-work, wood-work and metalwork are three suitable basic crafts according to Gandhiji. He holds that the contents of the general curriculum could be correlated with or conveyed through any of these crafts.

b) Mother-tongue
c) Mathematics- Gandhiji wants to develop in the pupils the capacity to solve speedily the ordinary numerical and geometrical problems arising in connection with their craft and their home and community life. Pupils are also expected to gain knowledge of business practice and bookkeeping. Gandhiji is of the opinion that “the teaching of mathematics is not to be confined merely to the facts and operations of number. It should be closely coordinate with life situations arising out of the basic handicap and out of the great variety of actual problems in the life of the school and community. Measurement of quantities and values in these connections would supply ample opportunity for the development of the reasoning capacities of the pupils”. Gandhiji also wishes that children should learn their four simple rules by actually working out the problems, which arise in their craftwork and gardening. They should deal with figures, which may throw light on the economic and social facts of their village or town or country. This practical measuring, fieldwork, and calculation of expenditure and of rural indebtedness would make the learning of mathematics an active process. This would enable the learner to interpret and understand the social environment.

d) Social Studies- Gandhiji has suggested that history, geography, civics and current events should be included in the course in social studies. He is of the view that it attempts to adjust the child to his environment both in place, which is the function of geography, and in time, which is the function of history. Civics aims at the giving of intellectual understanding of the present day problems and at developing the right social and intellectual habits.

e) General Science- Gandhiji has advocated the inclusion of nature study, zoology, physiology, hygiene, physical culture, chemistry and astronomy. He is also in favour of introducing the pupils to the more important incidents in the lives of the great scientists whose sacrifices in the cause of truth make a powerful appeal to the growing mind. Gandhiji further clarifies that the syllabus of studies will be the same for boys and girls up to the fifth grade of the school. In the fourth and fifth grade the syllabus in general science should be so modified as to include domestic science for girls. In the sixth and seventh grade the girls will be allowed to take and advanced course in domestic science in place of the basic craft.
f) Drawing- Acc. to Gandhiji, the work in drawing during the first four years is to be correlated chiefly with work in reading and pictorial representation in nature study and the craft. During the last three years emphasis may be laid on design and decoration and mechanical drawing. Gandhiji believes that such type of studies will give the pupils knowledge of beauty in nature and art.

g) Music- Gandhiji holds that in all classes there should be a course of choral singing set to standard tunes and times. Acc. to him, the songs are to be carefully selected and should include national songs, folk songs, festive songs, devotional songs, seasonal songs and a few songs in simple, quick rhythm suitable for group singing in connection with their craftwork and physical training.

4.5 METHODS OF TEACHING ACCORDING TO GANDHIJI:

In the Gandhian education system, methods of teaching have certain unique features and are quite relevant and suitable to the aims of Gandhian philosophy of education. Gandhiji criticizes the traditional educational for its literary and theoretical nature. He admits that it cannot train the whole man. There is no close relation between the teacher and the taught and methods of teaching followed are generally passive and verbal. Gandhiji believes that in order to train the whole man- his body, mind and spirit, education should be craft-centred. A system of education in which a craft is the centre and can lead to the highest development of the whole man. Gandhiji opines that the craft chosen should be manual and productive. It is “to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today, but scientifically, i.e., the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process”. It is to be a starting point of the other subjects as well- “a meeting point of both physical and social environment represented by such subjects as General Science, Social Studies and creative and expressional arts”.

Gandhiji suggests that when teaching the craft and through craft other subjects; stress should be laid on the principle of cooperative activity, planning, accuracy, initiative and individual responsibility in learning. He attaches a spiritual significance to the craft centred method. Acc. to Gandhiji, the notion of education through handicraft arises from the contemplation of Truth and Love permeating life’s
activities. True education should be easily accessible to all and should be of use to every villager in his daily life.

Gandhiji admits that craft-centred education lays emphasis on such important principles of teaching as provision of useful experiences and activity as well as correlation of subjects. All this helps to develop an all-round personality in which knowledge, action and feeling are evenly balanced. The craft is again in consonance with Gandhiji’s ideal of non-violence. It will save people from exploitation, selfishness and usurpation- all expression of violence. The craft-centred education will bring a new age from which class and communal hatred is eliminated and exploitation is eschewed.

Gandhiji is of the view that the craft in the school should be the craft of locality as far as possible. Only then, some positive relationship between education and life could be formed. It is thus, a method which not only stresses the importance of students’ activity, experimentation, discovery and discussion rather than passive reception and absorption of information, but one which establishes an intimate relationship of the school with life and reality.

Gandhiji also attaches great educational importance to music. He admits that the modulation of the voice is as necessary as the training of the hand in order to draw the best out of the boys and girls and create in them a real interest in their education. Gandhiji holds that song satisfies an imperative need in child’s nature and it is necessary that we should recognize this natural impulse and take advantage of it in educating the child.

Gandhiji advocates group singing as an instrument of disciplining our minds. He suggests that children should first be taught the art of drawing before learning how to write. It is interesting to observe that prominent educationists in the west have expressed similar views. Acc. to Gandhiji, drawing is really the reading and writing of form and colour. In an infant school, drawing should form a part of practically every subject. It should precede and lead up to the teaching of writing.
He was of the view that that the methods of teaching in schools should aim not merely at imparting of knowledge in an efficient manner, but also at inculcating desirable values and proper attitudes and habits of work in the students. The emphasis in teaching should shift from verbalism and memorization to learning through purposeful, concrete and realistic situation and, for this purpose, the principle of ‘Activity’ and ‘Project Method’ should be assimilated in school practice. Students should be given adequate opportunity to work in groups and to carry out group projects so as to develop in them the qualities necessary for group life and cooperative work. The means of doing so, he said, “are work, observation, experience, experiment, service and love. Without these, learning through books acts as a hindrance to the development of the spiritual and rational powers of the student and also impairs his physique.” Gandhiji advocated that stress should be laid on the principle of co-operative activity, planning, accuracy, initiative and individual responsibility in learning. Gandhiji remarks, “The subjects can be made interesting by adopting the technique of questions and answers by the teacher and due to this power of understanding becomes firm.” He was of the opinion that nothing should be taught to a child by force and he should be interested in everything taught to him. Education should appear to the child like play and play should be an essential part of education.

Regarding the innovation of new teaching methods Gandhiji said, “My ideas about education are very exacting. If we want to pour our souls into the pupils, we should constantly exercise our mind on how to teach them. We should not get angry with them. Passing on to them in the best possible language from day to day whatever we wish to give them, will take up much of our time. Moreover, we must for the present think of teaching methods as well. Every thing will have to be taught in a new way.”

“What we need is educationists with originality, fired with true zeal, who will think out from day to day what they are going to teach their pupils. The teacher cannot get this knowledge through musty volumes. He has to use his own faculties of observation and thinking and impart his knowledge to the children through his lips, with the help of a craft. This means a revolution in the method of teaching, a revolution in the teacher’s outlook.” Regarding the development of sense of
belongingness he said, “You can teach best by identifying yourself with your students. In order to do so, the teacher must prepare himself fully in the subject he has to teach.”

4.6 THE ROLE OF TEACHER ACCORDING TO GANDHIJI:

Gandhiji gave special importance to role of teachers in his scheme of education. He asserted that only right type of teachers can help in achieving the objectives of education. He should possess knowledge, skill, enthusiasm, patriotism, strong character and special training. He should be friend, philosopher and guide and should be inspired with the social attitudes and ideals of Ahimsa and Truth. He should be well equipped and fully alive to the objectives of life and education. He must practice these virtues himself and should be able to establish a heart to heart contact with the students. He has to fashion the hearts of the students rather than their brains.

Gandhiji believed that the task of the teacher is to present the most congenial environment for the fulfillment of the inner potentialities of the child. A good teacher must have some capacity to assume leadership and some vision so that he may be able to assess the impact of education on the child’s total personality. The teacher is the key person who can inculcate all the required values in small children in spite of many odds. This task would become easier if the teacher through his personality, character and actions sets an example before his students.

In the opinion of Gandhi, the true textbook for the pupils is his teacher and his work lies more outside than inside the lecture room. About Ideal Teacher, Gandhi said that a teacher has to be both father and mother to his pupils. A teacher who establishes rapport with the taught, becomes one with them, learns more from them than he teaches them. In this way, a true teacher regards himself as a student of his students. He said that for becoming a real teacher, the hearts of the pupils should be touched, their joys and sorrows be shared and they must be helped to solve their own problems.

Acc. to Gandhi, for inculcating values among children the teachers have to be careful about their own conduct and behaviour. Purity of personal life is the one
indispensable condition for building a sound education. If they impart all the
knowledge in the world to their students but inculcate not truth and purity among
them, they will have betrayed them and instead of raising them set them on the
downward road to perdition. In the opinion of Gandhiji, the training of the spirit was
possible only through the exercise of the spirit and the exercise of the spirit entirely
depended on the life and character of the teacher.

In his scheme of education, Gandhiji stressed highly on the qualitative aspects
of teachers. He assigned a unique and significant role to the teacher in the all round
development of the students. Acc. to him, teachers should be inspired by a spirit of
service and it is a despicable thing to take any Tom, Dick or Harry as a teacher in
primary stage. All teachers should be men of character. On the issue of need of
quality teachers he said, “We must procure the best teacher for our children whatever
it may cost.” Gandhiji was also very pertinent on the issue of sufficient number of
teachers in schools. In his view, the pupil-teacher ratio should not exceed more than
thirty in any case if we want to create a conducive teaching-learning environment.

In the matter of religious instructions, no good work is ever done except by the
teacher living the religion himself according to Gandhiji. “I have found”, Gandhiji
says, “that pupils imbibe more from the teachers’ own lives than they do from the
books they read to them, or the lectures they deliver to them with their lips. I have
discovered to my great joy that boys and girls have unconsciously a faculty of
penetration whereby they read the thoughts of their teachers. Woe to the teacher who
teaches one thing with his lips, and carries another in his breast”. Gandhiji, therefore,
asks teachers to cultivate their hearts and establish with the students a heart-contact.
He wants teachers to fashion the students’ hearts rather than their brains, and so, calls
for intimate contact, all the time, both inside and outside the school, between the
educator and educand.

He was of the opinion that the teacher’s is a high office and it enables him to
exercise great influence upon the boys and girls in his charge. They regard what he
says as gospel truth.
Gandhiji further explained about the necessity of good teachers, “The training of the spirit was possible only through the exercise of the spirit. And the exercise of the spirit entirely depended on the life and character of the teacher. The teacher had always to be mindful of his p’s and q’s, whether he was in the midst of his boys or not.”

He was of the view, “Purity of personal life is the one indispensable condition for building a sound education.” “If they impart all the knowledge in the world to their students but inculcate not truth and purity among them, they will have betrayed them and instead of raising them set them on the downward road to perdition.” “It is possible for a teacher situated miles away to affect the spirit of the pupils by his way of living. About Ideal Teacher, Gandhiji said that a teacher has to be both father and mother to his pupils. He stated, “We must procure the best teacher for our children whatever it may cost.”

Gandhiji said, “A teacher who establishes rapport with the taught, becomes one with them, learns more from them than he teaches them. Whenever I talk with someone, I learn from him. I take from him more than I give him. In this way, a true teacher regards himself as a student of his students.”

4.7 GANDHIJI’S VIEWS ON EVALUATION:

Evaluation is goal directed, and educational outcomes are judged in terms of goal attainment. Every educational programme should aim for the all round development of the personality of the child. Therefore, the learning experiences provided in the school should contribute towards the achievement of the desired goals. The scope of evaluation in schools extends to almost all the areas of learners’ personality development. It should include both scholastic and co-scholastic areas, i.e. it should be comprehensive in nature. This is in line with the goals of education. Evaluation is continuous and reveals the strengths and weaknesses of learners more frequently, so that the learners have better opportunity to understand and improve themselves. It also provides feedback to the teachers for modifying their teaching strategies.
Acc. to Gandhiji, no external examination needs to be held. At the end of the basic school course, a school leaving certificate based on internal examination should be given. Promotion from one class to another should be determined by the schools on the basis of internal examinations. He was of the view that the learners should be continuously assessed by taking in to consideration his or her performance in different scholastic and non-scholastic areas.

4.8 GANDHIJI’S VIEWS ON FREEDOM AND DISCIPLINE:

Gandhiji believes that discipline is an important aspect of a sound system of education. Discipline is a quality which comes from within one’s self leading to the regulation of one’s intellectual, moral and social behaviour. Regarding the importance of discipline he says, “If boys and girls do not learn discipline in their school days, money and time spent on their education is a natural loss.”

Gandhiji was in favour of self-discipline and voluntary discipline. Self-discipline arises from a pure life of self-restraint, fearlessness, usefulness and self-sacrifice. It may be achieved through non-violent conduct of life. It is synthesis of freedom and external control. Gandhiji believed that highest form of discipline comes through self-control and not by being free to follow stray impulses. He advocated self-discipline and not on an imposed discipline through punishment and rod. He was strictly opposed to inflicting corporal punishment for maintaining discipline in students. He was of the view that children are innocent, loving and benevolent by nature. They are innocent even in their mischief. In his opinion, the power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment. In order to promote discipline personal contact between the teacher and pupil should be strengthened. The teacher must prepare the environment in which the child may best blossom and make himself most fruitful. Only then the incidences of indiscipline may be avoided.

Acc. to him, the worst thing that can happen to boys in a school is to have to render blind obedience to everything that the teacher says. The pupils must have initiative and must cease to be mere imitators. They must learn to think and act for themselves and yet be thoroughly obedient and disciplined. The highest form of
freedom carries with it the greatest measure of discipline and humility. Freedom that comes from discipline and humility cannot be denied. He agrees that the students should not give blind obedience to whatever is taught or done by the educator. In fact, he wants students to resist teachers’ orders if they are not moral. Gandhiji suggests that students must be guaranteed the greatest freedom of opinion and speech. He is convinced that teachers can only point out to their pupils what they consider is the best way. Having done so, they have no right to curb their pupils’ thoughts and feelings. Gandhiji admits that discipline has nothing to do with artificial restraint upon the students’ all-round growth.

Gandhiji emphatically says, “I value individual freedom, but you must not forget man is essentially a social being. We have learnt to strike a balance between individual freedom and social restraint. Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of well-being of the whole society enriches both the individual and the society of which one is a member.” By synthesizing individual and social discipline, he wants to prepare the students to become successful and responsible future citizens of the country.

The discipline to which he would subject the student is purely voluntary discipline, arising out of love and respect for the teacher and his views. Gandhiji says, “All things in the universe including the sun, the moon and the stars, obey certain laws, with the restraining influences of these laws, the world would not go for a single moment. You, whose mission in life is service of your fellow-men, will go to pieces if you do not impose on yourself some sort of discipline……It is discipline and restraint that separate us from the brute. If we will be men walking with our heads erect, and not walking on all fours, let us understand and put ourselves under voluntary discipline and restraint”. Acc. to Gandhian philosophy, of course, voluntary submission to authority is one thing and forced obedience quite another. The first is reminiscent of the moral influence of the saint and the expert, the second of the brute authority of the policeman. While the first is liberating, the second is suffocating, choking, and killing the soul of man.
4.9 GANDHIJI’S VIEWS ON WOMEN EDUCATION:

To Gandhiji, woman is not merely the better half of man, but he acclaimed her as “the mother, maker and silent leader of man”, and regarded her as the noblest creation of God. He desired the utmost freedom for women. Gandhiji inspired the Indian women with a zeal for achieving heroic deeds, not with the help of sword, but through soul force and character. He was fully alive to the fact that independence of India would have no meaning so long as her women were enslaved within bonds created by ignorance, superstition and evil social customs. Without their emancipation from these bonds, India would not be able to achieve any progress, moral, material or spiritual. He, therefore, came to the conclusion that education was the most potent instrument for the regeneration of women.

Gandhiji felt strongly for the emancipation of women. He said, “My greatest hope is in women. They want a helping hand to lift them out of the hell in which they have been kept.” He was of the opinion that so long as Indian women do not get proper education, the condition of India is not likely to improve. Education should be given to them according to their particular aptitudes and life demands. Gandhiji believed that women by means of their equipment and nature are best fitted to take up the work of educating small children. He was of the view that the question of the education of children cannot be solved unless efforts are made simultaneously to solve the women’s education. And I have no hesitation in saying that as long as we do not have real mother teachers who can successfully impart true education to our children they will remain uneducated even though they may be going to schools. It is the belief of Gandhiji that education of little boys and girls could be more effectively handled by women than by men and by mother than by maidens. To fulfill this, a mother should have special knowledge of the management of the home, care of children, their education, etc.

Gandhiji was of the view that India is very backward in the education of women is a fact that cannot be denied. He was strongly of the opinion that women should have the same facilities as men and even special facilities where necessary. Acc. to him, “Man should learn to give place to woman. A country or community in which women are not honoured cannot be considered as civilized.” Regarding the
importance of women education Gandhiji quotes views of Yusuf Ali’s book which are worth noting. He says that so long as Indian women do not get proper education, the condition of India is not likely to improve. Woman is known as the better half of man. If a half of one’s body ceases to function, we call it paralysis and the person becomes unfit for any activity. Thus, if women in India are not employed as they should be, it can be said that the entire country suffers from paralysis. All parents should think of this in regard to their daughters, and all Indians should do likewise with regard to the womenfolk of India.

On the question of co-education, he was of the view that young boys and girls should have co-education till they are eight years of age. It is desirable that boys and girls should have co-education during the second stage (age 9 to 16) in the child’s education. Further, he was of the view that if the parents demand for separate schools for girls then efforts should be made by state governments to open separate schools for girls.

Although Gandhiji himself was married to Kasturba at an early age of 13 but later in his life, he was not in favour of child marriages and made a campaign against them on the ground that they weakened the race. He was of the opinion that the custom of child marriage is a moral as well as a physical evil. For it undermines our morals and induces physical degeneration. Women cannot make any progress so long as there are child marriages.

4.10 GANDHIJI'S VIEWS ON ADULT EDUCATION:

Gandhiji was a great champion for the cause of adult education in India. He taught his wife, the inmates of his ashrams in South Africa and India. He knew that illiteracy constitutes a heavy drag on freedom and progress and limits the mental horizon not merely of people but also their posterity. He said, “I would have adult education, not as we ordinarily understand it, but the education of parents so that they can undertake adequately the moulding of their children.” He clearly saw that it was by an awakening and re-orientation of the adult mind that society could be organized materially, morally and spiritually. In his view, “mass illiteracy is India’s sin and shame and must be liquidated. He was of the opinion that the literacy campaign must
not begin and end with knowledge of the alphabet. It must go hand in hand with the spread of useful knowledge. The dry knowledge of the three R’s is not even now, it can never be, a permanent part of the villagers’ life. They must have knowledge given to them, which they must use daily. It must not be thrust upon them and they should have the appetite for it. What they have today is something they neither want nor appreciate. Give the villagers village arithmetic, village geography, village history, and the literary knowledge that they must use daily, i.e. reading and writing letters, etc. They will treasure such knowledge and pass on to the other stages. They have no use for books which give them nothing of daily use.”

As to adult education, Gandhiji observed that it had become clear to him that the scope of basic education had to be extended. It should include the education of everybody at every stage of life. Acc. to him, “The age of Basic Education includes the education of the whole of society beginning with the children and going up to adults and old men and women. It has to be imparted through the practice of handicrafts, village sanitation and medical relief, preventive and curative.” Regarding the crucial role of students in adult education, he advised them to spend their vacations in the service of village people by conducting classes for them and teaching them rules of sanitation and healthy living.

Gandhiji advocated the education of the parents of children and other adults as the first concern of the nation. He regarded the education of the adult as a necessary prelude to the growth of the primary education for new generation. Therefore, a massive programme for removing adult illiteracy should be taken and education of the parents is to be looked after for the success of the programme. He said, “In my opinion what we have reason to deplore and be ashamed of is not so much illiteracy as ignorance. Therefore, adult education, too, should have an intensive programme of driving out ignorance through carefully selected teachers with an equally carefully selected syllabus according to which they would educate the adult villagers’ mind. This is not to say that I would not give them knowledge of the alphabet. I value it too much to despise or even belittle its merit as a vehicle of education.”
4.11 GANDHIJI'S VIEWS REGARDING MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION:

Gandhiji is a great champion of mother tongue. He stressed that mother tongue should be the medium of instruction. This is the most natural thing, as it is being the first medium of education at home. It enlarges the capacity to understand and to express effectively and to read and write correctly. It develops clarity of thinking and receptivity to new ideas. Gandhiji was of the view that true national education should be imparted through the language of each province. He believes that no real education is possible through a foreign medium. The foreign language causes brain fog, stifles all originality, puts undue strain on the nerves of our children and makes them only crammers. On the other hand, the mother tongue will help the child to think quickly, to express easily, develops originality, it enables us to be creative, and overall it lays the solid foundation of our many-sided development. It will also introduce the child to the rich heritage of his ancient culture. Moreover, it is a means of introducing the child to the rich heritage of his people’s ideas, emotions and aspirations and can therefore be made a valuable means of social education whilst also instilling right ethical and moral values. Also it is a natural outlet for the expression of the child’s aesthetic sense and appreciation and if the proper approach is adopted, the study of literature becomes a source of joy and creative appreciation.

4.12 GANDHIJI ON ROLE OF PARENTS AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION:

Gandhiji’s views on role of parents and community participation in the education of the children are of unique importance, in order to bring both of them close to each other to secure quality education for children. Gandhiji was of the opinion that the community has to render an important role in the education of children. According to him, “Important radical changes cannot be brought about by the rulers. It is for the leaders of the people to undertake such pioneering ventures. If we think that the Government alone should do these things, our object may not be achieved for a long while. It is difficult task to put our education on a sound foundation and it calls for Herculean effort. We will have to devote to it our all- the body, the mind, and the soul, and but not least, money!” There should be a close contact and effective collaboration between school and community. Regarding the
role of parents in child’s education, Gandhiji said, “The education of children is primarily a duty to be discharged by the parents Therefore, the creation of a vital educational atmosphere is more important than the foundation of innumerable schools. When once this atmosphere has been established on a firm footing, the schools will come in due course. There is no school equal to decent home and no teachers equal to honest virtuous parents The real property that a parent can transmit to all equally is his or her character and educational facilities.”

4.13 GANDHIJI’S VIEWS ON PHYSICAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES:

Although Gandhiji was of the view that big and expensive buildings are not necessary for educational institutions however he was quite aware about the basic necessities which make the school environment conducive for learning. Acc. to Gandhiji, the school should be located at a place where students would get clean drinking water, pure air and a peaceful atmosphere. The surroundings must be perfectly healthy. Regarding school building, he said that open spaces should be provided for teaching and physical training in form of playgrounds. The optimum number of boys to be admitted to any class should be 30 and the maximum should not in any case exceed 40, the optimum number in the whole school should be 500 while the maximum should not exceed 750. Further, regarding quality education he was of the view that there should be proper provision of sufficient number of teachers who are of high moral character, well trained, well equipped and dedicated to the teaching profession

4.14 GANDHIJI ON FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION:

Regarding free and compulsory education, he was of view that this minimum universal education was indispensable to the successful working of democracy in the country. In his opinion, we can postpone the question of higher education for sometime; but the problem of primary education cannot be postponed even for a minute. In his opinion, education is a birth right of every person and therefore, it should be provided to all boys and girls in an organized way on a free and compulsory basis during the formative period of their life. In this matter, no distinction should be allowed in respect of caste, colour, religion or sex. He was of the view that education
should be free and it should not be made to depend on money, just as the sun gives
light to all equally and rain pours down for all. He was of the view that conditions
must be created to enable the poorest Indians to receive the best possible education.

Gandhiji recommends that there must be free and compulsory education for all
boys and girls between the ages of seven and fourteen. As a concession, however,
girls may be withdrawn after the completion of their twelfth year if the guardian so
desire it.

One need not conclude from this that Gandhiji was not alive to the need of
pre-primary, post-primary, higher and adult education. In fact, his educational
philosophy comprises all these stages of education, but particular emphasis has been
laid on the education of the children between seven and fourteen years. To quote
Gandhiji’s own words: “Primary education, extending over a period of 7 years or
longer, and covering all the subjects up the matriculation standard, except English,
plus a vocation used as the vehicle for drawing out the minds of boys and girls in all
departments of knowledge, should take the place of what passes today under the name
of primary, middle and high school education”.

Gandhi includes secondary in primary education, because it is the only
education so-called that is available to a fraction of the people in our villages. He was
convinced that, if we wished to ameliorate the rural conditions, we must combine the
secondary with primary education.

Thus, it will be manifest that Gandhiji conceived of education as one,
indivisible and integrated process; but in view of the peculiar circumstances in which
the country had been placed, he focused his attention, in the first instance, on the
education of the children between seven and fourteen years. He did not underrate the
importance of other stages of education, but he was of opinion that this minimum
universal education was indispensable to the successful working of democracy in the
country.

Gandhiji said, “Just as I would discourage drink by refusing to open drink
shops and closing existing ones, so would I discourage illiteracy by removing
obstacles in the path and opening free schools and making them responsive to the people’s needs. But at the present moment we have not even tried on any large scale the experiment of free education. We have offered the parents no inducements. We have not even sufficiently or at all advertised the value of literacy. We have not the proper schoolmasters for the training.”

The Wardha Scheme envisages a free and compulsory education for all boys and girls between the ages of seven and fourteen.

4.15 GANDHIJI’S VIEWS ON EDUCATION FOR ALL:

Gandhiji laid stress on the education of all sections of society irrespective of caste, colour, creed, sex, region, religion, language etc. He was of the opinion that in order to realize the dream of ‘Ram-Rajya’ there is a need to establish a just social order free from any kind of exploitation and injustice and right kind of education can play an effective role.

Gandhiji tries to synthesize the individual and social aims of education for the betterment of the individual and society as a whole. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, “A nation cannot advance without the units of which it is composed and conversely, an individual cannot advance without the nation of which he a part.” In order to provide education to everyone he was of the view that the gates of knowledge should be open to all without any discrimination. In his opinion, Education should be made available to all.

4.16 VIEWS REGARDING PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION:

Gandhiji concept of pre-primary is quite comprehensive in nature and he was of the opinion that the real education of children begins from conception as the mother begins to take up the responsibility of the child. If a mother is correctly instructed and prepared for the coming responsibility, then that will be the education of the child as well. Acc. to him, Pre-Primary Education is essential for compulsory primary education. Adequate and satisfactory provision of pre-primary education is conducive to the effective enforcement of compulsory education. It contributes to its success and will minimize the ‘wastage’ in primary education. Very little attempt was
made to develop pre-primary education in India before independence, so the Second Wardha Education Committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education (1939) pointed out the necessity of providing model infant and nursery schools at suitable centres. Thereafter, the Sargent Report or Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education on Post-war Education Development in India (1944) emphasized the significance of pre-primary education in India.

4.17 VIEWS ON HEALTH, HYGIENE & NUTRITION:

Gandhiji was also quite aware to the fact that for education to explore, health is a prerequisite. Therefore, in his scheme of education he gave special emphasis on different aspects like health, hygiene, nutrition and physical exercises. In his approach, holistic or integrated health is of supreme consideration. Consequently health of body, mind, and soul should be promoted whenever and wherever possible. But the stimulation should take place in a natural way. He was of the view that proper nutritional diet be provided to children for their proper growth, which results into their proper education. He himself started serving of mid-day meals in his ashram schools. Gandhiji reminded that everyone should remember that his conception of primary education included the elementary principles of sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, of doing their own work, helping parents at home etc. as the present generation of boys knew no cleanliness, no self-help, and physically unfit. In his views, holistic or integrated health is supreme consideration. Consequently, health of body, mind, and soul should be promoted whenever and wherever possible. But the stimulation should take place in a natural way. Regarding the health of children Gandhiji said, “An important feature of the health and hygiene concern is the free school lunch we offer our children. It is through the school lunch that nutritious food was provided to them and it was planned with the active participation of the parents and for this, the parents make the most of whatever the environment offers in the way of greens, fats, proteins, etc.

Acc. to Gandhiji, his primary education would include the elementary principles of sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, of doing their own work, helping parents at home etc. He further said that exercise is just as essential to mankind as are air, water and food. As food is necessary for the mind as much as for bones and flesh, so also is
exercise necessary both for body and mind. If the body has no exercise, it is sickly and, if the mind has none, it is dull. Acc. to him, keeping the little hands busy at something useful and meaningful fosters healthy minds, whereas bodily health is taken care of by exercise, walks, swimming and games. In order to stimulate them in a natural way, it is especially important that the teacher teaches by example and by personal participation in these activities.

4.18 EDUCATION FOR PEACE:

Every culture regards peace as a noble ideal to attain. Constructive education for peace must aim to reform humanity so as to permit the inner development of human personality and develop a more conscious vision of the mission of mankind and the present conditions of social life as was so emphatically averred by Gandhiji as well.

Regarding the importance of education for Peace, Gandhiji said, “If we are to teach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on real war against war, we shall have to begin with children; and if they will grow up in their natural innocence, we won’t have to struggle; we won’t have to pass fruitless idle resolutions, but we shall go from love to love and peace to peace, until at last all the corners of the world are covered with that peace and love for which consciously or unconsciously the whole world is hungering.” He further said, “If we want to eliminate communal strife, and international strife, we must start with foundations pure and strong by rearing our younger generation on the education I have adumbrated. That plan springs out of non-violence.” Gandhiji not only advocated for peace-education but also education for peace. Peace is often equated with the absence of violence. To Gandhiji, exploitation was the most familiar and practical form of violence or an individual by the state, a group, another individual, or by machines; on women by men; and on one nation by another. Peace mandates the practice of values such as love, truth, justice, equality, tolerance, harmony, humility, togetherness, and self-control.