CHAPTER V.

AN ASSESSMENT AND THE PRESENT CONDITION OF BASIC EDUCATION.

It is not within the scope of the present dissertation to probe into the practical side of Basic education. Yet, a general assessment of it would be greatly helpful in the present context and for further study. The present chapter is an attempt towards that.

The fundamental concepts of Basic education according to Gandhi may be stated in his own words as "(1). Primary education should consist of the present matriculation minus English, plus a craft. It should cover the ages of 7-14 or more. (2). The craft should be chosen from among the main occupations of the people. (3). All instruction should be correlated to the crafts. (4). Such education should be productive and self-supporting". The resolutions passed at the Wardha National Educational Conference on October 1937 were declared as the official policy of the government of India. As such they are as follows: "... free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nationwide scale. (2). That the medium of instruction be the

1. Ramanathan, Education From Dewey to Gandhi, op.cit.p.5
mother tongue. (3). That the Conference endorses the proposal made by Mahatma Gandhi that the process of education throughout this period should centre around some form of manual and productive work, and that all the other abilities to 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. (h). That the Conference expects that this system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers."

The various State Governments went on pursuing the policy of Basic education in the primary level at their own speed quite enthusiastically. New Basic schools were started; the existing traditional types of schools in the elementary level were transformed into Basic schools; teachers were given training in Basic education and new Basic Training Schools, Colleges and Post-Graduate Colleges were established. Re-training and Refresher Courses were arranged both for teachers and administrative officers; Seminars and Conferences were called for on region-wide and nation-wide basis for elaborate discussion and deliberations. The education

departments of State Governments took active measures through their officers and proceedings with proper co-ordination from the Central Government. Moreover, the commitment of article 45 of the Indian Constitution to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of 6-14 within a period of 10 years added force and vigour to the efforts of the centre and State Governments' Educational Departments.

Apart from the Departmental endeavour, there were private Basic Education Centres like Sevagram, Kasi and Gujarat Vityapeeths, Jamia Millia and Santi Niketan, Gandhiagram and Periyanaickenpalayam. These reputed centres of Basic education initiated by independent persons and Gandhian adherants served as great centres as beacon lights of Basic education in close co-ordination with the Governments in training and re-training the Basic education teachers and kindling discussions and deliberations more and more in the experiment of Basic Education.

Within the campus of the Basic educational institutions, the Gandhian pedagogical concepts based on Truth and Non-Violence such as love, understanding and community living, prayer, self supporting craft with economic and
educational possibilities, medium of rather tense and development of proper civic and democratic traits and correlated teaching unto matric level. On their own initiative students were doing all their personal and corporate duties such as personal and environmental cleanings, morning and evening devotional meetings, flag hoisting, celebrations of religious and national festivals and decorations, cooking, serving and budgeting, keeping silent spinning hours in the hours set apart, play and gardening, attending classes based on activity and correlation, maintaining self-government to manage their own affairs and etc. It was said that an average nun in Basic school developed a more integrated personality than a student of the traditional school.

So then, with a view to examining its tenets, we may state the main aspects of Basic education as follows and examine each from an immortal viewpoint.

"Education unto a particular minimum standard should be universal for all citizens, male and female. It may not be compulsory to begin with, but as facilities are available it is to be compulsory. This universal minimum education is called Basic education. As the present system is of foreign importation and anti-national, this is national. Therefore it is called Basic National -
Education. (2). The course of this education is to run for seven years, beginning from the age of seven. (3). Basic National Education does not concern itself, for the present with the pre-school stage or the post-basic stage. (4). Basic National Education must be imparted through the mother-tongue. (5). In its method it must be woven round some art or handicraft. All intellectual instruction must be imparted through the instrumentality of the craft chosen. (6). The craft chosen must be learnt systematically and scientifically with a view to efficiency and practical results. It must not be learnt merely as a means either for intellectual work or for economic self-sufficiency. It must be both a means and an end. (7). The product of the craft must be economically paying. (8). Efforts should be made to see that the money value of the work done covers the pay of the teacher. (9). The State should provide the rest of the expenses, of school-building, furniture, books, maps and the whole of the apparatus including tools etc, for the craft taught. (10). The State should undertake to utilize the produce of the craft by which it may meet its own requirements or those of the local bodies where the school is established. For any excess of goods produced the State should provide marketing
To take up the aspect above mentioned that Universal, Minimum and Compulsory education for both boys and girls should be imparted which is called Basic education, it looks more original and forward looking in a country with such mass illiteracy like India. This need for such universal free and compulsory education was realised in the past by leaders like Gopal Krishna Gokale and we have authentic evidence for his struggle towards this end in the year 1910. Gandhi like a true follower of Gokale, incorporated the same in his educational theory.

But the other aspect of it which says that as the present system is of foreign importation and anti-national and his is national and therefore it is called Basic National Education have in its womb all the germs of present day educational problems, particularly language and therefore its allied national problems. Hence it demands a more careful scrutiny.

The concept of 'nation' in India was more strengthened after the advent of the British due to their connecting and consolidating work through a common media of administration and education. The indigenous

3. Ibid. p.73.
education in vogue in India before the British lacked systematization and organization, and religious centred through sanskrit and arabic medium, restricted to the upper and monied classes. It served only for a small percentage of the society.

In the beginning the British were not keen in imparting the English type of education is evident through the history of the 'orientalist party'. Apart from the part played by the Britishers it is by voluntary request and initiations of Indians themselves that paved the way for the English education. In a memorandum submitted to the Governor General on December 1823, Ram Mohan Roy insisted besides other things that the "Government should promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy with other useful sciences. . . ."

The improvements and extension of the English type of education was best realised on a nation wide basis and sometimes with the best of intentions by the British. This is evident by their recorded educational administration and other philanthropic activities and the way in which they opened the gates of educational possibilities

to the suppressed and downtrodden impartially which could not be imagined before the British era. These facts go to prove that efforts to attain national education in India started long before the advent of Basic education.

Any book on Basic education as a principle and tradition goes on criticising English education with a freehand. However, such people forget that even now, it is the fact that the best scholars, scientists, poets and politicians in our country are English educated. And a large majority of the educated class even now prefers English type of education. Hence simply we cannot reject English education as anti-national. With the invention of modern scientific techniques, radio, television and other achievements of Space, the world has become so tiny a globe in which there is nothing for any nation or country to call exclusively anything its own in the strict sense of the term. Any invention, whether it is in the positive side or negative side, is shared by all the human beings collectively.

In the modern political set up, the need for international understanding also works against narrow
nationalism which is the root cause of jealousy, hatred, fear and war. Toyenbee, the great Historian, in his book History of Civilization stresses that civilizations and cultures have their own beginning, growth and end, and the most powerful of the civilization would ascertain itself while the weaker ones would succumb to the most powerful one. As such, it would always be wise policy in this 20th century Space Era, to have a National Educational Policy which is consistent with the international educational set up naturally without too much emphasis on the concept of 'nation' and 'national education' in whatever way the terms might have originated.

Gandhi stresses on the education of the three H's (Hand, Heart, Head) harmoniously as to effect an all round development. He did so not because he was not aware of the importance of the three R's, but because he was keenly alive to the fact that our modern education was not balanced, as it emphasized only the training of the mind. According to him, mental training is nothing if it is not accompanied by a true training of the heart. He subordinates the education of the mind to the education of the heart which consists in the refinement of emotional impulses

5. Patel M.S., Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, op.cit. p.37
and the deepest feelings of love, sympathy, fellow­ship and aesthetic sense through drawing, music, and handi­crafts. Such education of the heart and head, Gandhi believed would come only through the proper exercise of the bodily organs and their training. Hence, he advocated "compulsory physical training through musical drill." He holds that the development of the hand and head should go side by side with the awakening of the soul. If not education would be a lopsided affair. We can see here Gandhi's concern with spiritual and moral training along with many other educators before him. However, we may point out here that mere training of the three H's without the training of the three R's would not go a long way in the present world.

In many of the ordinary Basic schools one can see a tendency to ignore the 3R's in lieu of the 3H's. As a result, public opinion is created in favour of the intellectual superiority of the non-Basic schools. Shriman Narayan expresses a timely warning in the following words: "... and the challenge to you is that through correlation you must show that the body who works and who does productive work develops his

6. Ibid. p.63.
7. Ibid. p.3h
mind better than the ordinary boy. If you are not able to prove that, Basic education would never stand competition. They say, alright, you teach them craft, but the boy has a blank mind. He does not know proper mathematics, he does not know science, history, geography. Even the impression that the boy in a Basic school is bound to be inferior so far as the intellect is concerned is passing a vote of no confidence in Basic education.” The training in the 3R’s must be considered as instruments of attaining development in the 3R’s. It is rightly said that mere literacy cannot be considered as education. All these different types of activities - intellectual, moral, and physical trainings should go side by side in the proper educational milieu creating lasting values in the life of the individuals.

The policy of having Mother tongue as the medium of education sounds most sensible. Any student of the History of Education in India would understand that this is the lesson of the long past. Though there were vernacular education before the advent of the English education, they were not of the status of the English type of education, having various departments of knowledge.

such as History, Geography, Civics, Science and Mathematics etc. As such they were purely religious centred education without any universal rules for curriculum and content and school administration. Education was not also considered as essentially necessary to lead a good life. With the advent of the English and the English system of education with its scientific approach and universality, there came a transformation of values in the everyday life, culture and civilization and English education began to spread more and more while the indigenous education declined gradually. Further the importance of the mother tongue was realised long before in Madras, where even the secondary education was imparted through the vernacular language in the missionary schools started by Zigenbalg and his colleagues and later in Bombay at the time of Elphinston and still later in Bengal and Punjab. Basic education reiterated the stand that in the primary level, instruction should be imparted through mother tongue. The discussion about language in the country naturally stimulate the question that Basic education or primary education means the 'secondary education minus English plus craft.' And it provides for the study of Hindustani and as a national language at the primary level. To discuss the problem

U.Narullah and Naik, History of Education in India, op.cit.pp.10,11
Ibid.
in today's context would be to enter forbidden waters, but a passing reference will have to be made to the present situation.

Beginning from the age of seven the course of Basic education is to run for seven years which includes education up to the matriculation standards. By saying this Gandhi expected that the pupil should gain the Matriculation standard of knowledge minus English which is not based on sound educational or psychological theories. The knowledge imparted in the higher standards of secondary level such as algebra, arithmetics and geometry, elementary scientific subjects and literature and poetry need a matured mind to the proper grasp and appreciation. But the childhood period of a pupil extends upto 12 years and the other two years are called the early adolescent years. It is questionable therefore, how far it would be advisable to include the curriculum content of secondary level in the primary level as Gandhi wants to do.

Basic National Education did not concern itself with the pre-Basic and post Basic stage in the beginning. But soon after independence great enthusiasm was shown in the pre-Basic and post-Basic educations. Gandhi redefined Basic education as education for life through life and
hence pre-Basic schools were attached to Basic schools and Post-Basic schools were started after the senior Basic stage. Adults education was given more stimulus with a special officer for it in various states. Moreover, Rural Universities were also started at important centres on Gandhian lines. With all these innovations the enrollment to these institutions were not encouraging and the majority of the students were clamouring for admission before traditional high schools and colleges. The causes are once again traced to the influence of Western education both on students and educators by the Basic educationists and to the inherent weakness and impracticability of Basic education by another set. However difficult it may be to make an impartial assessment in this connection a serious study of the question should be made in the interest of education and its development.

The question of a craft as the central structure through which all instruction must be imparted is another important feature of Basic education. The positive side of this aspect has been already discussed as to how activity is connected with intelligence and how activity is advocated and practiced in education in other European countries and America. Dewey gave particular emphasis to this in his Laboratory School in the Chicago University.
with his followers and later educational psychologists along with other supporters. It is a matter of great value that Gandhi arrived at this idea of activity in his own original way and educational experiments. Still more, he added the conception of a craft as the centre of educational activities which is his most original and colourful idea devised to fit in the conditions of the country at the moment as a solution to the most baffling socio-economic and political problems. But at the same time it was this aspect of Basic education which suffered the worst criticisms both by the educators and the enlightened public. There is enough evidence in the writings on Basic education and by Gandhi's own ideas in the form of discourses, questions and answers, resolutions and correspondence.

It was argued that it would cause drudgery in the minds of pupils to practice a craft and it would amount to child labour which was discouraged in the past. There are people who conceive the child as an angelic creature alive to nothing but impressions of beauty. Such people disapprove the introduction of such gross things as monetary values into the child's experience. Further, the idea would destroy the devine nature of
the children attributed to them from very early times and later by Froebel and others. Some argued it would be wasteful and will not pull its economic weight. No one would come forward to use the products of the pupils like the khadi cloth where there is an abundance of Textile and Mill cloth in the open market.

Gandhi argued and answered the critics that it would not be causing drudgery and boredom to the minds of the children because it is the very nature of children to be active, busy, and curious and because of the close connection between head and hand along with other relevant reasonings. He said it was not education and a craft, but education through the craft. He was not for undue importance given to book learning and felt that learning should come through activities. The activities in order to have educational potentialities to the children should be related to the actual life and hence Gandhi advocated adult occupation as the core-craft around which the other subjects and school life should be connected. A psychological flaw can again be pointed out in saying that "the activities in order to be capable of leading the child to learning should be related to the actual life of the children."

11. Ramanathan, Education From Dewey to Gandhi, op. cit. p.16.
But psychologically it is said that children are entirely in a different world at every stage with different instincts, emotions and character patterns. Hence it is possible to ask the question how far it is correct to expect children to do adult activities and feel and behave like adults. Whatever might be the pros and cons, when Basic education was actually put into practice in the country, this aspect gave varied experiences to the administrators of Basic Education as a whole.

It may be further counter argued that Basic education is only another name of activity centred education which is the most authenticated educational theory in the history of educational thought. From the knowledge centred education the emphasis was shifted to the child centred education in the middle ages and still later in the 19th century and 20th century to activity centred education. Even though a child is asked to do the adult craft as core-craft with correlated educational potentialities and possibilities with the curriculum, the child's understanding of them would be always from his point of view only. The craft centred activity and correlation method when put into educational practice, were found to provide education to the children with
all the attributes of modern education such as joy and play, rest and activity, curiosity and creativeness etc.

Firstly, it involved correlation of the various subjects to the central craft chosen and thus posed some problems. In some respects, great enthusiasm was shown in correlated teaching around a craft both by teachers and students. But there was misconception about the notion of natural and unnatural correlation or forced correlation. Not only subjects can be correlated with the main crafts chosen, but with the other routine activities as well. As far as possible, there must be natural correlation which must be flexible for growth along with the growth of the pupils' age and maturity. These problems will be solving themselves in the long run as the experience of correlation increase and with the production of sufficient published works on it. It was found that, however, disciplinary subjects like algebra, geometry, and mathematics and some topics on science did not subject themselves wholly to the correlation technique.

It cannot be claimed that the theory of correlation is originated wholly with Basic education. The theory as such was long before stressed by educational
thinkers in various countries. However it cannot be denied that in Basic education the correlated teaching technique finds its fuller expression. Not only it sustains interest and curiosity but also develops team spirit and community living, co-operation and responsibility, originality and imitation because Basic education through craft involves correlated teaching and correlated teaching involves activities of the 'regular' and 'routine' type.

The selection of a suitable craft often posed pedagogic and administrative problems. In cotton growing areas, spinning was adopted as the main craft because of its rich educational possibilities. But the vastness of the country with varying geographical background is not always conducive to select the same craft for all the schools of the country unanimously. Anyhow, it was left to the particular regions to select a suitable central craft rich in educational possibilities. It was not considered necessary to have only spinning as the core craft. For example, Bihar took to agriculture while Assam took to carpentry and Madras to spinning. In some special places where there are some other materials abundantly, they are free to take up that
that craft. In Pathamadai in Madras, where there is abundant growth of a particular type of grass, mat weaving is taken as the central craft and not spinning.

Though the idea of craft is novel and interesting, it creates problems when the craft chosen must be learnt systematically and scientifically with a view to gain efficiency and practical results. The scientific understanding of it would be easier with trained and experienced teachers and the scarcity of trained teachers was always felt by the state governments. Hence, they organised retraining and refresher courses and seminars and conferences to discuss and solve the problems they were facing in various levels.

The aspect of basic education that the product of the craft must be economically paying, and efforts should be made to see that the money value of the work done covers the pay of teacher can be considered as the central aspect of Basic education having in it both merits and demerits of the system. A student is earning while learning however small the amount may be that he earns and if all the pupils of the sub-continent can earn like this, atleast three annas per day, the total national income would be greater to that extent and
students can manage to earn at least to defray the cost of the teachers’ salary besides having educational experience which is practical and scientific. This is the contention of Gandhi and the Basic educationists. When the scheme is put into practice it worked well in the beginning in the reputed centres of Basic education about which we have ample evidences in the annals of Basic education. Thisaring enthusiasm was reflected in other newly established Basic education centres where there were devoted and sincere Basic educational personalities. These are the merits of this aspect.

The adverse side of the question is what would be the quality of product of the students in the beginning and who would buy it. It was argued, we should not consider the wastage in the beginning because the student will produce more when he gains speed and accuracy in later senior classes. In the beginning, we should be satisfied with the educational experience that the craft would produce. But it was argued at the same time that while the student comes to higher standards, he would not be concentrating his attention on production owing to intellectual pursuit and examinations. However, the fear was expressed and expected that if the scheme is put into practice, the economic aspect—
would receive more attention at the expense of the educational aspect or vice versa. What was feared became a reality in practice. Except in the Basic education centres run by real idealistic personalities like Ariyanayagam, Ramachandran, Vinoba Bhave and Avinacilingam chettiar in the majority of the state controlled Basic schools and Basic Training schools, the economic aspect was given greater emphasis so as to reach the standard set by the government. Besides other difficulties arose like the regular supply of cotton, Takli (spindle), or allied instruments, want of immediate repair works and trained teachers, and the problem of reaching a prescribed level of self-sufficiency to satisfy the departmental authorities and to compete with the other Basic schools in the area or 'Basic Education Belt'. These difficulties in the long run naturally resulted in several malpractices at each level.

Basic schools have to compete not only with other Basic schools in the 'Belt' but also with non-Basic schools in the area with prescribed text books and traditional type of teaching. This again created a suspicion in the minds of the parents whether the activity centred Basic education without prescribed books
to the students should be superior to the traditional type. In some advanced Basic schools, class library was maintained with several books on the same topic together with booklets prepared by students themselves as part of the activity centred educational programme on various topics such as the language aspect of a festival like Deepavali with its story or dialogue for the language aspect, the scientific and health aspects while celebrating the festival with new dresses, decorations, sweets, dinners and overeating, crackers and rejoicement, the parts of a flower, and the story of butterfly, frog and etc. Such centres were able to keep the balance with the non-Basic traditional schools and gain the confidence of the parents. But in the less advanced and urban places the Basic school could not gain the confidence of the public and well-to-do parents preferred traditional types of primary schools or convents or public schools in lieu of Basic schools while the poor students were forced to choose Basic schools alone. This again created a kind of casteism within the educational sphere. With all these difficulties the ideal of reaching the point of self-sufficiency at least to cover the pay of the teachers became a distant dream.
As a safeguard, it was provided within the scheme of Basic education that "the state should undertake to utilize the products of the craft by which it may meet its own requirements or those of the local bodies where the school is established. And for any excess of goods produced, the state should provide marketing facilities." The state governments in close co-operation with the Central Government has faithfully provided for the absorbment of the produce of the Basic schools. In spite of it, they could not gain the confidence of the public and they had to drop Basic education one after the other.

It is the contention of many that there is more of sentiment than of sound educational philosophy in the Wardha scheme. The success of Basic education for the time is associated with the personality of Gandhi as a saintly politician and educationist. "Gandhiji, they aver, has been the greatest teacher of mankind since Gautama Buddha and Christ and has much larger following than any of them. It is therefore quite natural that any thing coming from his lips or pen may well pass as authoritative and be accepted by his countless admirers as gospel truth without scrutiny.

12. Kripalani, Latest Fad, op.cit. p.73
Besides, Gandhi was a political leader of no mean order. As the architect of our hard won freedom and as the father of the Nation, he is held in the highest esteem by his countrymen numbering thirty crores and odd. Hence there is a tendency on the part of certain people to think that whatever Gandhiji said must be true and that it is their bounden duty to translate his teachings into practice. The infallibility attributed to Gandhiji is the natural outcome of our inherent tendency to deify men and women of heroic qualities." While there is an element of truth in it, Basic education cannot be rejected totally as baseless and devoid of any pedagogic principles. It is certainly in keeping with progressive educational concepts. But the way in which it should be carried out in the country proved a paradox. Gandhi himself gave expression to it: "I know for certain what is correct in education. But I don't know the how of it, the method with which it should be spread in the country." The same concept in the words of Acharvam Kripalani is expressed as follows. "But nonetheless there are great difficulties in its introduction which, if not surmounted, are sure to bring about the -

14. Ibid.
15. Gandhi, Basic Education, op. cit. p. 104
failure of the experiment."

Apart from the sentimentalism connected with Basic education, the absence of basically trained teachers with vigilence and missionary zeal proved the 'greatest difficulty' of the scheme. "Most of those who are already in the profession are incapable of initiating and working out new ideas." But at the same time, it must be realised the heavy load of responsibility and ideals of the Basic school teacher. He has to labour here more than the pupils. Active, alert, he has to be particular about every detail, keep a diary of every day class activity; productive and educational. In total, he will have to give all his time throughout the twenty four hours besides other administrative requirements and assessment works. He will have to sit and prepare for longer hours for correlated class-works and resourcefulness. Even the setting up of question papers under the new method incorporated in Basic system is laying heavy burden and responsibility on the teacher and making it easier and pleasant for the student to answer it. With all these, the system has in it an inherent demand for an ideal, devoted, hard life of high thinking and plain living, while

17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
the teachers of the traditional type usually have a much easier way of routine life and leisure inside the class room and outside.

The emoluments of the Basic school teacher, however specially trained and hard working remain to be the same as that of the previous time. While the teacher is expected to carry out heavy responsibility by the society or government, and in spite of his special training, his emoluments are not given adequate attention and enhancement. As a result, in the dynamic society of today, the social status of a teacher remains the same as in the olden days when the society was static with various obligations of an individual. When such is the lot of the teachers, idealism will scarcely set in, in their life of penury.

All the developed countries in the world are industrialized to a large extent. Industrialization is spreading rapidly in all developing countries. Along with the spread of industrialisation, old values and culture, customs, classes and castes had been reshaped in some countries and in the process of reshaping themselves in the developing countries in future. Dewey describes it as the redeemer of the poor and suppressed.

Every country in the world is struggling hard against greater odds to industrialize it more and more and raise its economic and cultural standard of life, however smaller or bigger it may be. India is not an exception to it. Side by side with the teachings of Gandhian concepts, we are striving to improve the industrial and technological capacity in every direction.

To consider Basic education in this context, sounds as a retreat in civilization. The idea is well expressed in the following passage. "Basic education is not yet out of the woods of controversies. At one end are those who hail it as a panacea for all our national ills. At the other end those who condemn it as a retreat from civilization and a relapse into primitiveness."

But it can be argued in both the ways. Gandhi once answered that he was not against the machine, because takli itself a machine. Further, 'primitivism' as an educational concept in the primary level is a necessary stage for the children to be experienced and pass through according to the famous educational theory viz. The Culture Epoch Theory. According to it, the growth and development of an individual should

20. Ramanathan, Education From Dewey To Gandhi, op. cit. p.7
correspond to the growth and development of the human race as a whole.

It would be worthwhile to point out at this juncture that it is often forgotten that Basic education was first used in elementary education or the education conceived as the first stage in formal education. From this narrow beginning the concept began to grow steadily and embrace all stages of education. In its original scope it indicated only that stage of education which formed the basis of all further stage of education. Later, its meaning expanded until it enveloped life itself, so that education which forms the basis of life itself, the foundation of healthy existence, physically, mentally and morally."

Gandhi conceived Basic education as a method by itself and an instrument to attain a new social order in India and elsewhere and thus connected the problem of education in the country with the problem of attaining political independence and freedom from external and internal shackles. He believed that "justice equally meted out to the haves and have-nots is the final arbiter of human destiny. Against such justice

22. Ibid. p.9
the might of muscle and metal and all the ingenuities of modern propaganda are of no avail. This was not an ideal vision of a somnolent dreamer; he deduced his ideas into terms of actions, co-conduct and behaviours and was prepared to carry them out. Everybody who has come into contact with him not only has experienced the aura of a new social atmosphere that he was able to create in the places where he lived and moved.

So it is clear that Gandhi connects his theory of education to a social philosophy in the Indian context and therefrom further to politics. Yet, he wanted, as expressed in a meeting, that Basic education should stand on its own legs without depending on Government for development. But strangely enough, it was his political personality in the Congress party, both in the days of struggle for Independence and afterwards at the hand of the Indian Government, that played a long way for the spread of Basic education in the country. Herein we may deduce a note of contradiction in Gandhi's personality. He was really appeared to be a controversial personality at times. The same idea is expressed by Shri G. Ramanathan as follows: "To

23. Ibid p. 8
"To most men, at least to those who have to put their shoulders to the task of education, all this is a fanciful picture incapable of eliciting practical response or conviction... Gandhiji has appeared to the world in many guises and one of them is that of a saint. Really it is a travesty of truth to say that he appeared in different guises..." Even in his teachings on education, he simply expressed his ideas in the magazines and conferences and never cared to present a systematic philosophy and editing of Basic education. What is available is due to the collection and editing of the relevant passages from various articles, speeches and letters.

Moreover Basic education was preached and practiced without the full support of the educationists of the day by non-educationists. Gandhi himself we may say "was not an educationist or a teacher in the usual sense." There was scepticism in the faith of Basic education amidst leading educationists was evident from the questions which were put before him in the conferences and letters he received in protest of the Basic education principles. Gandhi answered all those questions as a saintly Mahatma and political redeemer.

27. Ramamathan G., Education from Dewey to Gandhi, op.cit. p.11.
28. Ibid. p.4
and the others heard him as ordinary devotees and admirers.

As Gandhi himself seemed to have approved, if the scheme if happened to be the spontaneous outgrowth of the educational experiences of the professional educators of the society it might have a different turn out at present. "Any new scheme of education can be built only on an existing structure, making changes now here, now there by gradual process."

Instead, it was believed, that it was thrust upon the educationist by the powers of personality and government, central and state through the departmental authority. As a result, with all the subtle educational principles in Basic education and inspite of a long trial in the country, it has not taken a deep root in the minds of the people and pupils. Even a whole hearted acceptance and co-operation on the part of the Basic school and Basic Training school teachers and administrators was found absent. They worked, both teachers and administrators wearing khadi uniform while on duty because it was the compelling expectation inside the arena of the Congress policy

29. Gandhi, Basic Education, op.cit. p.105
30. Ramanathan C., Education From Dewey To Gandhi, op.cit. p.17.
and therefore the order of the government connected with their monthly salaries. And the common people still cannot come to an original conclusion to act on it firmly and indefatigably.

There is another view put forward as the chief cause of the failure of Basic education viz. that Basic education was not given a fair trial in the country by the government. They say that when the government made it its policy to have Basic education in all the primary levels in the country, it ought to have abolished every other system in the primary level. Instead, it maintained the traditional type of educational institutions side by side with Basic education institutions which resulted in the failure of the later. Though there is some truth in it, it would not be possible for any government to wipe away the already existing institutions and teachers. That would be against the tenets of any democracy. At the same time, having the traditional schools in existence proved as an assessment scale to measure the mind of the public regarding educational matters in a democratic way. Within the protection of democracy, we can see now Ministers and high Officials, teachers and others who officially preach the gospel of Gandhi and Gandhian education, sending their children to
non-Basic schools and other types. It would not have been possible had there been only Basic schools alone in the primary level in the country. Any new scheme has to be evaluated in comparison with other types of institutions only.

Basic education was considered by certain set of people as a scheme of education that promises to rescue mankind from materialism and redeem man into godliness and spirituality. Certainly there is ample evidence to support this view because of Gandhi's faith in God and his characterization of education as a whole. But at the same time there are people who hold that Gandhi was a man of reason and not a man of religion. In the words of Gandhi himself we can hear "By spiritual training I mean the education of the heart." Religious instruction according to him was a matter of the responsibility of the parents. This is again another evidence for Gandhi's contradictory personality. We cannot fix him as a man of religion entirely and at the same time not of a materialistic belief. He was a religious man and a spiritualist and at the same time stood for reason as a practical man. Once he said that what he means by God is only Truth.

32. Ramanathan, Education from Dewey to Gandhi, op.cit. pp.11,12,13
33. Ibid. p.11
Does it then mean that he can be included among the empiricist philosophers of the nineteenth or twentieth century? Certainly not.

Gandhi himself was an ardent believer in God and insisted on everyone having a faith. His belief in religion was the starting point of his activities and their ultimate sanction also. Though an intensely religious man, he was not blind to the needs of practical life. He wanted a scheme of practical reform in different fields of life here and now. For him, Truth was God and he carried on experiments with Truth. In his actual programme, he could appeal to common sense, but the ultimate sanction was his faith. A strict pragmatist or rationalist would find fault with him here also; but Gandhi was concerning himself with a traditional society with deeprooted beliefs and faith. He wanted to carry these people with him. His faith in Hindu religion and God sometimes have him open to certain contradiction and misguided people also who could practice their own narrow, traditional religious practices and still claim to be his followers. It is here that there arose certain difficulties in the Gandhian system of beliefs and his practical programme of action. A more detailed discussion of this will

35. Ibid.
follow in the next chapter when a comparative assessment is made of Basic and Pragmatic educational systems.

In his effort to bring together the educated people and the masses and to integrate education with the life of the people, Gandhi conceived the idea of Basic education. But, it was felt that too much emphasis was put on village education in the practice of Basic education at the expense of urban areas and city schools. But "in most places village teachers are opposed to Basic ideology. Urban mindedness has penetrated the village and the rural ideology of Basic education is resisted. Trained teachers do not generally appear to have much faith in the scheme."

Basic education as a system devised for the uplift of the villages "does not" take care of the cities where intelligentsia, the leaders, the members of Parliament, legislature and all high officials live. If they do not take to Basic education, this is bound to wither away. It will not work." Besides, it is the general tendency in the history of the world that civilization is spreading only through the cities. It is more so in the 20th century when all the advanced-

technical and scientific implementations and the way to higher economical and professional standard are found only in cities. Mankind with all its attainment is growing towards. Telihard de Sardin characterises 'his tendency as 'hominization'. Gandhi's education is, according to many, going counter to this fact failing to take account of the general trend of the world society towards Space and Outer Space. Technological and scientific advancement in this industrial era is progressing with momentous speed in competition amidst all nations. To expect a section of the people to go down from the trend is to create schism and set the clock backward. This point is well realised by Shriman Narayan, member of the Planning Commission in one of his articles. He says, "another point which I would like to emphasise is: please work out all schemes of Basic education full for the rural as well as for urban areas. Do not make the mistake of trying to work this out for only spinning, and weaving and agriculture and kitchen gardening, forgetting that unless you spread Basic education quickly in all the cities, no body is going to listen to you, to me or to any body else. Now a feeling is growing in the country that these leaders of Basic education go on lecturing to us but their children

are studying in some public schools and city schools whereas Basic education is doled out only to these poor village folks and to their children who will always remain backward because they do not know enough English and for the public service examinations English is very important. That sort of thing is suicidal for the movement. It cannot really succeed and nobody would listen to you and should not listen to you or me if Basic education becomes isolated only in the villages." Dr. K.L. Shrimali also stresses the same point and says that we should remove the difference which exists among the rural schools and the urban schools and accept a minimum programme..."

It has been pointed out by eminent educationist in the recent years that Basic education itself became in a way dogmatic and orthodoxy. Dr. K.L. Shrimali, as Union Minister of Education while talking on this aspect of Basic education says, "when we are in the classroom trying to evolve techniques and methods of learning, we very often ignore the fact that it is the child which is a living organism..." Now in Basic education also a great deal of emphasis is laid on the method of correlation, if in laying this emphasis we ignore the

40. Ibid. p.55
child, the creative child, the child who always wants to be active and energetic and to create new forms, it is possible that we may do great injury to the whole purpose of education." They therefore stressed that it should adjust itself according to the march of time with a flexibility to include new values following Acharya Vinoba Bhave's motto of Basic education that it is Mitvam Nai Talim or every day new education. Accordingly the principles of correlation were made flexible and broad based against unnatural and forced correlation not only with core craft alone but also with the routine activities and craft, physical and social environment. "...the human factor is therefore, more important than the method itself, and any method is good enough in the hands of a good teacher. I wish to emphasise this aspect before you as in the working of the Basic schools we very often forget this important truth."

Limiting our discussion to the assessment of Basic education, if we go to enquire whether its principles are progressive and acceptable in spite of its past administrative errors and unpopularity, we may certainly answer in the affirmative. If then, the future of

Basic education cannot be pronounced pessimistically. It

\[1\] Ibid. p.57.
\[2\] Ibid.
\[3\] Ibid. p.53.
It may be brighter at one time and darker at some other time. But it may go on continuously for ever illuminating the darker sides of the society and towards Gandhi's new social order as the 'Nityam Nai Talim' starting from the people's own present standard.

The concept of nationhood dawning on the Indian educated was a byproduct of the educational policy of the British. Their introduction of English as a medium of instruction was so far as the British administrator in India was concerned, in the interest of administrative convenience. They wanted an army of educated natives to run the administration and so they taught them English. At the same time, the British were shrewd and farsighted enough to note the possible results of English education, of ideas like social equality, freedom and democracy which it would bring. British liberal opinion welcomed the eventuality when an enlightened Indian intellectual class, after studying the British Parliamentary Institutions and ideas of liberty would demand similar ones of their own.

Leaders of the Indian Renaissance like Raja Ram Mohan Roy wanted India to be abreast of the West in the latest ideas of democracy and science. For this
they preferred English education and through the English medium. Leaders of Indian nationalism also recognised the value content of English education and made systematic efforts to emphasise its national aspects. They made deliberate efforts to divert education from the narrow bureaucratic channels in which it was running in the government educational institutions and give it a national, patriotic colour.

The movement for indigenous English education in Bengal, Maharastra or the Punjab thus emphasised the nationalistic content of education and did a great service in fostering the idea of one nation. By the time Gandhi came on the national scene, the economic and political ends of British rule, the poverty and unBritish rule according to Dadabhai Naoroji, were quite apparent. National leaders had also noted the widening gulf between the educated few and the illiterate many. English, they saw, widened this gulf by creating another class of superior persons holding themselves aloof from, and working in ways which were not in the interest of the people as a whole. It was necessary to widen the basis of democracy and make the people participate in the process of government. This could be done
through indigenous education and through the regional languages.

This need became novel and more pronounced after provincial autonomy under the British and Gandhi's Wardah Scheme was in answer to it. As a reaction to the narrow, exclusive channels through which education in the English schools and colleges was running, Gandhi took an extreme stand and sought to eschew not only English but the whole of Western Culture based on the inactive sort of education and scientific technology. Hence his insistence on a handicraft like weaving and spinning. Gandhi and the nationalist leaders before him were right when they insisted that nationalism which was a byproduct of English education and British rule should be the main centre of educational and national activity. This, they rightly thought, could be done more effectively through the regional languages, thus making the people as a whole - and not a few educated class - participate in truly nation building activities. As against the spirit of exclusiveness and alienness, the education through a foreign medium fostered, Gandhi's was a legitimate reaction if not an extreme one. It did not then take into consideration the problem of regional rivalries or the more important problem of a link -
link-language, acceptable to all. With the removal of the British these problems have become so menacing as to threaten national unity. Indian Educational Policy today needs the essence of Basic education both in rural and urban areas. It has to include industry and technology with its insistence on a harmonious and vital correlation between the life of the community and its educational system without its sentimentalistic extremes and dogmas.

In spite of the enthusiasm shown by the state and central governments, the progress of Basic education at present is far from satisfaction. It is still in the woods of controversies. Many governments like Madras dropped it while many cling to it half-heartedly but hardly any wholeheartedly. Dr. Zakir Hussain, one of the chief architects of Basic education is reported to have sadly confessed at the National Integration Conference, that Basic education has failed in its purpose. "The Estimate Committee of the Kerala Legislature has recorded their opinion in unmistakable terms that Basic education as run in this state should be given up. This situation is not unique in Kerala; it is a common feature of all states." The general tendency in the country

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\[44\] Ramanathan, *Education from Dewey to Gandhi*, op. cit., p. 8

\[45\] Ibid., p. 7
concerning Basic education is that, apart from a few pockets of Basic Education run by Gandhi's disciples there has been no enthusiasm to further the policy of Basic education. "The experience of the states in respect of the quality of education after the introduction of the Basic system has not been uniform. While the superiority of Basic over the old system is admitted by almost everyone, results have not always been commensurate with the hopes entertained about the system." It is not surprising in these circumstances that the introduction of Basic education has not in all cases had the desired results. "The attitude of the people towards Basic education also varies from place to place. In Bihar, where the attempt has been attended by a large measure of success, the people are sympathetic to the scheme and show by their enthusiasm that they welcome the new system. This is largely true also of Madras, Bombay, and some of the tribal areas. In other states the experience has been less happy. In some cases, the introduction of Basic education appears to have met with resistance from the people and the teaching professionals. In such areas, instead of improving the quality of instruction, Basic education has

46. Progress of Education, Govt. Publication, op. cit. p. 27
sometimes led to a lowering of standards in reading, writing and arithmetic.' Pressure on Elementary schools has, however, made it impossible for the number of trained teachers, to keep pace with the increasing number of schools and expanding enrolment. The result has been that in most states, Basic education has not met with the success anticipated for it.' The experiments that have been conducted in various states during these periods have not fully justified the productive claim made on its behalf.

Except certain states like Bihar, 'in Madras, Mysore, the Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, problems were experienced that do not seem capable of early solution. In some cases, experience seemed to suggest that Basic education at the lower stage is unlikely to pay its way. The relative stress given to the educational and productive aspects of Basic education varies from state to state. Everywhere though the productive aspect has not been encouraging, great importance is attached to the educational value of activity methods inherent in the system.'

But at the same time, only because of these various shades of controversies among educationists over Basic education, we cannot say that it is a

\[L_{17}\text{, }I_bid.\text{pp. }27,28.\]
\[L_{18}\text{, }I_bid.\text{p. }35.\]
\[L_{19}\text{, }I_bid.\text{pp. }37,38.\]
total failure. It is still in the experimental stage in spite of its discouraging record of achievement. Even from the very beginning, it was struggling through controversies and criticisms from educationists as well as from other public. And the whole of its theory, policy and aims were subjected to supercilious remarks, derision and shrugging of the shoulders. Gandhi himself has faithfully recorded some of these criticisms and Acharya Kripalani while writing about it remarks, "... there are difficulties in its introduction which, if not surmounted, are sure to bring about the failure of the experiment."

The critics of Basic education often said that the success of Basic education was due to the political personality of Gandhi and the power of the Congress party and the illiterate mass in India at the time of Gandhi's activities in India and not because of the soundness of the educational theory itself which was framed on behalf of the nation by a restricted few who would certainly support the views of Gandhi. It is well put in the words of Acharya Kripalani as follows: "To the public the danger however, arises..."

50. Harijan, 18.9. '37.
from the fact that when Gandhiji has ushered in a plan, it means the Congress and consequently the country must follow." Hence, when the scheme was given a start except a rare few, those who were best qualified to speak on Basic education did not enter the competition at all.

Whatever may be the arguments on either sides, Basic education is forcing a responsibility on the present day educational thinkers in India to dig deep into the soundness of its theories in the context of the socio-political and national and international background together with the advanced ideas of educational theories. The problem becomes so acute and calls for immediate attention of the educationists, when we realise the tragedy of education on the line of western culture "that the history of mankind for the last half a century has been a history of deepening horror."

Education not only becomes involved more and more with modern arts of warfare, but also with the industries, factories, science and technologies and other allied subjects and professions and the attitude they create thereby in the citizens of the world of tomorrow.

If the educational ideas of Gandhi have to retain

52. Ibid, p. 8
53. Ramanathan, Education from Dewey to Gandhi, op. cit, p. 8
55. Ibid.
their place in India or elsewhere, they can do so only on the basis of their soundness as an educational theory and rest on their own supports linking itself with all the aspects of social problems as a philosophy of education.