CHAPTER 1

HISTORY AND PRESENT POSITION OF
COMMUNITY-LIFE AND CRAFT
IN TEACHER TRAINING
India has unfortunately been subjected to introduce many self-defeating practices during the British rule, but the passive, service centered education, losing touch with the social demands is the most damaging practice among these. If one examines the current system of education in context of proper meaning of education, he will find that there are few elements of true education in the pattern. It does not include much above the three 'R's in a broad sense.

Still the country has not been able to free itself from the rigid pattern of this system. Gandhian system of education was a revolutionary attempt to get rid of many evils that have corroded education in India and to go on the way towards life-centered education. In his attempts for reconstruction in all fields of the nation, Gandhiji gave eighteen constructive programmes. Among these programmes he considered this - Basic Education - as his best gift to the nation.

Gandhiji had no specialised experience of methodology of education. He had not much studied the thoughts of eminent educationists. But like all the great men in the world, he had an insight into all the fields of life. He once started a school for the
children of the inmates of his ashram in Johanisburg wherein he toyed with a few ideas of his own on education. Generally these children were participating in different works of manual labour according to their age and ability. The elders including Gandhiji himself used to teach them languages, mathematics, history, geography etc., though the teaching of these subjects was not regular. Gandhiji considered character-building much more important and that task was given great importance.

The scheme of Basic Education came into being in October, 1937. Gandhiji had of course expressed his thoughts of education a little earlier. In his mouthpiece 'Harijan' of October 2, 1937 he wrote:

"By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best of child and man - body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education."

Gandhiji thus criticised the prevailing system of education. When provincial self-governments were formed by the congress party, the problem for the reconstruction of education became more vital. A conference was held in Wardha on October, 1937 to think over the national policy on education.
Workers in National education from different provinces and the Education Ministers of the provinces attended the conference. Gandhiji in his presidential address put his thoughts on education before the conference. In the beginning of his address he criticised the present system of education in these words:

"The present system of education is not simply wasteful but positively harmful. Most of the boys are lost to the parents and to the occupation to which they are born. They pick up evil habits, adopt urban ways and get a smattering of something which may be anything but education."[1]

After these comments he pointed out the way for the proper form of education expressing:

"I think the remedy lies in educating them by means of vocational or manual training."[2]

Then he quoted the crafts - shoe-making, carpentry and Takli-spinning as practised by him in the Ashrams and added:

"If you have any suitable handicraft to suggest, please do it without any hesitation so that we can consider it as well."[3]
Moreover he suggested:

"The new primary education would include the elementary principles of sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, of doing their own work, helping parents at home etc."

This suggestion inspired to develop the concept of community-life.

Thus craft and community-life were the essential part of Gandhiji's approach to education. Gandhiji's ideas on education are valuable because the main objective of education is to develop an integrated personality. The normal education tries to develop an individual through the medium of books and words in various subjects. The objective of even an ordinary type of education should be to develop independent thinking. The development of thinking demands formation of basic concepts. These basic concepts become more clear, broad and dynamic if they are formed through experience and life situation. The activities of community-life and craft are to provide situations not only for the development of positive attitudes, skills, habits and abilities of the individual and through that the social efficiency, but also to contribute towards formation of dynamic concepts of various subjects. This leads to the
development of the ability to think, which is the main objective of education. Hence the areas community-life and craft are important not only by themselves, but also for providing practical situations for academic subjects. It is the aim of Basic Education to achieve all-sided development of the individual through the tools—community-life and craft.

The discussions in the conference after the presidential address of Gandhiji centered round the ideas and the following four resolutions were passed at the end.

1. In the opinion of this conference free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale.

2. The medium of instruction be the mother-tongue.

3. The conference endorses the proposal made by Mahatma Gandhi that the process of education throughout this period should centre round some form of manual productive work, and all the other abilities be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due
regard to the environment of the child.

4. The conference expects that this system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teacher.

The conference then appointed a committee under the Presidentship of Late Dr. Zakir Husain to draw a detailed syllabus on the line of the above resolutions. The committee submitted its report in February, 1938. In this report (syllabus) it gave proper status to the crafts and also to civic life. The concept of civic life afterwards developed and the term community-life was used instead.

Gandhiji approved the scheme and placed it before the working committee of the Congress party for consideration. The congress accepted the scheme as its programme of national education in its Haripura Session of March, 1938 and passed the resolutions on the lines of the first three resolutions of the National Education Conference. (P. 6) The fourth resolution of the conference was not accepted by the party.

In addition it resolved:
Accordingly the congress is of opinion that an All-India Education Board to deal with this basic part of education be established and for this purpose requests and authorizes Dr. Zakir Hussain and Shri E. W. Aryanayakam to take immediate steps under the advice and guidance of Gandhiji to bring such a board into existence, in order to workout in a consolidated manner a programme of basic national education and to recommend it for acceptance to those who are in control of State or private education.

In April, 1938, this Board was established under the name of Hindustani Talimi Sangh with E. W. Aryanayakam as its secretary and its headquarters at Sebagram. The Central Advisory Board of Education appointed a committee in January, 1938 to examine this scheme of educational reconstruction. After receiving the report of that committee, the board accepted the scheme and made a few suggestions to introduce it.

To convert the ordinary schools to Basic pattern, the teachers had first to be educated. As it was decided first to introduce Basic pattern in primary education, community-life and craft were included as a part of the training of primary teachers. These are the new elements introduced to serve double purpose. The first purpose is to provide an opportunity for
the student to develop his own personality as Gandhiji put more emphasis on process than product. Other purpose is to provide situations of learning the methodology of productive work and social activities as media of education. Community-life and Craft have great impact upon both the remaining areas i.e. Education and Academic subjects. Hence they are very important in teacher education also.

The syllabi of these subjects are developed gradually and somewhat differently in the various states, step by step according to the development of understanding of the workers in the field.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SYLLABI

The development of the syllabi of Community-life and craft for the training of teachers in the State of Gujarat is very interesting.

Zakir Hussain committee accepted the importance of teacher-training by noting in its report -

"The proper training of teachers is perhaps the most important condition for the success of the scheme."

In the report the committee gave outlines of the syllabi for primary school children as well as
for primary school teachers. It could not prepare the syllabi in detail because of lack of time.

The first syllabus for the training of teachers was published in March, 1938. Obviously the syllabus had no basis of experience. The persons who constructed it, were aware of this and they were quite open minded to note -

"This syllabus is to be used only as a tentative basis to start the experiments. The true syllabus of Basic Education will have to be prepared on the basis of actual experience of work in our training schools and colleges and if the new schools of basic education begin to work out the new scheme scientifically and record their observations and experiences, it will be possible to improve the syllabus progressively. Such an experimental attitude of mind on the part of teachers is essential for the success and efficient working of this educational scheme." 7


One of these was to be selected by the student teacher. The committee pointed out the Importance of community-life, noting -
"We expect these teacher-training schools to be residential institutions where the students and their teachers will be in close contact with one another. They should develop cooperatively a vigorous and many-sided social and cultural life in which the individual interest of the teachers in training will find adequate expression

... We would again emphasise to centre the teaching in actual concrete problems of sanitation, hygiene, first-aid, arising in the school or in the environing community-life."

The committee suggested that the relation of the school with the community should be studied. It suggested an outline course in physiology, hygiene, sanitation and dietetics, referring specially to the actual problems of village-life aiming at direct practical utility.

'Hindustani Talimi Sangh' at Wardha began to train the officers of various states in the ideology and practice of Basic Education by short-term courses of one month or more. Those officers were to work in Basic training institutions in their states. The first orientation course was held in November, 1938. Five from the fourteen officers in the course were from Bombay Province of which the present Gujarat State was a part. In 1939, a course of five and a half months' duration was held for reorientation of
the traditionally trained instructors to employ them in basic training institutions.

The following subjects were included in this course:

1. Basic principles of Wardha-method of education
2. The process of starting training institution
3. Drawing up a syllabus.

Three basic teachers' training institutions were opened in Bombay State. One of these was for the Gujarati-speaking area and it was at Katargam situated in the present Gujarat State.

A Basic Education Advisory Committee was formed by the Government in 1939. The Education Advisor in charge of Basic Education in the state noted in his report in 1941 -

"Basic Education Advisory Committee suggested two years' course for matriculates, because the one year trained teachers were not craft-minded and were also deficient in the necessary background for work in the basic schools."
Bombay State prepared a syllabus with the following significant features:

1. It was estimated that there will be 150 days for craft work.

2. Time was allotted to the craft work as follows:
   (a) Three hours for practice and correlation
   (b) Twenty minutes for daily recording of work done
   (c) Forty minutes for lecture regarding theory of spinning.

3. Time allotment for every process and quota to be completed.

By the time nearly seven years elapsed in the working of the scheme. So a committee was appointed by Hindustani Talimi Sangh to review the work and to prepare a revised syllabus. The committee, after the work of a year, prepared a detailed revised syllabus for the training of teachers. It remarked in the preface,

"The committee is convinced after years of work that the physical and mental health of our teachers and children forms the first pre-requisite of any educational programme."
As the committee realized the necessity, it introduced two new subjects in the syllabus -


Thus the concept of community-life began to be more specific.

In the introduction of even that syllabus the Secretary of Hindustani Talimi Sangh made it clear that,

"There could be no final or ultimate syllabus of Basic education........
It is to be hoped that the workers and teachers of Basic education should always use this syllabus with experimental attitude to prepare the way for another and better syllabus of Basic education in future."

Nearly at the same time the Government of Bombay also prepared a syllabus for teacher - training. The following were important features of that syllabus -

1. Community-life

(i) Health and community-life
   A. Cleanliness
   B. Healthy living
   C. Food

(ii) Training in civics and social service
   A. Civic life of community
   B. Organization of social and cultural
activities

2. Craft

(i) Craft activities

A. Spinning - weaving with targets and standards of attainment

B. Agriculture - no target or standard of attainment was specified

C. Card-board modelling and wood work, with a suggestive list of articles to be prepared.

The number of articles to be prepared was not suggested.

(ii) Training in teaching craft -

Theory and practice in teaching with special reference to correlated teaching.

Theoretical portion in relation to practical work was suggested in details for the crafts and community-life.

In the Fifth All India Conference of Basic Education, the report of Bombay State said,

"The Basic training institutes were provided with a qualified staff of graduate teachers who had been deputed for training in basic education at Wardha and Jamia."
"As the first step towards the introduction of basic education proper on large scale, we have to train teachers in Basic method and ideology. For this purpose the training institutions are obviously the starting point. For the purpose, craft and community-life have been introduced in almost all institutions. To train the staff for them, Graduates Basic Teachers Centre was started in July, 1947. Three such centres were opened in July, 1948, for the three linguistic regions including the one started in the previous year. The staff consisted of Wardha-trained teachers."

"The success of the whole scheme depends on the efficiency with which training of teachers can be organized. Therefore, a number of teachers from Government and Non-Government training institutions have been trained in basic education at Sevagram, Jamia and Vishva-Bharati."

The conference set a mile-stone by passing a resolution about teacher education as follows-

"This conference is of opinion that all basic training colleges and schools engaged in the work of training teachers in Basic education shall be residential institutions where the teachers under training shall live as a community and that each Basic training institution shall have a practising school attached to it."

The Sixth All India Basic Education Conference (1950) passed a resolution saying,
"The courses provided in training schools should in no case be shorter than two years."

The report of Bombay State put before the conference said,

"In accordance with the Government policy of converting its schools to the Basic-system, teacher-training schools are now training teachers for basic education only."

The Seventh All India Basic Education Conference (1952) passed the following resolutions concerning teacher training -

1. All the training schools should have hostel accommodation and co-education system (for men and women) should be adopted wherever it is possible.

2. It is necessary to introduce a method in which the student-teachers should be provided with the opportunity to give continuous practice lessons in the surrounding schools, as far as possible. The discussions on the method of teaching and on practice lessons should be based on their own experience.
Thus, it suggested to give experience of work to students by making use of surrounding schools. This is the only method to ensure the contact of the students with school children and school work when they are under training.

Then, in 1952, the revised edition of the syllabus for the training of teachers was published by Hindustani Talimi Sangh. It is seen from this syllabus that the concept of community-life has been more clear after years of work. The following topics in the syllabus of community-life had been mentioned with sufficient detail-

1. Social-training and social service
2. Clean and healthy living
3. Cultural and recreational programmes
4. Self-sufficiency programmes
   a. Production and preparation of food
   b. Production and preparation of cloth
   c. Care of buildings and articles of daily use.

The syllabus of craft was the same as in the 1947 revision. The syllabus for spinning-weaving was given with proper specifications, but those of agriculture and carpentry were lacking in specified
details of practical work.

The syllabi prepared by Hindustani Talimi Sangh at different times were supposed to be used as model by the provinces. Provincial Governments usually prepared their own syllabi. The syllabus prepared by Government of Bombay has already been discussed.

THE PRESENT POSITION

Later on, a new syllabus was prepared and published by the State in 1956. The same is being used in the present Gujarat State, then a part of old bilingual Bombay State. Community-life and craft are given proper place in it. It is useful to have a glance at this matter.

COMMUNITY - LIFE

According to the syllabus it is compulsory for the students to stay in the hostel, to take their meals together in the hostel mess and to perform duties necessary for community living. There is no provision for the theoretical instruction concerning community-life. So the students have to learn it from the atmosphere of the institution.

The syllabus suggests the following activities through which other-community living programmes can
be organised -

1. Practice of self-Government
2. Observation of daily routine
3. Training in first aid
4. Participation and organisation of cultural and social programmes
5. Long educational excursions and tours
6. Participation in 'Shramadhan' (Honourary manual labour) programmes
7. Spending at least one week in a camp in rural areas for village work
8. Knowledge of Community Development and National Extension Service Programmes.

It is made clear that besides student's participation in these programmes, it is equally important for him to organise two of these activities in a Basic School as a part of his training.

How much time should be given to community-life is not mentioned in the syllabus. In the same way how long a student can remain absent on leave is also not specified in it, though it is compulsory for him to stay in the hostel.

It is suggested that the students will maintain a complete record of their participation in community-
The work and the records of the candidates will be assessed by the staff members in rotation. The assessment is to be done in broad categories. For that, a five point scale has been suggested, but use of a seven or more point scale is allowed. Members of the staff are allowed also to decide upon a different method if they feel it necessary.

CRAFT

Eighteen periods, out of fifty-six a week, are allotted to craft. Four periods out of these sixteen are to be utilised for theoretical study of the craft and the remaining for practical work.

Spinning-weaving, agriculture and carpentry (card-board modelling and wood work) are the three crafts suggested. The student has to choose one of these three according to the provision in the institution to which he is admitted. He has to study the theory of that craft along with the practical work. The details of the theory work for the crafts is given in the syllabus. Practical work in the crafts is to be done as follows:

Spinning - Weaving

The student has to complete the following quota-
1. Weaving a carpet piece (24" \times 18"), one towel and ten square yards of cloth of double yarn
2. Spinning the yarn necessary for the weaving work
3. Spinning is to be done from cotton having cotton seeds. So a series of activities from cleaning the cotton up to sleever making is to be done.

Agriculture

The student has to get experience of growing one kharif crop, one Rabi crop and at least four different types of vegetables on his individual plot of four gunthas (4356 square feet). Moreover he has to work with his class on the common plot of four acres. He has to do all major farm operations.

It is suggested that there should be a dairy and poultry attached to the farm of the institution.

In carpentry -

The student has to prepare -

1. Eight articles of cardboard
2. Six small articles of wood
3. Six big articles of wood
He has to bind two books and repair one damaged article.

The scheme of evaluation of craft work is not mentioned in the syllabus.

It is necessary to note here that the syllabus has suggested three main crafts - spinning-weaving, agriculture and carpentry. The student has to choose one of these three crafts according to the provision in the institution to which he would be admitted. Most of the students in Gujarat have to select spinning-weaving as seventy two out of seventy nine institutions in Gujarat State offer only that craft for different reasons. Only five institutions offer agriculture and two others carpentry in option to spinning-weaving. Thus spinning-weaving is offered by all the institutions. All institutions offering an option are for men only. Thus women students have compulsorily to use spinning-weaving as a craft.

The investigator is very happy to note that the State Government appointed a committee to prepare a new syllabus for primary teacher education. The committee has completed the work and the syllabus is already accepted by the Government to bring it in force from June 1970. It is a course of two years
for the S. S. C. passed students. The significant features of this new syllabus as follow:

COMMUNITY - LIFE

The new things added are that the students have to work with the school children in the activities of community-life and they have to keep the records of the activities done by them.

The syllabus has suggested a scheme for the evaluation of the activities of community-life. But still the scheme is not sufficiently objective. Probably the students will be dissatisfied even with this new scheme.

CRAFT

The new syllabus suggests five main crafts from which the student has to offer one craft. They are as follows:

1. Spinning-weaving
2. Spinning
3. Agriculture
4. Carpentry
5. Forestry
The detailed quota to be completed by the student in each of the crafts is specified.

It should be noted that it is for the first time that spinning without weaving and forestry have been suggested as main crafts. It is hoped that it will provide opportunity to fulfil the demands of the different parts of the state.

2. Ibid., p. 23.
4. Ibid., p. 25.
5. Seven years of work, Hindustani Talimi Sangh (Sevagram, Wardha, 1946), p. 4-5.
7. Ibid., p. 155.
8. Ibid., p. 156.