THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF MAHATMA GANDHI

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Shri M. S. Patel, the author of this book, approached the Navajivan Trust saying that, as the book dealt with Gandhiji's ideas, he would be glad if the Publishing House founded by him agreed to publish it. He also showed his willingness to look up his MS. again and revise it for the Press. As he observes in his preface, Gandhiji's contribution to the theory and practice of education has not received as much attention as it deserves ; therefore there is very scant literature on the subject published up till now. This is deplorable, specially if we remember that the scheme of Basic Education which he gave us was described by him as his best and last gift to the nation. Therefore it was good to learn that Shri Patel had taken up this subject for his doctorate from the Bombay University which was conferred on him for his thesis on "The Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi". Thinking that it will be a very welcome addition to the few books on the subject published so far, the Navajivan Trust readily accepted Shri Patel's suggestion and hence this publication. We hope it will be welcomed not merely by educational workers but also by innumerable students of Gandhiji — his life and philosophy.

Though not a teacher by profession, we may very well say, Gandhiji all his life had been a teacher of man, irrespective of class or creed, caste or colour, sex or race. It was from that larger aspect of his personality that he was required to touch all sides of man's life on earth, — its progress and development. Therefore he dealt with the problem of education and developed it not merely for the mural limits of a school but also for other and wider fields of various human activities. His view of education, therefore, was to evolve the whole man in us, whom God has created in His own image. Hence education, according to him, encompassed the entire vista of man's life on earth,

from conception to cremation if not before or beyond it. Such a view of education was born of a philosophy that holds that education is indivisible; therefore it does not agree to compartmentalize or departmentalize man's life and its problems as individual apart from social, biological apart from ethical, physiological apart from metaphysical or spiritual. All these contradictory-looking aspects of our being dovetailed themselves in his view as one whole which man surely is and should undoubtedly be so considered; and his peculiar genius as the great teacher of men gave us also a similarly whole technique for the realization of such an entity.

Very often Gandhiji described himself as one who had not really discovered any new thing but had only translated or redefined the hoary truths for the modern age and had chiefly tried to apply them to the group-life of man in society. These truths were well known as guiding our individual life, but more often than not they were ignored or, if at all, observed only in their breach when it came to the questions of collective or group-life of the individual. So was it in the case of Satyagraha, his greatest discovery as the moral equivalent of war. A technique was devised by him whereby Truth and Non-violence were to be operative in group-life as well. This peculiarity of Gandhiji's genius is apparent in his educational discovery of Basic Education as well. To put it in the terminology of the Gita, he only showed us the way of Karmayoga in education. The principle of life and creation, according to the Gita is tersely laid down in its following two verses:

> "From food springs all life, from rain is born food: from यज्ञ — sacrifice comes rain, and sacrifice is the result of Karma — action."
>
> "Know that action springs from Brahma and Brahma from the Imperishable; hence the all-pervading Brahma is ever firm-founded on sacrifice." (Chap. 3-14, 15).

From this principle the Gita derives the eternal law of life which is *yajna*, and enjoins the following law of man's education and advancement:

"Together with यज्ञ — sacrifice did the Lord of beings create, of old, mankind, declaring, by this shall ye increase (evolve and progress); may this be to you the giver of all your desires."

"With this may you cherish the gods and may the gods cherish you; thus cherishing one another may you attain the highest good." (Chap. 3-10, 11).

Man achieves all his good by action. It should therefore be productive of the goods that sustain life. It has therefore to be a co-operative effort of mutual aid and respect for others. And it is through such action, which is sacrifice, that man educates and frees himself of bondage. This is the law of man's education through life. It is his real education for freedom. Applied to a child's education, it says that the child also learns through doing and associating himself with action which is integrally related to the life of the society. Such action, if divorced of life-needs, will render its doer either a parasite or a pest to human society; it will jeopardize the health of the community. As the Gita says (Chap. 3-12), it will land us in sin and bondage. It will thus mean mal-education for a child. Thus only can education be for life or for a democratic society or for real freedom of all. That is the type of education for Sarvodaya. Gandhiji's view of education was thus a derivative from his general philosophy of life which was Karma Yoga. The craft that is to be the medium of *education* was to be done intelligently and with the full understanding of its know-how. Then only can it be Karma Yoga, i.e. synthesis of action and knowledge. It is such a synthetic method of teaching which, Gandhiji said, was the true and natural way of a child's education. It is therefore bound to be the best way also. Shri Patel, in his book, has tried to describe this in terms of modern pedagogy and philosophy. Obviously, the views and remarks that he has expressed in it are his own and are there for what conviction they might carry to the reader. His book is published in the hope that it will make a good addition to the ever-growing literature on Gandhiji.

15-1-'53

"LEAD KINDLY LIGHT....."

* * * * *

"The greatest fact in the story of man on earth is not his material achievements, the empires he has built and broken, but the growth of his soul from age to age in its search for truth and goodness. Those who take part in this adventure of the soul secure an enduring place in the history of human culture. Time has discredited heroes as easily as it has forgotten every one else; but the saints remain. The greatness of Gandhi is more in his holy living than in his heroic struggles, in his insistence on the creative power of the soul and its life-giving quality at a time when the destructive forces seem to be in the ascendent."

S. Radhakrishnan

TO
KAMALA AND ARUN

PREFACE

Gandhiji's achievements in the domain of politics and social reform have been so spectacular that his magnificent contribution to the theory and practice of education does not generally receive as much attention as it deserves. It should, however, be borne in mind that the most valuable legacy he has left to posterity is as a teacher of mankind and prophet of its spiritual regeneration. It is being increasingly recognized that the only way out of the present-day madness of mutual destruction and ravages of politico-economic authoritarianisms is a conscious reorganization of life according to the dynamic truths preached and practised by Gandhiji, who broke down the barriers — mental and physical — which separated man from man, tribe from tribe and nation from nation, and which divided humanity into mutually suspicious and blindly hostile groups. Gandhiji gave us the instruments of Truth and *Ahimsa* to demolish these barriers and enable all human beings, irrespective of their class or country, to be partners of a universal culture built on the foundations of peace, prosperity and love.

It is in this context that I view the significance of Gandhiji's teachings. In the pages that follow, I have applied myself to the task of giving a detailed and critical exposition of Gandhiji's philosophy with its metaphysical foundations and practical applications in the field of education. Gandhiji's versatile genius made it possible for him to spotlight every problem under the sun from God to birth-control. The scope of the present work is, however, restricted to the interpretation of Gandhiji's philosophy and showing that his educational teachings which are found to be sound in practice are based upon a sound theory, though this theory may not have been formulated by him in an academic fashion.

Some teachers are inclined to maintain that, in their practical work, there is no need for a philosophy of education. It is difficult to imagine anything more unintelligent

than the attitude of these practical teachers towards theory. They appear to think that, as the proof of the pudding is in the eating, their successful practice stands in no need of the backbone of theory. The truth is that they have not taken the trouble to bring clearly to their consciousness the principles on which they have been working. Theory arises naturally out of practice, for nothing practical can be done with success without some previous knowledge of the end to be attained and some notion of the means by which it is attained. It is usual at the early stages to give more attention to the practical, and to leave to a later period the consideration of the reasons of our actions.

The same has been the case with Gandhiji, who, to begin with, experimented with education, then reflected upon the results gained from experience and reached conclusions which were open to correction and improvement in the light of further experiments. This is how his theory of education has evolved during the period of over half a century. His method is *a posteriori* rather than *a priori*, inasmuch as he subjected his conclusions to the acid tests of verification adopted by modern science.

In Gandhiji's view, education is an integrated and indivisible process beginning with conception and ending with death. It is true that, in view of the peculiar conditions prevailing in the country when it was on the threshold of independence, Gandhiji gave Basic Education the highest priority as an instrument of national regeneration, but that does not mean that he was not alive to the supreme need for education for all stages of life from infancy to late adulthood. In fact, the first thing he did after his release from detention following the Quit India Movement was to put forth his new conception of *Samagra Nai Talim* or Education for Life through life. My main concern has been not only the consideration of Basic Education, but also the exposition of the basic principles underlying Gandhiji's entire philosophy of education, which is in no wise inferior to any other branch of speculative philosophy. Though the actual working of Basic schools does not fall within the purview of my discussion, it cannot

be passed over in silence or relegated to the background, because education is both a science and an art and if it is cut off from its practical moorings, it would be unrealistic and unscientific. I have, therefore, discussed at considerable length the implications of Basic Education, traced its progress since its inception and indicated the possible lines of its advancement.

The core of Gandhiji's philosophy is manual labour to which he has imparted a special dignity by making it the pivot of all our activities — social, political, educational, economic and even religious. It occupies the position of the sun in the vast solar system of human life, satisfying our material needs in perfect harmony with the higher values of life. Thus Gandhiji's educational philosophy is a marvellous edifice with a perfect structural unity, leaving no loose ends anywhere in the whole structure. It has well-defined aims, is supported by the recent findings of psychology and sociology and has laid down a well-regulated procedure for the realization of the ultimate objectives of education.

In the end, I take the opportunity of acknowledging my deep debt of gratitude to Dr. M. A. Buch, Professor of Philosophy, L. D. College, Ahmedabad, and Professor T. K. N. Menon, Dean of the Faculty of Education and Psychology, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, for their inspiring guidance and kindly interest, but for which the present work would have been well-nigh impossible. My thanks are also due to the several authors on whose works I have freely drawn for supporting my conclusions; to the Trustees of the Navajivan Trust for bringing out this book in its present form; and to Shreemati Hansa Mehta, Vice-Chancellor, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, for writing the Foreword despite her heavy preoccupation with the work of the Secondary Education Commission. I am also grateful to the authorities of the University of Bombay for their kind permission to publish my thesis in the form of this book.

Baroda, November 1, 1952 M. S. Patel

FOREWORD

The late Shri K. G. Mashruwala was to have written a foreword to this book which deals with the 'Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi'. As a student and critic of Gandhian philosophy he was the right man to have undertaken this task. Unfortunately his death has deprived us of a valuable commentary on this very important aspect of Gandhiji's philosophy.

The author is correct when he says that Gandhiji's educational philosophy does not begin with the Wardha Scheme or the Basic Education Scheme. He began his experiments in education at the Tolstoy Farm in South Africa. He continued these experiments when he returned to India and established his Ashram first at Sabarmati and later at Sevagram. The Basic Education Scheme can be considered as a result of these experiments carried on for a number of years. It actually emerged out of his desire to solve the problem that confronted the Congress when it took office for the first time in 1937, in various provinces. The problem was to improve the existing system and make it universal. There was a general discontent with the then existing system of primary education. The teachers were badly paid and badly equipped for teaching. Education was all bookish; it had no bearing on the daily life of the children, with the result that it never sustained the interest of the children, who soon forgot what they had learned in schools as soon as they left them. This amounted to tremendous wastage in time, money and energy. The problem before the country was two-fold. Firstly, to make the education as imparted in primary schools more related to life and, therefore, useful; and secondly, to find ways and means of making it universal. The Basic Education Scheme which discards mere bookish learning aims at an all-round education for the child to enable him to be a useful member of society. It can be described in short as the education of the three H's,

i.e., Hand, Heart and Head. The training of the hand is to be done through a craft — a productive activity.

The idea of emphasizing the productive part of the activity was in order to solve the financial difficulty of making Basic Education universal. Gandhiji felt that unless a part of the expenses of this education was met through the productive activity, it would be difficult to make it universal. What Gandhiji had in mind was also the fact that a child should be taught a craft that was productive and which would be useful to him after he left school. His philosophy that every one should be self-sufficient and not dependent on others for his or her daily needs was also responsible for this stand that he took in the matter of craft. Even a creative activity which was educationally sound, but was not productive, did not appeal to him. The author has very ably explained the entire philosophy underlying the Basic Education Scheme as expounded by Gandhiji. The author has also rightly said that there can be no finality about educational schemes and if Gandhiji had been alive he would have been prepared to make changes or modify the Scheme where necessary in the light of experience gained.

The author has done well in comparing Gandhiji with other philosophers who have contributed to the educational theories of their times. He has classified these philosophers into naturalists, idealists and pragmatists. About Gandhiji he says : "The real greatness of Gandhiji as an educational philosopher consists in the fact that the dominant tendencies of naturalism, idealism and pragmatism are not separate and independent in his philosophy, but they fuse into a unity, giving rise to a theory of education which would suit the needs of the day and satisfy the loftiest aspirations of the human soul. This and not the scheme of Basic Education is his greatest achievement."

The book while discussing Gandhian philosophy of education covers a wide range and provides an interesting and instructive reading.

19-12-'52 HANSA MEHTA

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THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF MAHATMA GANDHI

CHAPTER I

PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION

Some one has said that the world neglects or uses ill its greatest men and prophets, and allows them to pass unhonoured and misunderstood. Appreciation comes after their death, when the extreme violence of opinions subsides, hostile theories correct one another and the scattered elements of truth cease to contend and begin to coalesce. This is not entirely true of Gandhiji to whom world-wide recognition and appreciation came in his lifetime. It was only to Gandhiji who had withdrawn his eyes from the ephemeral prizes of the world and fixed them upon the eternal truth, that a large measure of praise and homage came while he was yet in the land of the living. Gandhiji was great in his lifetime, greater in the hour of his supreme self-sacrifice and became greater still after his assassination, while guiding the erring humanity to the path of truth, justice and rectitude.

Gandhiji died, but he still lives and will continue to live for countless generations in his sublime teachings. He spoke and wrote on every aspect of life from philosophy to birth-control. He wrote on education with the ease and facility of a veteran educational philosopher. Are his widely scattered writings entitled to be styled a philosophy of education or are they an effusion of a saint and a politician strayed into the realm of education? It is difficult to answer this question, unless we define the terms *philosophy* and *education* clearly and intelligibly.

What is philosophy? Plato says in his *Republic*: "He who has a taste for every sort of knowledge and who is curious to learn and is never satisfied may be justly termed a philosopher." [1] He is "a lover, not of a part of

[1] *Republic*, p. 252.

wisdom, but of the whole".[2] His desire is "to see life steadily and see it whole". Thus Reality is the subject of philosophical inquiry. All are philosophers who seek to provide a reasoned-out point of view on fundamental questions like the nature of Reality, the nature of man, his origin and destiny, the goal of his strivings, etc. According to Professor John Dewey, "Whenever philosophy has been taken seriously, it has always been assumed that it signified achieving a wisdom that would influence the conduct of life."[3] He pleaded for a practical philosophy, for man's beliefs about life mattered more to him than anything else. In the words of Aldous Huxley, "Men live in accordance with their philosophy of life, their conception of the world."[4]

Every man has his own philosophy of life. Different philosophies result in different ways of life. It is natural that a person with a philosophy of life will seek to influence and convert others. This process of influencing and converting consciously or unconsciously is education, which, in other words, is the modification of natural development. A philosophy thus results in an educational effort. Sir John Adams believed that "education is the dynamic side of philosophy."[5] It is the active aspect of philosophical belief, the practical means of realizing the ideals of life.

The relation between philosophy and education has been clearly defined by Professor James Ross, who says: "Philosophy and education are like two sides of a coin: the former is the contemplative side, while the latter is the active side. Education is the influence of a person who holds a vital belief brought to bear on another person with the object of making him also hold that belief."[6]

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2 *Ibid.*

3 *Democracy and Education*, p. 378.

4 *Ends and Means*, p. 252

5 *Evolution of Educational Theory*, Ch. 1.

6 *Groundwork of Educational Theory*, p. 16.

That education is fundamentally, rather invariably, dependent on philosophy is proved by the fact that the great philosophers have always been great educationists. Educational movements are the working-out of various philosophical positions. A philosopher, unless he is an idle dreamer, naturally becomes an educationist. We can find the clearest examples of the dependence of education on philosophy in the lives and teachings of all the great philosophers from Socrates down to John Dewey in the West and from Yajnavalkya down to Gandhiji in the East. Socrates saw the need for an enduring standard against which moral judgments might be measured. He believed that ideas of universal validity existed in the very nature of things. He made it his main task of life to bring such ideas to light in the minds of those with whom he associated. Thus a theorizing philosopher became an active educationist. It is universally acknowledged that he was one of the greatest teachers of all time.

His disciple Plato's Republic is accepted on all hands as a classical treatise on education, as it deals directly with education. Christ lived his life in accordance with the fundamental idea that God is the Father of all men. He was a living exemplar of such a relationship between God and man. He was concerned with the education of his disciples. What is true of Christ is true of all great teachers of the world including Gautama Buddha, Mohammed and Shankaracharya, who have all left indelible marks on the tablets of eternity. Each of them formulated his own philosophy, tried to give it a concrete form and make others hold the same belief as he held. It is not surprising that, though centuries have elapsed since they formulated their philosophies, we find even today vast multitudes of men and women all over the world striving to live up to the ideals preached by them. Imagine, for a moment, the condition of the world, if a few such outstanding philosophers were not born. Such a world would have been dominated by the forces of evil, hatred, injustice and unreason. These great teachers realized that the minds of men are the birthplaces of

everything good and evil and that it is in the minds of men that the foundation for a better world could be laid, so that men and women who, having caught a "vision splendid", will not rest until they had built "paradise in this green and pleasant world".

Coming to more recent times, we have Rousseau who believed that society had become an end in itself rather than a means to the welfare of the individual. He worked out in *Emile or Education* the conditions for an ideal education, Emile being educated according to nature away from the madding crowds. Emile's education was Rousseau's philosophy in action.

In our own days we may think of George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Bertrand Russell, Aldous Huxley, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, all of whom first preached a way of life and then gave us their philosophies of education. The greatest living philosopher of America, John Dewey, however, believes that philosophy follows from education, that philosophy, if it is practicable and workable, is the theory of education and that truth is what works in practice. He holds that education is a process of living and not some kind of preparation for future living. His philosophy reflects the Industrial Revolution and the development of democracy. He freed American philosophy from its sterile preoccupation with German epistemology.

It would not be out of place here to examine the relation between philosophy and politics. If education is philosophy in action, so is politics too. Political systems are the outcome of philosophical positions. Politics is philosophy in concrete form, and a political system evolves a suitable educational theory and practice to maintain itself on a solid foundation. An educational theory, unless it comes from a philosopher of outstanding merit, will not take a concrete shape, if it is not backed up by a powerful political system. This is one of the reasons why education is generally undertaken either by the State or by religious sects. The aim of the State is to produce citizens after an accepted pattern; the aim of the

religious sects is to produce men and women who would strive to realize the ideals preached by the heads of their sects. Whosoever undertakes the function of education, it is beyond doubt that the process of education has been most effective whenever and wherever it is undertaken by the State. Hence the close relation between education and politics.

Every philosophy has both a political and an educational system following in its wake. We can find this interconnection of philosophy, politics and education in the works of Aristotle. Virtue, said Aristotle, lies in the attainment of happiness or goodness. It includes well-doing in addition to well-being. His *Ethics* is a study of well-being and his *Politics* of well-doing. His *Politics* largely consists of his philosophy of education.

We have seen that philosophy is not a mysterious and abstruse subtlety confined to the elite only. It does not connote the mere loving of wisdom. Any one who employs knowledge and experience in determining a course of action in a given situation is thereby entering into the realm of philosophy. People from the beginning have searched into the reason and nature of the things in their environment and arrived at certain general conceptions and attempted to apply them to their daily conduct of life. Philosophy is concerned with a systematic view of relevant facts, with their interpretations and implications for the problems of life. From this point of view, we have the philosophy of art, of conduct, of education, of music, etc. In a very broad sense, any attempt to work out a systematic view of things is a philosophy. There are, therefore, as many individual philosophies as there are persons who reason and determine their course of action in terms of their knowledge.

Philosophies of education are more general philosophies of life. An educational philosophy is concerned primarily with the aim of education, the programme of education needed for the achievement of the aim and the examination and evaluation of educational organization, content, methods, teacher-

preparation, measurement and the like in terms of the goals and ideals of life.[7]

We have already seen that philosophy and education are interdependent. Philosophy is dependent upon education for its formulation, while education is dependent upon philosophy for its guidance. Every good philosophy of education should comprise the following three essential elements :

Firstly, a philosophy of education should not be mere theorizing about education. The scientific movement in the present century has exercised a healthy influence on the development of a philosophy of education by making educational thinking more critical. A comprehensive understanding of the facts of the fundamental sciences like psychology, sociology and biology has helped the solution and simplification of educational problems relating especially to the nature and behaviour of the learner and the social relationship in which he is expected to participate.

Secondly, there should be a formulation of educational aims and purposes. This is a vital step in developing a philosophy of education. An educational philosopher must have his own convictions as to the educational objectives which ultimately determine the choice of methods, the plan of organization, the selection of materials and the subject-matter. He should have a clear conception of the immediate and ultimate aims and purposes of education. Opinion is sharply divided among educational thinkers as to whether the chief aim of education should be the fullest development and happiness of the individual or the highest good of society. The conflict between the two schools of educational thought would be resolved, if it is kept in mind that they are the two sides of the same coin. We would do well to follow the lead of the ancient Greek philosophers who strove hard to reconcile the claims of the individual with those

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[7] F. W. Thomas and A. R. Lang: *Principles of Modern Education*, p. 39.

of the State. In their view, the interests of the State are best promoted by the development of virtue and wisdom in the individual, and individuals find the best scope for self-development in the service of the State. It is needless to state that a community stands "to gain from the free growth of individuality among its potential citizens". Mazzini's definition of democracy, viz., "the progress of all, through all, under the leadership of the wisest and best" emphasizes the same fact.

The third step in developing a philosophy of education is the evaluation of the essential principles and their organization into a scheme of educational procedure. This evaluation and application is difficult, because it is likely to be subjective and personal in character. Each educational thinker offers his own plans, methods and systems emphasizing his favourite data, aims and values. One need not be disconcerted by lack of complete agreement among educationists, for the validity of any system of educational values and procedures can be determined by an objective measurement of its results.

Our consideration of the above points leads us to the conclusion that a philosophy of education must be based upon an adequate knowledge of the fundamental facts of the sciences, the formulation of aims and purposes towards which educational activity should be directed and the evaluation of essential principles and practices and their organization into a scheme of educational programme. The need for such a well-considered philosophy of education cannot be overemphasized, for its absence "makes one either a mechanical follower of routine or the victim of ill-advised and futile innovations".[8]

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[8] F. W. Thomas and A. R. Lang: *Principles of Modern Education*, p. 16.

CHAPTER II

GANDHIJI'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Gandhiji's marvellous achievements in the field of politics and social reform and his experiments with Truth and Non-violence have been so spectacular that his outstanding contribution to educational theory and practice is generally passed over unnoticed. The real measure of his greatness as a prince among educational thinkers is lost sight of like the wood in the trees. He realized quite early in his life that education was a pivotal activity on which not only social, but moral, political and economical progress also ultimately depends. He has secured a unique place in the galaxy of the great teachers and preachers who have brought fresh light in the field of education. Green remarked that Pestalozzi was the starting point of modern educational theory and practice. This may be true so far as Western education is concerned. An impartial study of Gandhiji's educational teachings will reveal that he is the starting point of modern educational theory and practice in the East. Pestalozzi earned the appellation of Father Pestalozzi; Gandhiji is rightly and deservedly called the Father of the Nation.

There is a growing tendency on the part of the common people to identify Gandhiji's educational philosophy with what is popularly known as the Wardha Scheme. The Wardha Scheme of education is no doubt an integral part of Gandhiji's educational philosophy, but it should be remembered that it is a scheme, or a programme of education, which is not synonymous with Gandhiji's entire philosophy of education, which aims at bringing about a revolution in the hearts and minds of men all over the world. The Wardha Scheme is primarily concerned with the education of children between 7 and 14 years of age.

In Gandhiji's system of thought even the smallest act or word is related to those eternal values which give content and significance to life. The fact that Gandhiji's educational philosophy has not yet received the attention of the world it deserves, may be due to its recent origin and growth, or lack of its proper interpretation and evaluation by recognized authorities on the subject; but that does not detract from its intrinsic worth. It may be reasonably hoped that it will shine like a pure gem and guide the destinies of the human race by shaping its educational policies and programmes for generations to come.

In the light of the basic requisites of philosophy discussed by us previously, are we justified in calling Gandhiji's teachings a philosophy? The answer to this question largely depends upon the meaning we attach to the term *philosophy*. If we mean by *philosophy* a mysterious and abstruse subtlety indulged in by the idle, intellectual few, Gandhiji has no claim whatever to be called a philosopher. He is intensely practical, and the abstruse and remote has little place in his scheme of things. If philosophy is concerned with a systematic and reasoned-out view of relevant facts and with their interpretations and implications for the problems of life, Gandhiji ranks among the greatest philosophers of the world. His view on the nature of Reality is monistic, as can be clearly seen from his early writings. "I believe," says he, "in the absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity. What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source." [4] He again says in the same breath: "I believe in *advaita*. I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives." [5] The same belief is expressed by him even in his subsequent writings. He held it firmly for the whole life. For him God is one by whatever name you prefer to call

4 *Young India*, 25-9-'24.
5 *Ibid.*, 4-12-'24.

Him. You call Him Rama or Rehman, Ishwara or Allah, Christ or Buddha, but His essential unity you cannot change. Gandhiji further says in unequivocal terms: "I subscribe to the belief or the philosophy that all life in its essence is one, and that men are working consciously or unconsciously towards the realization of that identity. This belief requires a living faith in a living God who is the ultimate arbiter of our fate. Without him not a blade of grass moves."[6] For Gandhiji God is the Ultimate Reality behind the universe which is always in a state of flux. "God alone is real, the world is an illusion. He alone persists in the midst of change." Gandhiji observes: "I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and re-creates. That informing power or spirit is God. And since nothing else I see merely through the senses can or will persist, He alone is. And is this power benevolent or malevolent? I see it purely as benevolent, for I can see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is the supreme Good".[7]

Gandhiji does not need a logical proof for the existence of God. He says: "There is an indefinable, mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends reason. But it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent. It is proved not by extraneous evidence but in the transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the real presence of God within. Such testimony is to be found in the experiences of an unbroken

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[6] N. K. Bose: *Selections from Gandhi*, p. 27.
[7] *Young India*, 11-10-'28.

line of prophets and sages in all countries and climes. To reject this evidence is to deny oneself." [8]

In Gandhiji's view, there is no other God than Truth. What is Truth? This is a difficult question, but Gandhiji solves it for himself by saying that it is what the voice within us tells us. Gandhiji would say, Truth is God rather than God is Truth; because the atheists in their passion for discovering truth do not hesitate to deny the very existence of God. The definition, "Truth is God", gave Gandhiji the greatest satisfaction.

If Truth is God, how to realize it? Gandhiji says that the only means for the realization of Truth is *ahimsa*. Realization of Truth which is God is the ultimate goal of human life, and *ahimsa* is the means to this end. "*Ahimsa* and Truth," says Gandhiji, "are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say, which is the obverse, and which is the reverse? Nevertheless, *ahimsa* is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach and so *ahimsa* is our supreme duty." [9]

As there is no other God than Truth, and the only means for the realization of Truth is *ahimsa* or love, only the pure at heart can see God. To attain purity of heart, to rise above attachment and repulsion, to be free from passion in thought, word and deed, to be redeemed from fear and vanity, the inconsistencies of our flesh and the discursiveness of our minds must be overcome. Disciplined effort, austere living, *tapas*, says Gandhiji, is the way to it. Suffering rinses our spirit clean. If we recognize the superiority of spirit over matter and the supremacy of the moral law, we must be able to overcome evil through non-violence, which can be practised not only by individuals, but by groups, communities and nations also. It is a power which can be

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8 *Ibid.*

9 Mahatma Gandhi: *From Yeravda Mandir*, p. 13.

wielded equally by all, provided they have a living faith in the God of Love and have therefore equal love for all mankind. It is not limited to physical life. It is a frame of mind. To think ill of others or to tell a lie is an act of violence. "When it is accepted as the law of life, it must pervade the whole being and not be applied to isolated acts". [10] Non-violence is not for Gandhiji a negative attitude. It is positive and dynamic. As Dr. S. Radhakrishnan puts it, "It is not non-resistance or submission to evil. It is resistance to it through love. Satyagraha is belief in the power of the spirit, the power of truth, the power of love by which we can overcome evil through self-suffering and self-sacrifice." [11]

Gandhiji is not an egoistic seeker after truth. His motto is: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." He believes in freedom and equality of all. His dream was the establishment of a universal community of free persons without artificial barriers of caste, colour, creed, wealth and power. The movement of such a society should be towards human brotherhood and then to the realization of the Absolute. According to Gandhiji the individual must work out his perfection in a spiritual society. Such a society must be based on principles that will lead the individual on to his divine destiny. Briefly speaking, these principles are those of love, non-violence, truth and justice.

Such a social order as contemplated by Gandhiji must be free from any type of exploitation or injustice. He wants to build up a classless society of workers. This non-exploiting society must rely upon moral force and moral sanctions. To avoid capitalism, he proposes to build up the economic and social structure on decentralized industry and agriculture. He advocates cottage and village industries to check the accumulation of big fortunes in the hands of a few. Just as he is against

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10 *Harijan*, 5-9-'36.

11 *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 353.

big private-owned business, so he is against big zamindaris. He is, however, not against the possession of minimum necessary material goods. He believes that they are necessary for a refined, civilized and moral life.

In such an ideal spiritual society of Gandhiji's dream, service unto man would be service unto God, for God is in the heart of every man. He says in clear terms : "My creed is service of God and, therefore, of humanity."[12] In his view, "Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities — social, political, religious — have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour, simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. I am a part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity."[13] So for Gandhiji God is neither in the temple of the Hindus nor in the church of the Christians nor in the mosque of the Muslims. He is in the temple of humanity and "Man becomes great exactly in the degree in which he works for the welfare of his fellow-men."[14]

Gandhiji firmly believes that the ultimate aim of man's life is the realization of God. Man is a part and parcel of the social structure through which alone he can realize this *summum bonum* of his life. Society or humanity is composed of human beings who are bound together by the bond of universal brotherhood. Man and society can realize God who is Truth, only through *ahimsa*, which implies love for all and hatred for none. As man shares the common soul with all other human beings he should, as we have seen, practise the ideal of service unto all. In such a society there is no domination of the strong over the weak and no exploitation in any form. The whole social structure is based upon moral and equitable principles.

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12 *Young India*, 23-10-'24.

13 *Harijan*, 29-8-'36.

14 Mahatma Gandhi: *Ethical Religion*, p. 56.

We have made an attempt in the foregoing lines to give a quintessence of Gandhiji's philosophy. It is not an exaggeration to say that, if Gandhiji was not a practical philosopher, he was nothing. He was an experimentalist to the core. Did he not call his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*? The fact that he spent the whole of his life on his experiments with truth is of greater consequence than his political, social or educational experiments, for these are mere tools for the realization of the *summum bonum* of life.

Like every other great philosopher, Gandhiji spared no pains to translate his philosophy into actual practice. As a true philosopher he could not help being an educator. His philosophy has both a political and an educational system following closely in its wake. His political philosophy consists in the evolution and establishment of an ideal society which is a Stateless democracy, where social life has become so perfect as to be self-regulated and self-disciplined. "In such a State every one is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal State, therefore, there is no political power, because there is no State." [15] Such an ideal democracy will be a federation of *satyagrahi* village communities. In such a community every individual will be a believer in non-violence and will live a life of love, renunciation and social service. In such a non-violent society non-violence will reconcile individual freedom with social restraint.

With the object of realizing his ideal of a spiritual society as a stepping-stone to the realization of God or Truth, Gandhiji evolved an educational system as a dynamic side of his philosophy. There is a unity running through his concrete schemes and plans, making them a complete system of philosophy. His thoughts on education well cohere into a complete educational philosophy, which is the coping-stone of his general philosophy.

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[15] *Young India*, 2-7-'31.

What is true education according to Gandhiji? We have the answer in his own words: "By education I mean an all-round drawing out of 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."[16] This aim is in conformity with the one accepted by the Board of Education in England, viz., "the aim of education should be to develop to the full the potentialities of every child at school, in accord always with the general good of the community of which he is a member."[17] Contrary to the belief of the common people, Gandhiji attached little value to literacy in his scheme of education. In Gandhiji's view, an unsophisticated shepherd who is possessed of character is a much better citizen of the world than one who has received the so-called literary training in a modern school. Gandhiji's views on literacy were elucidated by Shri K. G. Mashruwala, one of his closest associates and an authentic interpreter of the Gandhian philosophy. "In the Segaon Method," writes he, "literacy (that is, information on various matters through reading and writing, and capacity to follow logical or pseudological controversy) is not considered knowledge or even the medium of knowledge, but is regarded only as a symbolical representation both of knowledge and of accomplished ignorance."[18] Literacy can never be, as people are apt to believe, the be-all and end-all of education. In Gandhiji's philosophy of education, the personality of the educand is of primary importance, and not the tools and subjects. Like Rousseau Gandhiji restored the child to his legitimate place in the scheme of education. His greatness as an educationist lies in the fact that without reading Rousseau's Emile he evolved a philosophy of paido-centric education. "Education, he has often explained," writes

16 *Harijan*, 31-7-'37.
17 *Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers*, p. 12.
18 *Harijan*, 4-12-'37.

Shri Mahadev Desai, "must draw the whole man out of the boy and the girl, and no education could be sound that does not make useful citizens, whole men, of boys and girls." [19] What constitutes the whole man ? Of course, his personality. It is the function of education, therefore, to bring about a harmonious development of all the four aspects of the human personality, viz., body, heart, mind and spirit. So we have the education of the body, of the heart, of the mind and of the spirit. "True education," says Gandhiji, "is that which draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of the children." [20] 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. All the ills of our educational system from the dawn of civilization down to modern times can be traced to the undue emphasis laid on one or more aspects of education and indifference to others.

After laying down definite objectives of education, Gandhiji proceeds with the work of prescribing a suitable method for realizing those objectives. The existing system of education in India is "not only 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, affect urban ways and get a smattering of something which may be anything but education. What then should be the form of primary education ? I think the remedy lies in educating them by means of vocational or manual training." [21] This is the most essential feature of Gandhiji's philosophy of education. "I would therefore begin," Gandhiji continues, "the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training....I hold that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of

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[19] *The Year Book of Education* (1940), p. 441.

[20] *Harijan*, 11-9-'37.

[21] Gandhiji's Inaugural Speech at All-India National Education Conference, Wardha, on October 22, 1937.

education. Only every handicraft has 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." [22] This is the core of Gandhiji's educational philosophy. The handicraft is not to be the necessary concomitant of the existing method of imparting education, but it is to be the centre of the method. All training will be principally through the medium of and in correlation with a productive industry. The school is not to be just a school where a vocation is added to the existing plethora of subjects; but all subjects are to be taught through a vocation. It should not be inferred from this that the school is to be turned into a factory in which boy-men are engaged in a productive craft. It is through a suitable craft that the aim of education conceived by Gandhiji is to be realized. "The fact that the whole person in the boys and girls has to be developed through a vocation automatically saves the schools from degenerating into factories. For, over and above the required degree of proficiency in the vocation in which they are trained, the boys and girls will have to show equal proficiency in the other subjects they will be expected to learn." [23] It is, therefore, an article of faith with Gandhiji that education must revolve round vocational and manual activity as the centre, and all syllabuses should be woven round vocational training. "This does not mean," says Shri Mahadev Desai, "supplementing literary with manual training, but making manual training the means of literary and intellectual training." [24]

The idea that a suitable handicraft should form the centre and basis of all education worth the name is supported by recent developments in educational theory and practice with an important difference. In the well-considered opinion of the Consultative Committee attached to the Board of Education in England, the curriculum

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[22] *Harijan*, 31-7-'37.

[23] *Harijan*, 30-10-'37.

[24] *The Year Book of Education* (1940), p. 441.

"should be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored." [25] Gandhiji goes a step further and prescribes a handicraft as the source from which the activity and experience should spring. The fact that the handicraft is to be the means of developing the whole man prevents the activity from lapsing into a mere frivolity. Hence the craft has both educational and economic value.

This leads us to another important feature of Gandhiji's educational philosophy, viz., the self-supporting aspect of the craft chosen as a means of education. Gandhiji believes that the handicraft should, besides developing the personality of the child, make education self-supporting. The craft chosen should be so learnt that its produce should have economic value. The self-supporting aspect of education may be taken in two senses, viz., education that will help one to be self-supporting in later life, and education which in itself is self-supporting. [26] If it is taken in the first sense, much opposition is not expected from the opponents of the scheme. It enables the pupil to be self-supporting after leaving school by undertaking a suitable occupation. Gandhiji himself says: "This education ought to be for them a kind of insurance against unemployment." [27] Elaborating the same idea, he further observes:

> "The child at the age of 14, that is after finishing a seven-year course, should be discharged as an earning unit. Even now the poor people's children automatically lend a helping hand to their parents — the feeling at the back of their minds being: What shall my parents eat and what shall they give me to eat? That is an education in 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. You have to train the boys in one occupation or another. Round this special occupation you will train up his mind, his body, his hand-writing, his artistic sense, and so on. He will be the master of the craft he learns." [28]

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25 *The Primary School*, (1931), p. 93.

26 C. J. Varkey: *The Wardha Scheme of Education*, p. 30.

27 *Harijan*, 11-9-'37.

28 *Harijan*, 18-9-'37.

. . . The real meaning of the term *self-supporting* is in connection with meeting the expenses of teachers' salaries through the manual and productive work of the children. Gandhiji is confident that "every school can be made self-supporting, the condition being that the State takes over the manufactures of these schools." He does not approach the idea of self-supporting education with hesitation, for "My one regret is that what I have seen through the glass darkly for the past 40 years, I have begun to see now quite clearly under the stress of circumstances." [29] "Such education, taken as a whole, can, must be, self-supporting; in fact, self-support is the acid test of its reality." [30] To the critics who condemned Gandhiji's scheme by likening the boys in the school of his conception to the boys of the semi-slave plantations of Ceylon, he vigorously replied: "'. . . the boys on the plantations are not treated as students. Their labour is no part of their training. In the schools I advocate boys have all that boys learn in high schools less English but plus drill, music, drawing and, of course, a vocation. To call these factories amounts to an obstinate refusal to appreciate a series of facts. It is very like a man refusing to read the description of a human being and calling him a monkey because he has seen no other animal but a monkey, and because the description in some particulars, but only in some, answers that of monkeys." [31]

The two basic principles of Gandhiji's educational philosophy are that education should be woven round a suitable craft and that the craft chosen should meet the expenses of the teachers' salaries. It is not Gandhiji's intention to ensure economic independence of the pupil or the school by means of a craft mechanically learnt. He proposes to accord dignity to labour, ensure modest and honest livelihood and alter the characters and language through which education is imparted. Labour does not stand merely for self-help or school work.

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29 *Harijan*, 2-10-'37.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Harijan*, 18-9-'37.

Gandhiji's belief that the vocation should have economic value and that there is nothing baneful in it has the support of Professor John Dewey, who observes :

> "To charge that the various activities of gardening, weaving, construction in wood, manipulation of metals, cooking, etc., which carry over these fundamental human concerns into school resources, have a merely bread and butter value is to miss their point. If the mass of mankind has usually found in its industrial occupations nothing but evils which had to be endured for the sake of maintaining existence, the fault is not in the occupations, but in the conditions under which they are carried on. The continually increasing importance of economic factors in contemporary life makes it the more needed that education should reveal their scientific content and their social value." [32]

The idea of self-supporting education leads us to another essential feature of Gandhiji's philosophy of education, viz., his creed of non-violence. In the opinion of Shri Mahadev Desai : "The idea of self-supporting education cannot be divorced from the ideological background of non-violence, and unless we bear in mind that the new scheme is intended to bring into being a new age from which class and communal hatred is eliminated and exploitation is eschewed, we cannot make a success of it. We should, therefore, approach the task with firm faith in non-violence and in the faith that the new scheme is evolved by a mind that has conceived non-violence as the panacea for all evils." [33] To Gandhiji's mind there is fundamental opposition between education and violence, for he is convinced that true education must be imparted through non-violence. This is a central idea in Gandhiji's educational scheme. He truly says : "If India has resolved to eschew violence, this system of education becomes an integral part of the discipline she has to go through. We are told that England spends millions on education. America also does so. But we forget that all wealth is obtained through exploitation. They have reduced the art of exploitation to a science, and might well give their boys the costly education they do. We

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[32] *Democracy and Education*, pp. 234, 235.

[33] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 94.

cannot, will not think in terms of exploitation, and we have no alternative but this plan of education which is based on non-violence." [34]

Gandhiji could see that the present system of education in India is unreal and artificial. Among its manifold evils the lack of close relationship of education with life situation is the chief. There is no co-ordination between the various subjects and no provision for adjusting the child intelligently and actively to his environment. According to Gandhiji, all teaching should be carried on through concrete life situations relating to craft or to social and physical environment, so that whatever the child learns becomes assimilated into his growing activity. The school of Gandhiji's imagination will not be a place of passive absorption of information imparted second-hand, but will be a place of work, experimentation and discovery, because it will follow an activity curriculum. The child acquires his knowledge actively and utilizes it for the understanding and the better control of his social environment. From this arises another important feature of Gandhiji's philosophy of education — the sense of social responsibility.

The ideal of citizenship inherent in the scheme is its important feature. Mr C. J. Varkey remarks :

> "The present system of education has completely ignored this aspect of education. In modern India, citizenship is destined to become increasingly democratic in the social, economic and political life of the country, and a system of national education must produce a new generation with opportunities of understanding its own problems and rights and obligations. For this purpose we need a completely new system of education that will secure at least the minimum of education required for the intelligent exercise of rights and duties of citizenship. Moreover, an intelligent citizen must be able to repay in the form of some useful service what he owes to society as a member of an organized civilized community." [35]

In addition to the above fundamental features of

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[34] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 66.

[35] *The Wardha Scheme of Education*, pp. 39, 40.

Gandhiji's philosophy of education, there are other secondary features which deserve to be mentioned here :

1. Free and compulsory education should be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale. The age-limits of children under compulsion to be 7 to 14 years.

2. Emphasis on the mother-tongue : The mother-tongue not only to become the medium of instruction, but to occupy the first place among languages.

3. The scheme to include what we now understand by elementary and secondary education — " matriculation less English ".[36]

4. The State to take over the products of the children.

We have discussed the various aspects of Gandhian philosophy of education. We should now be able to see how Gandhiji's educational teachings are entitled to be called a philosophy of education. We have already discussed the three essential prerequisites of a philosophy of education. Gandhiji's educational philosophy consists in the formulation of aims and objectives of education and laying down procedure and programme for their realization. The organic structure of his educational philosophy would be complete, if we can show conclusively that the edifice of his philosophy is based on the facts of the fundamental sciences like psychology, sociology and biology.

The fact that Gandhiji's educational philosophy has a sound psychological background is established by the findings of the Zakir Husain Committee :

> " Psychologically, it is desirable, because it relieves the child from the tyranny of a purely academic and theoretical instruction against which its active nature is always making a healthy protest. It balances the intellectual and practical elements of experience, and may be made an instrument of educating the body and the mind in co-ordination. The child acquires not the superficial literacy which implies, often without warrant, a capacity to read the printed page, but the far more important capacity of using hand and intelligence for some constructive

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[36] *Harijan*, 31-7-'37.

purpose. This, if we may be permitted to use the expression, is "the literacy of the whole personality." [37]

According to Gandhiji, if education is to fit the future citizen for playing his role in society, he should cultivate in school the character appropriate to a social being. He must be trained for his life. He must have an opportunity to practise civic virtues at school. To be a member of a democratic State he must learn the art of discipline and self-government. He should cultivate breadth of vision, toleration and good neighbourliness. The school must be an organized society engaged in some fruitful creative activity. The Report of the Zakir Husain Committee says :

> "Socially considered, the introduction of such practical productive work in education, to be participated in by all the children of the nation, will tend to break down the existing barriers of prejudices between manual and intellectual workers, harmful alike for both. It will also cultivate in the only possible way a true sense of the dignity of labour and of human solidarity — an ethical and moral gain of incalculable significance." [38]

Gandhiji's aim of education, viz., "to develop the whole man through crafts" is justified by a sound reading of biological facts, for the education that aims at developing the individuality of the whole man is the only education according to nature. As Sir Percy Nunn puts it so eloquently, "The process we see shaping itself in the mind of a boy or a girl is only the highest aspect of a process that actually involves the whole being, and includes movements that go back to pre-human days and even to the dateless beginnings of life". [39] If education is to fit the child for the type of the society in which he will have to live, there should be proper adjustment between him and his environment. Man has the capacity to go beyond the process of modifying the reactions of his organism to fit the environment and can consciously change the environment for promoting his best interests as well as those of the society in which he lives. Man's biological aim in education is to fit him perfectly for a

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[37] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 121.

[38] *Ibid.*

[39] *Education: Its Data and First Principles*, p. 20.

successful existence under the conditions of a complex and changing civilization.

Gandhiji's outstanding contribution to educational theory and practice is the fact that he restored the human hand to its legitimate place in the scheme of education. He could see that the human hand under the supervision of the eyes and the direction of the brain has been a decided advantage to him in the manipulation of his environment and in making adjustments. The hand with its complex structure and its flexible fingers and opposable thumb has great uses. It is able to touch, feel, take up, hold and move objects with ease and precision. Without the hand the human brain could never have been developed. Kaka Kalelkar rightly observes :

> " Experience has taught us now that in order to develop the whole personality of the student education through manual work is essential. So far we have used the tongue and the ear for the evolution of the mind and the heart. Eyes also have been used more for cramming than observation. But now we should realize that the true development of the mind and the heart can only be through manual labour." [40]

The irreducible minimum of a syllabus for schools has been till today the education of the three R's — Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. Now shall we not say after Gandhiji that the slogan of the three R's had better be substituted by a much better slogan of the three H's — Hand, Heart and Head ?

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40 *Educational Reconstruction,* p. 78.

CHAPTER III

GANDHIJI ON THE AIM OF EDUCATION

As every scheme of education is, at bottom, a practical philosophy, it is correlated to life and its aims are correlative to the ideals of life. Ideals of life are conflicting with one another, with the result that the aims of education are perpetually at variance with one another. The ancient Greek aim of education was the reflection of the Greek ideal of life and the ancient Indian aim of education was the reflection of the Indian ideal of life. No ideal of life has for long remained unchallenged even in the same country. It is no wonder then that the educational thinkers of different ages and countries contradict one another and there is complete absence of unanimity among them as to the supreme good at which education like every other art is supposed to aim.

We have already seen that an educational philosopher formulates his aim of education as an integral part of his educational philosophy. Some philosophers lay down 'one good' as the goal of all our actions, "While others are content to say that several 'goods' may co-exist and motivate our behaviour."[1] In education too "we may seek for an *aim* or for *aims*."[2]

The educational aim as conceived by a thinker is always in consonance with his general ideal of life. As education is the dynamic aspect of philosophy, an educational philosopher keeps before himself a certain end as the goal to be ultimately realized. He not only directs his own activities to the realization of his ultimate goal of life, but also formulates a system of education through which people may rise above their established mode of life and realize the *summum bonum* of their life, as conceived by him in the beginning, but as accepted by them later on as the ultimate goal of their life.

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[1] G. H. Thomson: *A Modern Philosophy of Education*, p. 57.
[2] *Ibid.*

Different individuals have different aims and ideals in education. Each man's aim of education is the reflection of his philosophy of life. Hence every national system of education is a reflection of the philosophy of the whole nation. The fact that each individual's aims in education are different need not lead us to the conclusion that all aims are mutually exclusive of one another. An aim of education may be compared, as done by John Dewey, to the summit of a hill from where we get a clear view of a landscape. The same landscape viewed from another stand-point presents a prospect different from the first. The different views do not necessarily contradict, but in most cases complement one another.

Gandhiji does not set forth only one aim of education. In fact, he views education from different stand-points at different times and in different places, but it is possible to subsume the different aims set forth by him under one all-inclusive and all-comprehensive aim. To the mind of a casual reader, Gandhiji's philosophy of life and education may appear to be a veritable bundle of contradictions. One who cares to probe the rough exterior and delve deep into his writings will notice that all his different aims in education deal with different aspects of life, and, when organized around his central philosophy, they form a coherent structure complete in itself. We shall now proceed to see how this happens.

Students of educational philosophy are acquainted with what is commonly known as the "bread and butter" aim of education. Those who advocate this aim maintain 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 provide the economic needs of our life? This view is concerned with the basic needs of our animal life. Food, clothes and shelter are our minimum needs and, unless we are able to satisfy them, all talk about higher ideals of life falls on deaf ears. This aim of education may seem to be base and materialistic to some people, but it is idle to deny that our primary needs should be satisfied, if we are to make any progress material, moral,

or intellectual. It redounds to the credit of Gandhiji that he arrived at his theory of self-supporting education independently of any authoritative books on education. Shri Mahadev Desai states that "he has studied no educational theory; I do not think that he knows of the existence of a book called *Emile*." [3]

Mr C. J. Varkey points out that "the term *self-supporting* is used, in connection with the Wardha Scheme, in two entirely different senses — education that will help one to be self-supporting in later life, and education which in itself is self-supporting." [4] Gandhiji desired that each boy or girl should be "self-supporting after leaving school by finding an occupation — unlike the product of the present system of aimless education. In other words, the handicraft feature of the new education provides a solution to the problem of unemployment by training pupils to earn their bread and thus enabling them to be self-supporting after they finish their school course." [5] This shows that Gandhiji is not averse to the bread-and-butter aim of education, however minor it may be in his scheme of education, for he trenchantly remarks: "This education ought to be for them a kind of insurance against unemployment." [6] Elaborating the same idea, he further says: "The child at the age of 14, that is, after finishing a seven-year course, should be discharged as an earning unit. Even now the poor people's children automatically lend a helping hand to their parents — 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 in 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." [7]

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[3] *The Year Book of Education* (1940), p. 436.
[4] *The Wardha Scheme of Education*, p. 30.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Harijan*, 11-9-'37.
[7] *Harijan*, 18-9-'37.

The craft that the child would learn at school will not turn him into a base mechanic, but a self-respecting citizen who would not depend on others for his future living. Shri K. G. Mashruwala, one of the ablest interpreters of the Gandhian philosophy, maintains that "Industry will not be only the means and medium of instruction; but to the extent it is an inevitable condition of human life, it will also be an end of instruction. So that the aim will be to inculcate in the pupil a sense of the dignity of all manual labour — even scavenging and the duty of earning an honest livelihood by labour." [8] Shri Mahadev Desai too points out: "It aims at giving the right kind of education to village children — education to fit them for life, education suited to their environment and hereditary occupations." [9]

The fact that Gandhiji does not want every child to be a little wage-earner, a boy-man, is borne out by the above discussion. 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. As Shri K. G. Mashruwala puts it, "The Segaon Method will aim at bringing about in the child, at as early an age as possible, the determination of the future career it should expect to pursue, and will arm him with at least one occupation, which will give him a wage enough for a healthy subsistence." [10]

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 attributes of this kind of knowledge, according to Cardinal Newman, are: "freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom; or

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8 *Harijan*, 4-12-'37.

9 *The Year Book of Education* (1940), p. 449.

10 *Harijan*, 4-12-'37.

what in a former discourse I have ventured to call a philosophical habit." [11]

The advocates of the cultural aim of education tend to think that, because a person has been engaged in intellectual work, his mind is thereby trained to behave better ever after in all new situations. It should, however, be borne in mind that knowledge is not the same as culture. "Mere knowledge," says Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "which gratifies curiosity is different from culture which refines personality. Culture is not remembering a mass of curious details about the dates of birth of the great heroes of the world or the interesting names of the fastest ships which cross the Atlantic or entertaining odds and ends gathered from the latest *Who's Who*." [12] "A man's culture is not to be judged," he continues, "by the amount of tabulated information which he has at his command but by the quality of mind which he brings to bear on the facts of life." [13]

Being practical to the core, Gandhiji 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. In his talk to the girls of the Kasturba Balikashram, New Delhi, on 22-4-'46, he said: "I attach far more importance to the cultural aspect of education than to the literary. Culture is the foundation, the primary thing which the girls ought to get from here. 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." [14]

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[11] *Selections from Newman's Idea of a University* by H. V. Hampton, p. 37.

[12] *Freedom and Culture*, p. 22.

[13] *Ibid*, p. 23.

[14] Mahatma Gandhi: *To the Students*, p. 291.

Thus in Gandhiji's view, culture is not the product of intellectual work, but the quality of the soul, permeating all aspects of human behaviour. To Gandhiji's mind, this is an important aim of education. He thinks that very often our vision is blurred by the clouds of pride and prejudice and we are not able to see things in their proper perspective. The function of education is not to add to the leaden weights clinging to the soul, but to remove them and liberate the soul from the encumbrances, so that it may follow its native impulse to soar upwards. The educand does not merely learn something, but becomes something by being exposed, in the most impressionable years of his life, to the transforming influences of education, such as the constant clash of mind with mind, the interchange of ideas, the testing of opinions and the growth of knowledge of human nature.

Perfection of our nature is taken as an aim of education by some educational thinkers. According to this view, all our abilities both innate and acquired, all our instincts and emotions, all our general innate dispositions like mimesis and play and all the aspects of our physical, mental and spiritual life should be so perfected as to bring about a harmonious development of all our powers. Gandhiji has reached almost a similar conclusion independently of any other thinker. His basis is empirical in so far as it is drawn from personal experiences initially applied to a limited number of persons. But subsequently it reaches down to the roots of human behaviour. His approach to all problems of life here and hereafter is intuitive rather than rational, and is influenced more by the dictates of his conscience or inner voice as he puts it than by his head. "By education," he says, "I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man — body, mind and spirit."[15] Such a belief is in complete agreement with the aim of education formulated by some modern educational thinkers. "True education", he again

[15] *Harijan*, 31-7-'37.

says, " is that which draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of the children." [16]

We need not conclude from Gandhiji's use of the term *faculty* that he was an advocate of faculty psychology, which is now discredited. He used the term in the sense of power, physical, mental or spiritual.

" I had no difficulty," says Gandhiji, " in giving at the Tolstoy Farm (Transvaal) all-round development to the boys and girls for whose training I was directly responsible." [17] How is this all-round development to be brought about ? " Through a craft," would be Gandhiji's reply. Those who set forth the perfection of nature as an aim of education failed to suggest a concrete method through which perfection was to be achieved. Gandhiji is nothing, if he is not practical ; and if he expounded a theory, he would practise it or deduce it from first-hand experience. We have his own words : " You have to train the boys in one occupation or another, Round this special occupation you will train up his mind, his hand-writing, his artistic sense and so on." [18] In Gandhiji's view, hand-writing is a necessary part of education. " . . . . good hand-writing," he says, " is a necessary part of education. I am now of opinion that children should first be taught the art of drawing before learning how to write. Let the child learn his letters by observation as he does different objects, such as flowers, birds, etc., and let him learn hand-writing only after he has learnt to draw objects. He will then write a beautifully formed hand." [19]

Thus Gandhiji lays greater emphasis on the education of the three H's (Hand, Heart and Head) than on that of the three R's (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic). These three H's play no mean role in the all-round development of the child, which is the education of the whole man. " The modulation of the voice," he maintains,

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16 *Harijan*, 11-9-'37.
17 *Harijan*, 18-9-'37.
18 *Ibid.*
19 Gandhiji : *Autobiography*, p. 28.

" is as necessary as the training of the hand. Physical drill, handicrafts, drawing and music should go hand in hand in order to draw the best out of the boys and girls and create in them a real interest in their tuition." [20]

Gandhiji is keenly alive to the fact that our modern education is unbalanced, as it emphasizes only the training of the mind. " Here mental training is nothing," he affirms, " if it is not accompanied by a true training of the heart." In his opinion, " culture of the mind must be subservient to the culture of the heart," for are not kind hearts more than coronets? Education of the heart consists in the refinement of our emotions and impulses, awakening of our deepest feelings of love, sympathy, fellowship, and aesthetic sense through drawing, music and handicrafts. Gandhiji provides for such education of the heart, for in its absence human life degenerates to the level of mere animal existence. Just as Gandhiji does not minimize the importance of developing a sound vigorous intellect side by side with the heart, he does not underestimate either the need for developing a fine, healthy body. He firmly believes that true education of the head and heart can come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs. " I would, therefore, give," says he, " compulsory physical training through musical drill." [21] His views on physical education are not of recent origin. He held them even when he was trying to find out through experience and experiment in South Africa a true system of education for the children of the inmates of the Tolstoy Farm, where he occupied the place of the father and shouldered the responsibility for the training of the young. His method of physical education is as novel and startling as it is refreshing and interesting. We can do nothing better than quote his words to know his views on the training of the body as a part of education. He observes :

" Nor did I underrate the building up of the body. This they got in the course of their daily routine. For there were no servants on the Farm, and all the work, from cooking down to

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20 *Harijan*, 11-9-'37.

21 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 63.

scavenging was done by the inmates. There were many fruit trees to be looked after, and enough gardening to be done as well. It was obligatory on all, young and old, who were not engaged in the kitchen, to give some time to gardening. The children had the lion's share of this work which included digging pits, felling timber and lifting loads. This gave them ample exercise. They took delight in the work, and so they did not generally need any other exercise or games." [22]

Unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand, Gandhiji believes, with a corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a lopsided affair. A proper and harmonious combination of all the three is required for the making of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education. Gandhiji has no doubt in his mind that what goes by the name of education is in reality "only intellectual dissipation". The energies of students are largely frittered away in the accumulation of the knowledge of mere facts. Intellectual training has become the be-all and end-all of education. As Dr. E. A. Pires ably points out, "An artificial and barren system of physical training is sought to be tagged on to this intellectual training." [23] And as for the spiritual faculties, they are simply allowed to run to seed or grow anyhow in a wild, undisciplined manner. The result is moral and spiritual anarchy. Gandhiji's philosophy of education is in line with the best and highest in educational thought, and if we are to profit by it, we should aim at a perfect, well-balanced, all-round education in which the head, the heart, the body and the spirit have all full play and develop together into a natural, harmonious whole. Such an education will draw out the faculties of a student, so as to enable him or her to solve correctly the problems of life in every department.

In his essay on the Aesthetic Revelation of the World as the chief work of education, Herbart puts forth morality as the chief aim of education. "The one and the whole aim of education," he maintains, "may be summed up in the concept of morality." Many other educationists

22 Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, p. 408.

23 *Psycho*, October, 1949.

express the same idea when they declare that the chief aim of education is the formation of character. Gandhiji too believes that character formation is one of the foremost aims of education. "... I had always given the first place to the culture of the heart or the building of character, and as I felt confident that moral training could be given to all alike, no matter how different their ages and their upbringing, I decided to live amongst them all the twenty-four hours of the day as their father. I regarded character-building as the proper foundation for their education and, if the foundation was firmly laid, I was sure that the children could learn all the other things themselves or with the assistance of friends." [24] Gandhiji laid so much emphasis on character building as an aim of education that he would relegate to a subordinate position or even sacrifice literary training, if the choice were to be made between the two. To the question, "What is your goal in education when India obtains freedom?", he 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. That is why India's great lack of literacy, deplorable as it is, does not appeal to me nor make me feel that India is unfit for self-rule." [25] Purity of personal life is for Gandhiji an indispensable condition for building a sound education.[26] "Students have to search within," he affirms, "and look after their personal character," for "what is education without character, and what is character without elementary personal purity?" To Gandhiji's mind, "schools and colleges are factories for making of character. Parents send their boys and girls to them so that they may become good men and women." He does not deny the value of knowledge and of scholarship provided they help in the attainment of a good

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19 Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, p. 408.

20 E. Carlton Washburne: *Remakers of Mankind* (1932), pp. 104, 105.

21 Mahatma Gandhi: *To The Students*, p. 106.

character. "The end of all knowledge must be," he affirms, "the building up of character."[27] All our learning or recitation of the *Vedas*, correct knowledge of Sanskrit, Latin, Greek and what not will avail us nothing if it does not enable us to cultivate absolute purity of heart.[28] In his advice to the students of the Zahira College, Colombo, on 22-11-'27, Gandhiji said: "All the education you are receiving in this great college will be reduced to nothing, if it is not built on the foundation of a pure character. . . But as I was reading the report that was read before the Governor on the occasion of the foundation laying ceremony, I could not help feeling how nice it would be if we could raise a foundation of good character so that stones on stones might be raised thereon and we might look back with joy and pride upon that edifice. But character cannot be built with mortar and stone. It cannot be built by hands other than your own. The Principal and Professors cannot give you character from the pages of books. Character-building comes from their very lives and really speaking, it must come from within yourselves."[29]

Gandhiji regards righteousness or good life as an essential part of character, at which education ought to aim. Addressing a gathering of college boys, he said: "Your education is absolutely worthless, if it is not built on a solid foundation of truth and purity. If you, boys, are not careful about the personal purity of your lives, and if you are not careful about being pure in thought, speech and deeds then I tell you that you are lost, although you may become perfect finished scholars."[30]

We have already seen that Gandhiji does not attach much importance to literacy in his scheme of education. If education is synonymous with literacy, he says, it can be put to good as well as bad use like a surgeon's knife which can save as well as take life. The popular notion

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27 Mahatma Gandhi: *To The Students*, p. 107.
28 *Ibid.*
29 *Ibid.*, pp. 124, 125.
30 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

of education is that it consists in the knowledge of reading, writing and reckoning. Gandhiji would not accept such a conception. In his *Hind Swaraj* he draws the following vivid picture of a peasant who is rightly educated :

> "A peasant earns his bread honestly. He has ordinary knowledge of the world. He knows fairly well how he should behave towards his parents, his wife, his children and his fellow villagers. He understands and observes the rules of morality. But he cannot write his own name. What do you propose to do by giving him a knowledge of letters ? Will you add an inch to his happiness ? Do you wish to make him discontented with his cottage or his lot ? " [31]

It will appear from the above discussion that Gandhiji set up a new standard of education, but it should be remembered that Gandhiji's educational philosophy has its roots in Indian life and culture. Character-building as the supreme aim of education does not sound unfamiliar to those who are acquainted with the history of Indian philosophy. In the scheme of ancient Indian education moral training played a scarcely less important part than mental training. The development of the inner nature or character of the student was deemed as one of the essential objects of education. As Dr. Radhakumud Mukerji points out, " This definitely and emphatically lays down the ancient view that mere intellectual development without the development of character, learning without piety, proficiency in the sacred lore with a deficiency in the practices it implies, will defeat the very end of studentship. The part of education that deals with the life of the students probably fills a larger place in the ancient pedagogic scheme than the part that deals with the mere intellect." [32] The course of moral training provided for no holidays, as the disciplinary regulations imposed by the *gurus* acted unceasingly as impersonal teachers, exercising a sleepless vigilance and control over the elastic and tender nature committed to their care. Thus " the growth of the whole nature of the boy, and not the growth of his intellect

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[20] Mahatma Gandhi : *Hind Swaraj*, pp. 63, 64.

[21] Radhakumud Mukerji : *Ancient Indian Education*, p. 205.

merely, was the objective of this ancient pedagogy. The raw material is received into the workshop after due examination as to its soundness; it is then treated to different processes of manufacture; and finally sent out to the world as a finished product. The making of the nation or the country was in the charge of these schools. Their aim was to produce not mere recluses or scholars, but whole men, ideal householders who would perfect family, society and country." [33]

Thus Gandhiji's ideal of education is consistent with the one put forth by Indian thinkers through ages. Gandhiji was not a mere arm-chair theorizer. If he did not maintain unity between thought, speech and action, what claim would he have to greatness, and who would follow in his foot-steps? He practised what he preached and he preached what he thought, let heavens fall. He performed the experiment of his new education not only on the sons and daughters of the inmates of the Tolstoy Farm and Phoenix Settlement in South Africa, but also on his own four sons, who were not fully satisfied with the type of education imparted to them in the Farm. They lodged a mild protest with Gandhiji, who would not listen to them. He wrote to Manilal, one of his sons: ".... Your duty is to learn whatever you can, and serve your parents.... We are poor and we want to remain so.... It is our duty to further the ideals of Phoenix, because that is the only way to self-realization and service to the country. Character-building should be the main task of the human race.... Rest assured that your service unto others will not be wasted." [34] This shows how much importance Gandhiji attached to character-building. "True education," he says, "does not consist in literary training, but in character-building. My reading of Emerson, Ruskin, Mazzini and the *Upanishads* confirm such a belief." [35]

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33 Radhakumud Mukerji: *Ancient Indian Education*, p. 286.
34 R. M. Patel: *Gandhijini Sadhana* (Gujarati), p. 111.
35 *Ibid.*, p. 114.

All the three places, viz., the Phoenix Settlement, the Tolstoy Farm and the Sabarmati Ashram, where Gandhiji performed his educational experiments remind us of the ancient Indian *ashrams* where the ideals of character-building and service were steadfastly kept in view. The children working in Gandhiji's *ashrams* and helping in their activities raise before our mind's eye the picture of our ancient *brahmachari* who used " to get up early in the morning before sunrise, failing which he has to perform a penance....Every morning and evening he has to go round in the village begging and whatever is given him he has to hand over to his master. He is himself to eat nothing except what his master gives him. He has to fetch water, to gather fuel for the altar, to sweep the ground round the hearth and to wait on his master day and night." [36] We should bear in mind that the teacher was never to utilize the labour of his pupil for his own selfish purposes. *Apastamba* definitely declares that " the observance of these rules is in the interest of the student's own welfare." [37] This system brought about the all-round growth of the boy and not merely of his intellect.

It would be manifest from the above discussions that Gandhiji regards character-building as a supreme aim of education. It is true that he does not attach undue importance to literary education, but the fact remains that he is not in favour of dispensing with it altogether. He clearly says : " But as I fully appreciated the necessity of a literary training in addition, I started some classes with the help of Mr Kallenbach and Shri Pragji Desai. Nor did I underrate the building up of the body." [38] In the *History of Satyagrahashram* too he says : " With the establishment of the Ashram I could perceive that it was our duty to give literary education to the women and children residing in the Ashram. Later on I could also see that there

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20 Radhakumud Mukerji : *Ancient Indian Education*, p. 206.

21 M. Gandhiji : *Autobiography*, p. 408.

should be provision in the Ashram for the literary education of the illiterate males who joined it." [39]

Besides character-building Gandhiji made *sa vidya ya vimuktaye* (education is that which liberates) one of the most important aims of education. It has been the motto of the Gujarat Vidyapith founded by Gandhiji in 1920. This education for freedom admits of a broad interpretation. It might be taken in the sense of political freedom of the country which had been in bondage for over hundred and fifty years. But this interpretation is too narrow to command universal acceptance. Some thinkers believe that all education worth the name ought to aim at spiritual liberation, but this is not the only sense in which this aphorism should be understood. 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." [40] In fact, no man can be said to be free if his desire for food, shelter and economic security is not satisfied. As long as man is called upon to fight for bare physical necessities, life will seem to him to be all-important and the lustre of his soul will be dimmed. Although the economic function is one of the many functions of the human being, it will dominate the whole course of his life, if it is not satisfactorily fulfilled.

The economic, political and intellectual freedom is the essence of the freedom of the spirit which is the spring of all great art. Gandhiji is of opinion that spiritual freedom should be an important aim of all education. He says : "The motto of the Gujarat Vidyapith is '*sa vidya ya vimuktaye*'. It means : that is knowledge which is (leads to)

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39 Mahatma Gandhi : *Satyagrahashramano Itihas* (Gujarati)

40 *Harijan*, 10-3-'46.

salvation. On the principles that the greater includes the less, national independence or material freedom is included in the spiritual. The knowledge gained in educational institutions must, therefore, at least teach the way and lead to such freedom." [41] In their pure forms, art and literature, philosophy and religion are consecrated to the service of a high impersonal spirit tending to a union ever more intimate with

> " Our only true, deep buried selves
> Being one with which we are one with the whole world." [42]

The Hindu philosophers speak of bondage as due to *maya* and the Christians trace it to the Fall. In fact, all great religions refer to man's alienation from his deeper being. They teach that man is a dual being, participating in two worlds — the higher, the divine, the free world and the lower, the natural, the one in shackles of bondage. The highest task which man has to fulfil in life, says Gandhiji, is to liberate his spirit from those shackles and to affirm spiritual purity. The aim of education should, therefore, be initiation into the higher life of the spirit.

In the foregoing discussion we have considered the different aims of education as set forth by Gandhiji from time to time. We have seen how they are in line with the best educational thought both in the East and in the West. All these aims of education are mostly concerned with our life here in this world. Our educational aims are correlative to our ideals in life. As our ideals in life are concerned with this world as well as the world beyond, our aims in education should be broadly akin to these two aspects of existence. Gandhiji, therefore, sets forth two sets of educational aims, viz., the *immediate* and the *ultimate*. Having discussed the immediate aims of education as set forth by Gandhiji, we shall now consider his ultimate aim of education, which is bound to be correlative to his ultimate goal of life.

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20. *Young India*, 20-3-'30.

21. S. Radhakrishnan : *Education, Politics and War*, p. 98.

Following the tradition of the Indian thinkers from the Vedic times onwards, Gandhiji also thinks in terms of the Ultimate Reality rather than the immediate present. He thinks of the present so far as it is conducive to the realization of his highest aim in life. Like ancient Indian philosophers, Gandhiji also does not believe that everything that is in man is worth development, but insists on self-control and abstinence and even austerities as means to true self-realization. In ancient India students were called *brahmacharis*, who had to give up comforts, wear simple clothes and take food not to please the palate but to keep body and soul together. Having scorned delights like Milton's Lycidas, they lived laborious days in their search after truth and the knowledge concerning the nature of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. Instruction occupied hardly a third of their time. Their corporate social activities facilitated the development of their sprouting interests and initiatives. A stimulating mental atmosphere, congenial conditions of living and feeding, playing and studying built up their character as well as revealed to them the mysteries of Nature and Reality.

The *brahmachari* had often to beg food for himself and for his *guru*, not because he and the *guru* were unwilling to work, but because it was considered essential for self-discipline. The Hindu view of life was that the offer of gifts as well as their acceptance was equally ennobling, for a gift was twice blessed — it blessed him that gave and him that received. The gifts were regarded as a blessing both to the community that supported the educational centres as well as to the humble-minded beneficiaries. The education that was ardently sought after was a means to self-realization of the highest type — realization of not only the best that was in himself as an isolated individual, but as one whose spirit shared with the immortal Universal Spirit. Knowledge of secular things was considered inferior or *apara*, while the spiritual knowledge was regarded as a key to all other knowledge and was, therefore, called *para* — the supe The Hindu student's ambition was to know that by wh

all other things are known, the knowledge of which would make a man humble and respectful, by which the unheard becomes heard, the unperceived becomes perceived, the unknown becomes known.

Gandhiji as an embodiment of what is best in Indian culture both past and present is certainly influenced by the *Upanishadic* teachings. He turns our attention to the spirit; "Modern education", he says, "tends to turn our eyes away from the spirit. The possibilities of spirit force or soul force, therefore, do not appeal to us, and our eyes are consequently rivetted on the evanescent, transitory, material force." [43] He asks: "Is it not most tragic that things of the spirit, eternal verities, should be regarded as Utopian by our youth, and transitory makeshifts alone appeal to them as practical? [44]

Gandhiji regards every student as a *brahmachari*. "The ancient word," he says, "for a *vidyarthi* (student) is *brahmachari*, because all his study and activity had as their objective the search of Brahman, and he built his life on a sure foundation of stoic simplicity and self-restraint, which every religion has enjoined on the student. ....Let all your work and play have the exalted objective of a life of restraint, let them take you nearer to God." [45] He again says: "In our languages, there is a beautiful word, equivalent for the word student, that is *brahmachari*. It means searcher after God, one who conducts himself so as to bring himself nearest to God in the least possible time." [46]

The highest aim of education, according to Gandhiji, is a knowledge of God and self-realization. All other aims are subordinate to this supreme aim of life and education. We have considered different aims of education as put forth by Gandhiji. With all these aims as the bases of educational activities, Gandhiji regards self-realization as

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[43] Mahatma Gandhi: *To The Students*, p. 190.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 188.
[45] *Young India*, 21-7-'27.
[46] *Ibid.*, 8-9-'27.

the *summum bonum* of life and education. This is the ultimate goal after which human beings ought to strive. In his *Autobiography* he clearly says: "Long before I undertook the education of the youngsters of the Tolstoy Farm I had realized that the training of the spirit was a thing by itself. To develop the spirit is to build character and to enable one to work towards a knowledge of God and self-realization. And I held that this was an essential part of the training of the young, and that all training without culture of the spirit was of no use, and might be even harmful." [47] Gandhiji believes "that those who defer preparation for this invaluable experience until the fourth stage of life, i.e., *sannyasa* attain not self-realization but old age amounting to a second and pitiable childhood, living as a burden on this earth." [48] He regards the life of a *brahmachari* and that of a *sannyasi* as spiritually similar.[49] In a letter to his son, Manilal, he writes: "You have realized my ideal of education, if you learn real virtues and saturate your life with them. Armed with these virtues, you will earn your living in any part of the world and will be on your way to the knowledge of God and self-realization." [50]

It will be apparent from this discussion that Gandhiji puts forth two sets of educational aims, viz., immediate and ultimate. His immediate aims of education are manifold, because they touch life at different points. Of all these aims those of character-building and spiritual freedom are the most important as they serve to bridge the gulf between our life here and life hereafter. His ultimate, and by far the most important, aim of education is the knowledge of God leading to self-realization, the merger of the finite being into the Infinite.

The greatness of Gandhiji as an educational philosopher consists in the fact that he does not rest content with the formulation of only one aim of education like most

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47 Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, p. 413.
48 *Ibid.*
49 *Young India*, 29-1-'25.
50 R. M. Patel: *Gandhijini Sadhana* (Gujarati), p. 114.

of the educational thinkers all over the world. He sets forth a number of aims so as to embrace all aspects of human life, and subsumes them under an all-comprehensive ultimate aim after which human beings ought to strive. He does not commit, like other thinkers, the fallacy of exclusive particularity by identifying the part with the whole. The difficulty with other educational philosophers is that they set forth one particular educational aim and think that it should be the exclusive aim of education.

Gandhiji's ultimate aim of education, viz., self-realization includes and embraces all his immediate and subordinate aims and presents a picture which has a perfect architectural unity. It is eminently suited to the genius of our people and perfectly consistent with our cultural heritage and the teachings of the great philosophers in all ages and all places. It is no wonder that Gandhiji's ultimate aim of education has the unconscious backing of no less a thinker than Sir John Adams, who discusses before reaching his own conclusion the following aims of education :

> " Preparation for complete living; the harmonious development of all the faculties; adaptation to environment; a sound mind in a sound body; the perfection of nature; the preparation for a perfect citizen; to develop children as imperfect beings into perfect beings; inward development; a gradual adjustment to the spiritual possessions of the race; to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright; a completely moral man; to develop self-activity; the transmission of life from the living through the living to the living; socialization, etc." [51]

He then finds that " it is hopeless to select any one aim as the most likely to focus all the elements involved." [52] At last he comes to the conclusion that " self-realization is in itself an all-comprehensive ideal ",[53] and that all other ideals " are really complementary. Neither can be attained apart from the other, and their union is essential if we are to have an ideal that shall really include all the aspirations of the various schools." [54] All the apparently

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[51] *The Evolution of Educational Theory*, p. 39.
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 146.
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

contradictory ideals of education in Gandhiji's educational philosophy come together and show their inter-dependence with the ideal of self-realization forming the apex of the whole pyramidic structure of his educational philosophy.

Whatever the ultimate goal of life and education may be, we should not blind ourselves to the needs and requirements of our present life. That is why in his later life Gandhiji did not emphasize the ideal of self-realization so much as preparation for life and the education of the whole man. As a practical man he could realize that he was concerned with the education of the teeming millions of India who were rotting in the darkness of ignorance, superstition, inertia and illiteracy. How could they attain self-realization unless they were able to satisfy the elementary needs of their lives? The ideal of self-realization may be good so far as it goes, but its attainment presupposes the existence of a social order in which there are peace, plenty, and prosperity. We are all aware how "the spirit of other-worldiness which.... gained a hold upon the *Brahmanic* schools made them more and more out of touch with the ordinary life of the world, and helped to make them unfit to mould the Indian peoples in the paths of progress and general culture." [55]

It is obvious that, if all were to forsake the world for a monastic life, the bonds of society would soon be broken, and the work of the world would come to a stop. Hence for the mass of the people education has to be regarded from the worldly point of veiw. At the same time, if the ideal of self-realization is constantly kept before our eyes, the world would be a better place for us to live in and all the dissensions and conflicts by which it is torn today will cease to exist and we would succeed in building up paradise on this unhappy terrestrial globe. We should then take education, as Gandhiji did, not in a parochial sense of a class-room process, but in its broad and true sense of a life-long process which begins with the beginning and ends with the end of life, going on constantly and unceasingly.

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55 *Indian Education in Ancient and Later Times*, pp. 184, 185.

CHAPTER IV

IS GANDHIJI'S EDUCATIONAL AIM SOCIAL OR INDIVIDUAL ?

We have dwelt at length on the immediate and ultimate aims of education as formulated by Gándhiji. It would, therefore, be in the fitness of things for us to consider whether his educational aim is social or individual or both. Before we can come to any definite conclusion on this vexed question, let us study the evolution of both these aims through the ages.

The social aim of education in its extreme form conceives of the State as an idealized metaphysical entity superior to the individual in all aspects of life. According to this aim, the State is an embodiment of all reason and justice. The aim of life and education in such a State is the good of the State, which has complete control over the lives and destinies of its citizens and takes upon itself the duty of moulding all its members after a certain pattern consistent with its policy of self-preservation and progress. Education is the best means of achieving this goal and, therefore, the State chalks out and enforces a system of education to be rigidly adhered to by all those who are in charge of education. It also decides the method and matter of education, the mainstay of its policy being the enforcement of discipline and damping down of individuality. Whether a person should receive intellectual, industrial or military training depends upon the needs of the State, his own will, aptitude and inclination being of little consequence. Nobody has any inherent right to any type of education except, of course, when it is shown beyond reasonable doubt that such education would be conducive to the highest good of the State.

Ancient Sparta furnishes a perfect example of a Socialistic State, where no consideration was given to the individual, for each man " was born, not for himself, but for his country ". Spartans led a simple life. They had no

interest in art or literature. Their education consisted in military training. The State itself was a vast school, where the adult citizens looked after the training of the youths. Their education aimed at making soldiers. Independent thought and action were discouraged. Their education was an exercise of obedience. Courage and pugnacity were looked upon as virtues of supreme value.

In Athens, the citizen guiding his life by reason, wise and judicious in his performance of the manifold public duties demanded by the State, could not be produced by an education thoroughly controlled by a despotic socialistic regime, as at Sparta. The State demanded such services of the citizen that a life of economic activity for personal ends was hardly possible. As Prof. Paul Monroe points out, " The pleasures of private life, whether amusements in sports and games, attendance upon the theatre, or social gatherings for eating and drinking, were controlled, for social ends, by the Athenians, though somewhat less directly than by the Spartans. The State and the entire social life became a school in which, although effort for physical perfection was not neglected, yet greater emphasis was laid upon intellectual and moral growth." [1]

We see the repetition of history in the totalitarian States in our own age. The same methods were employed in modern Germany and Italy only yesterday and Russia and her satellites have evolved a special technique to improve upon all the methods used by socialistic States in the past to mould the people after a desired pattern. After the defeat of Germany by Napoleon at Jena in 1806, Fichte preached that the State could be regenerated only through education. " It is education alone," said he, " which can save us from all the evils by which we are oppressed." As the years rolled on, " Fatherland is our everything " became the motto of the German nation. It was injected into the veins of the children at school and the whole country was turned into a vast military camp during both the world wars.

[1] *A Brief Course in the History of Education*, p. 44.

Hitler became the idol of the nation and every German was supposed to live for and promote the best interests of the State. This philosophy of the idealized State can be traced to the teaching of Hegel. Sir Percy Nunn rightly observes : "From the idealism of Hegel more than from any other source, the Prussian mind derived its fanatical belief in the absolute value of the State, its deadly doctrine that the State can admit no moral authority greater than its own, and the corollary that the educational system, from the primary school to the university, should be used as an instrument to engrain these notions into the soul of the whole people." [2]

What happened in Italy in the regime of Mussolini and what is happening in Russia today ? Individuality has been damped down, the Press has been muzzled, and loyalty and obedience to the dictator have been expected of every citizen.

In England the social aim in education takes a less extreme form. "Education for Social Service", "Education for Citizenship" are watchwords of the English educational system, which is free from the notion of an idealized State. As Prof. James Ross puts it, "Social service is the aim in education. Schools ought to stress the duties and responsibilities of individual citizens ; they ought to train their pupils in a spirit of cheerful, willing, and effective service." [3]

As against the social aim in education, we hear the cry of those who advocate the individual aim. They contend that social institutions exist to make the individual life better, richer and happier ; the State should permit and encourage individual enterprise and experiment in schools.

Sir Percy Nunn has been one of the ablest exponents of the individual aim in education. He shows that British philosophy has been individualistic from the days of Hobbes. He does not accept his extreme individualism,

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[2] *Education : Its Data and First Principles*, p. 3.

[3] *Groundwork of Educational Theory*, pp. 43, 44.

though his emphasis is on the individual rather than on society. His contention is "that nothing good enters into the human world except in and through the free activities of individual men and women, and that educational practice must be shaped to accord with that truth".[4] Nunn's philosophy "reasserts the importance of the individual and safeguards his indefeasible rights".[4] In his view, the function of education is to secure for every one "the conditions under which individuality is most completely developed". It must enable him to "make his original contribution to the variegated whole of human life as full and as fully characteristic as his nature permits; the form of the contribution being left to the individual as something which each must, in living and by living, forge for himself."[5]

Eucken holds "that the chief movement of our life is to win a genuine being, and that in the development of personality and spiritual individuality such a being is in question".[6] In short, he is of opinion that the aim of education, as of life, is "to exalt personality".

Of the two ideals in education, viz., social and individual, which one does Gandhiji seek to pursue? It is very difficult, if not impossible, to answer this question offhand, for we notice, in his scattered writings, that he advocates each of these ideals at different times and in different places. One may be tempted to accuse him of inconsistency in this respect, but a discerning observer will not fail to see that behind the mass of conflicting statements lie eternal verities which do not admit of any contradiction.

Gandhiji does not hesitate to state that "the individual is the one supreme consideration",[7] and "I look upon an increase of the power of the State with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind

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[4] Nunn: *Education: Its Data and First Principles*, p. 4.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[6] *Life's Basis and Life's Ideal*, p. 371.
[7] *Young India*, 13-11-'24.

by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress." [8] Gandhiji has no doubt in his mind that individuality should be preserved, if we are to achieve any progress either material or spiritual. It is no use driving all human beings like dumb cattle to the same goal, while we are aware that all have in them individual characteristics which distinguish each from others. No two persons are identical in respect of nature, ability and temperament. Gandhiji has the greatest respect for the individuality of every human being irrespective of his caste, colour or creed.

What Gandhiji wants to achieve is unity in diversity — a society in which all individuals have to play their part for the good of the whole without losing their individual character. But this goal is to be achieved not by violent means. As an apostle of truth and non-violence, Gandhiji would not even brook the idea of employing violent means for the realization even of his highest ideal. "It would be a sad thing," says he, "if India also tried to build up the new society based on co-operation by means of violence. Good brought about through force destroyed individuality. Only when the change was effected through the persuasive power of non-violent non-co-operation, i.e., love, could the foundation of individuality be preserved and real, abiding progress be assured for the world." [9] Gandhiji is confident that, if individuals are rightly educated, one need not worry about the society of which they are constituents. To the question, "Would you try to bring about any specific kind of social organization ?", he replies in his characteristic way : "I would feel that if we succeed in building the character of the individual, society will take care of itself. I would be quite willing to trust the organization of society to individuals so developed." [10]

It will be apparent from the above discussion how great an importance Gandhiji attaches to the place of the

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[8] N. K. Bose : *Selections from Gandhi*, p. 27.

[9] *Harijan*, 9-3-'47.

[10] Carlton Washburne : *Remakers of Mankind* (1932), pp. 104, 105.

individual in a social organization. His attitude to individualism is clear and definite; in fact, one would feel justified in dubbing Gandhiji a prince among individualistic philosophers. But his personality is so elusive that any description, however accurate it may appear to be, would not be sufficient to bring into light all its facets. It is possible as a matter of fact to show that Gandhiji believed in the good of the State whose service and interests should be the aim of its individual citizens. He maintains that social service should be an essential part of education. Referring to the duty of every student, Gandhiji observes: "While continuing his studies in the institution which he has joined, he should ever keep before him the ideal of service set forth by me and use his studies with a view to serve that ideal, never for making money." [11] To Gandhiji education is not worth the name, if it does not inculcate in the minds of the educands the spirit of service and sacrifice. While addressing the students of the Prem Mahavidyalaya at Brindaban, Gandhiji said: "Your education, if it is a vital thing, must shed its fragrance in your surroundings. You must devote a certain portion of your time daily to serving the people around in a practical manner. You must, therefore, be prepared to take the spade, the broomstick and the basket. You must become voluntary scavengers of this holy place. That would be the richest part of your education, not learning by heart literary thesis." [12]

Gandhiji's ideal of service knows no frontiers, for the whole living kingdom is his family. Service of a particular society or country is not incompatible with the higher ideals of service unto humanity and service unto God. "I am a humble servant of India," he admits, "and in trying to serve India, I serve humanity at large. I discovered in my early days that the service of India is not inconsistent with the service of humanity." [13]

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[11] *Harijan*, 10-3-'46.

[12] *Young India*, 14-11-'29.

[13] *Harijan*, 17-11-'33.

One is apt to ask : " How is it that Gandhiji preaches these two mutually exclusive and self-contradictory ideals in life and education ? " The fact is that the main key to Gandhiji's philosophy is his tendency to avoid extremes and follow the middle course. He avoids both the extremes and strikes a balance between the individual and scoial aims in education. His greatness consists in the fact that he synthesizes the ideals of social service and individual development. He clearly 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 requirements of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. We have learnt to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint. Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society, enriches both the individual and the society of which one is a member." [14]

If Gandhiji advocates individual development or social progress, it is not because he is inconsistent, but because he is keenly alive to their interdependence. He has profound faith in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives. He, therefore, says : ". . . . I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent." [15] In Gandhiji's view, individual development and social progress are interdependent to such an extent that one is inconceivable apart from the other. " A nation cannot advance without the units of which it is composed advancing, and conversely, no individual can advance without the nation of which it is a part also advancing." [16] According to Gandhiji, the individual must work out his perfection in a spiritual society. The social order that he contemplates must be free from economic power or any other exploitation. As Acharya Kripalani points out, " To avoid therefore unregulated and anarchic individualism of the capitalist system as also the crushing concentration of

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[14] *Harijan*, 27-5-'39.

[15] *Young India*, 4-12-'24.

[16] *Young India*, 26-3-'31.

the power of the Communists, Gandhiji proposes to build the economic and social structure on decentralized agriculture and industry." [17]

Gandhiji's synthesis of the ideals of social service and individual development reminds us of the golden age of Greece in the days of Pericles who believed that the greatness of Athens was due to her democratic institutions. An Athenian citizen cared for the State as well as for his own household. The great philosophers of Greece tried hard to reconcile the claims of the individual with those of the State. In their opinion, the interests of the State were enhanced by the development of virtue and wisdom in the individual, and individuals had full scope for self-development in the service of the State.

Gandhiji believes that individuality can be developed only in a social medium, for man's nature is "social as truly as it is self-regarding".[18] Society and the individual cannot be separated. In actual life they go together and are interrelated. In the words of Acharya Kripalani:

> "This interrelation can only be ignored at the peril of the individual and the society. Any over-emphasis on the one will be at the expense of the other. Such over-emphasis destroys the balance which a true and lasting civilization needs. Most of the trouble of the world has been due to the loss of this balance. Sometimes the individual with his anarchic tendencies produces confusion in society. At other times society so crushes the individual that his initiative and personality are lost and he becomes a mere automaton. Humanity has been oscillating between the thesis of the individual and the antithesis of society." [19]

Gandhiji succeeded in achieving the proper synthesis between the individual and society in his philosophy of life and education. Education concerns itself with the training and development of the individual. But the human individual attains his individuality, only in a group, in some sort of society. He does not develop in a vacuum. Even renunciation keeps before itself the ideal of social service by example and precept.

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17 *The Latest Fad*, p. 84.

18 Nunn: *Education: Its Data and First Principles*, p. 4.

19 *The Latest Fad*, p. 77.

> "It is both for the individual and for society. Such was the renunciation of the great teachers like Buddha, Christ, Rama and Krishna. It was a kind of discipline for perfecting themselves, so that they might mould society the more effectively." [20]

Self-realization which is Gandhiji's aim in life and education can be achieved through social service and self-sacrifice. Like Christ, Gandhiji also exalts the value of the individual human soul in the world, yet he believes that the way of personal salvation and self-realization is the way of sacrifice and self-abnegation, believing that "He that loseth his life shall save it". Gandhiji lived and died in perfect service and devotion to his fellow-brothers. He showed by precept and practice that there was no conflict between self-realization and social service as aims in life and education. To quote his own words :

> "Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour, simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. I am a part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity." [21]

Gandhiji's ideal of self-realization through service and self-sacrifice is not repugnant to the modern trends in educational theory. Sir John Adams is driving at the same truth when he says : "We do not have to choose between self-sacrifice and self-realization, nor are we driven to practise them alternately. We sacrifice in realizing, and we realize our highest self in sacrifice." [22] Gandhiji believes that the individual can make the best of himself only in a State and the State can achieve its highest development only on the condition that each of its citizens realizes the best that is in him. The restraint that the State places on the individual is a means by which he realizes himself. We cannot think of the individual as a complete independent

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[20] *The Latest Fad*, p. 76.

[21] *Harijan*, 29-8-'36.

[22] *The Evolution of Educational Theory*, p. 130.

unit. It is now recognized that social bonds originate within man's nature and are woven inextricably into the texture of his being. As Sir Percy Nunn points out, "The most original personality is unintelligible apart from the social medium in which it grows; no Thoreau could hide himself so deeply in the woods as to escape from the social in his own mind." [23]

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." [24] 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. Gandhiji's position can be best summarized by the following quotation from the Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education:

> "The State may through its schools offer much which the young will accept, even with enthusiasm; nevertheless, they may not know it, their minds are in prison. We find it impossible to believe that a community will not, in the long run, suffer by such drastic limitations of individual autonomy, and that, on the other hand, it has not everything to gain from the free growth of individuality among its potential citizens." [25]

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[23] *Education: Its Data and First Principles*, p. 4.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[25] *Spens Report*, p. 151.

CHAPTER V

PRECURSORS TO GANDHIJI

We propose to discuss in this chapter whether the educational philosophy of Gandhiji is new and original in its entirety or it has its roots in the teachings of the master minds that preceded him in the East and the West. We should also ascertain the extent of debt, if any, Gandhiji owes to his predecessors in the realm of educational thought. The precursors to Gandhiji's philosophy of education may belong to one of the two types, viz., (i) those who exercised direct formative influence on his philosophy, and (ii) a host of others who had reached similar or identical conclusions before, though Gandhiji may have reached his conclusions independently of what they had taught.

What are the salient features of the Gandhian philosophy of education? The outstanding contribution of Gandhiji to the evolution of educational theory is his revolt against the existing content and methods of education, which reduce the child to the position of a passive receiver of mere information. Gandhiji seeks to restore the child to his rightful place in the class and make education paedocentric. In his view, education should aim at developing "the whole man through craft".[1] He is perhaps the first educationist to preach and practise on such a large scale the idea "that handicrafts are to be taught, not merely for productive work, but for developing the intellect of the pupils",[2] and that "I want to teach through hand-work all the subjects like history, geography, arithmetic, science, language, painting and music,"[3] according to a definite plan.

Let us see if we have the like of this idea in the history of education. Acharya J. B. Kripalani says: "So far as

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1 *Harijan*, 16-10-'37.
2 *Ibid.*, 11-9-'37.
3 *Educational Reconstruction*, pp. 73, 74.

Gandhiji is concerned education through manual work or craft is an original idea. That he should have come by it independently of former workers and thinkers in the field shows how near he lives to the earth. However, in the history of education, the idea is neither new nor revolutionary.... The idea has been advocated often enough and notable efforts have been made in the past to work it out." [4]

If we go far back into history, it will not be difficult for us to discover the roots of activity as a means of education. The children of primitive men, as also the little savages today do, practised *learning* by *doing*. It was always the educational method of the patriarchal family. The children in the cities of antiquity separated the school from life, for gymnastics, the bearing of arms and verbalism took the place of "the education". Socrates reacted against the sophists and the teachers, but his lone but firm voice was silenced, leaving no followers behind.

Man maintained himself through physical work in primitive times, when education consisted in teaching the young the arts of hunting, fishing or agriculture, which sustained human life. All knowledge was to be acquired through work and experience. With the march of civilization in the East, the *gurukul* system of education came into vogue in India. Under this system, the student was required to stay away from his home in the house of a teacher. The *smritis* enjoined that the student should live under the direct supervision of his teacher, whom he was supposed to hold in high esteem. Great teachers like Buddha and Apastamba enjoined their followers to show high reverence for their teachers.

The student was enjoined to beg in order that he might learn humility and realize that it was due to the sympathy and help of society that he was acquiring the heritage of the race, which would enable him to follow a profession that would secure him a living.

What a contrast this life presents to the easy-going and ease-loving life of our students nowadays! The *gurukul*

[4] *The Latest Fad*, p. 21.

system was very valuable in so far as a direct, personal and continuous contact with a teacher of noble character helped to mould the mind of the learner during the most impressionable period of his life. It also served to make "all students more resourceful and self-reliant and acquainted with the ways of the world".[5] His knowledge was, therefore, based on the real and the concrete. It was linked to objective facts. Activity was the watchword of every student. It was through experience and activity that he gradually entered into possession of his own body and raised his command over it to the highest possible power and found his moral, social and intellectual self. Activity was undertaken spontaneously and it always tended to increasing perfection of form, to more complete expressiveness and to a higher degree of unity in diversity. Our ancients believed that nature devised activity not merely as a means of disposing harmlessly of the youngster's superfluous energy, but as a device for using that energy for the serious business of life.

Gandhiji was an ardent lover of the *gurukul* system of education. He had the same old ideal at the back of his mind, while he started the Phoenix Settlement, the Tolstoy Farm, the Sabarmati Ashram and the Sevagram Ashram. In his speech at the anniversary of the Kangdi Gurukul, he said : "The *gurukul* boys need a thorough industrial training if they are to become self-reliant and self-supporting. It seems to me that in our country in which 85 per cent of the population is agricultural and perhaps 10 per cent occupied in supplying the wants of the peasantry, it must be a part of the training of every youth that he has a fair practical knowledge of agriculture and hand-weaving."[6] It should, however, be borne in mind that there is a fundamental difference between Gandhiji's ideal of manual training and the one laid down under the ancient *gurukul* system. For Gandhiji manual training is an integral part, an indispensable means of education, whereas under the

[5] Dr. A. S. Altekar : *Education in Ancient India*, p. 32.
[6] Mahatma Gandhi : *To The Students*, p. 9.

gurukul system it was a supplementary activity of the *ashramites*. Gandhiji believes in education *through* manual training; in the *gurukulas* there was education *plus* manual training. Herein lies the novelty of the Gandhian philosophy of education. Gandhiji's ideal of character building as a major aim of education is consistent with the teachings of our ancient philosophers. There is a striking agreement between Gandhiji and the teachers of ancient India in many respects. Both preached and practised the ideal of plain living and high thinking; both enjoined *brahmacharya* as an essential condition of student life; both preached the gospel of love and service and both laid down self-realization as the ultimate goal of life and education.

In the medieval ages, education was in the hands of the priestly class. Being more or less abstract it was confined to words and ideas. Education both in the East and in the West was formal and abstract, dealing with words to the neglect of things and objects. It was customary to prove one's thesis by means of definitions and laws of deductive logic. Philosophical conferences discussed for days together how many angels could dance on the point of a needle. Such scholasticism and mere jugglery of words smothered all free thought and initiative.

With the Renaissance in Europe a class of persons came into being that protested against such formal and abstract knowledge. "From Bacon, Montaigne, John Locke, the Encyclopaedists, up to the present-day philosophers and educationists, it has been one long protest against scholasticism and its divorce from nature and reality. The first revolt was naturally in the field of philosophy and science." [7] Education was not touched for a long time, but it could not escape the scientific spirit. The idea of bringing the school to life, of linking the one to the other did not occur to the classical and medieval philosophers in the West. Rabelais, Montaigne and Luther raised their voice against the traditional system of teaching that

[7] Acharya Kripalani: *The Latest Fad*, p. 26.

prevailed everywhere. Jean Jacques Rousseau was perhaps the first to discern the true value of childhood and make his voice heard. Explaining why teaching must be based on interest and activity, he said: "Man's diverse powers are stirred by the same instinct. The bodily activity which seeks an outlet for its energies is succeeded by the mental activity which seeks for knowledge. Children are first restless, then curious." [8] Does Gandhiji not say: "Physical drill, handicrafts, drawing and music should go hand in hand in order to draw the best out of boys and girls and create in them a real interest in their tuition." ? [9] Both of them spoke in the same language and that too, perhaps, independently of each other, for we are told that Gandhiji had hardly read or heard about Emile. It is no exaggeration to say that, if Rousseau was the prophet of education through activity in the West, Gandhiji was so in the East. Besides, Gandhiji makes definite what to Rousseau was vague. Referring to the advantage of this method over the traditional one, Rousseau said: "The most obvious advantage of these slow and laborious inquiries is this: the scholar, while engaged in speculative studies, is actively using his body, gaining suppleness of limb and training his hands to labour so that he will be able to make them useful when he is a man." [10] Gandhiji also believes that "the children ought, at the end of seven years, to be able to pay for their instruction and be earning units." [11] Both Rousseau and Gandhiji were against storing the minds of children with mere bookish knowledge. "If instead of making a child stick to his books," said Rousseau, "I employ him in a workshop, his hands work for the development of his mind. While he fancies himself a workman he is becoming a philosopher." [12] In the same vein Gandhiji also says: "We have up to now concentrated on stuffing children's minds with all kinds of information,

[8] *Emile or Education*, p. 130.
[9] *Harijan*, 11-9-'37.
[10] *Emile or Education*, p. 139.
[11] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 64.
[12] *Emile or Education*, p. 140.

without ever thinking of stimulating and developing them. Let us now cry a halt and concentrate on educating the child properly through manual work, not as a side activity, but as the prime means of intellectual training." [13] There are many points of agreement between these two philosophers, but Gandhiji differs from his predecessor on a number of fundamental points. Rousseau's approach was *negative* ; he taught that education should consist " not in teaching the principles of virtue or truth, but in guarding the heart against vice and the mind against error ".[14] With him the entire education of the child was to come from the free development of his own nature, his own powers, his own natural inclinations. Gandhiji's approach is essentially *positive* ; he believes in the need for positive efforts by the teacher. In his long discussions on the importance of the manual and industrial activities in education, Rousseau emphasized many of the social and economical advantages, while Gandhiji stresses the psychological advantages. Gandhiji does not wish to teach handicrafts side by side with so-called liberal education. He wants that the whole education should be imparted through some handicraft or industry.

Rousseau had an illustrious disciple in Pestalozzi. The guiding principle of Pestalozzi's philosophy is to leave the child alone, to leave him free to act, to show him or rather let him find out what sort of being he is, to let him discover his own inclinations. Herr Pestalozzi's children called him 'father'; the nation calls Gandhiji " Bapuji " or " the Father of the Nation ". According to Pestalozzi, education is " the harmonious development of all the powers of the individual." [15] In Gandhiji's view, it is " all-round development ".[16] Pestalozzi made positive and concrete the negative and general educational principles of Rousseau. Education

[13] *Harijan*, 16-9-'37.

[14] Paul Monroe: *A Brief Course in the History of Education*, p. 286.

[15] *Ibid*, p. 306.

[16] *Harijan*, 18-9-'37.

as conceived by him is but the organic development of the individual — mental, moral, physical. This development comes in each of these phases through activities initiated by spontaneous desire for action. He also made the study of the physical world through sense-perception the chief activity of the school. From 1775 to 1780, Pestalozzi conducted what was probably the first industrial school for the poor. The children were engaged in raising special farm products, in spinning and weaving of cotton and in other occupations. While so engaged they also spent some time in reading and in committing passages to memory and especially in arithmetical exercises. "There was no connection between the occupations and the intellectual activities, but Pestalozzi demonstrated that the two could at least go on together." [17] Gandhiji aims at the development of the intellect through an occupation. Herein lies the fundamental difference between the two thinkers. Pestalozzi tried his educational experiments at Stanz, at Burgdorf and eventually at the Yverdun Institute ; Gandhiji evolved his educational philosophy through experiments at the Phoenix Settlement, at the Tolstoy Farm, at the Sabarmati Ashram and at Sevagram, the last being the place where he finalized his theory of education.

Rousseau and Pestalozzi had an army of able disciples who swelled the stream of human experience. One of them was Paul Robin, who founded a school and an orphanage at Cempuis. At Cempuis as at Yverdun, the household economics — beds, clothing, house-cleaning — was in the hands of the pupils. Giroud calls it organic education which aimed at developing the acuteness, precision and delicacy of the senses, and perfecting the means of expression and the instruments of labour, particularly that marvellous universal tool, the hand. The end of the manual work in which all boys and girls shared was essentially educational. Children were given training in plaiting, weaving, drawing, colouring, clay- and wax-modelling,

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17 Paul Monroe: *A Brief Course in the History of Education*, p. 310.

sewing, knitting, agriculture, gardening, book-keeping, washing, ironing, cooking, earthwork, masonry, woodwork, carpentry, metal-work, wire-making, printing, book-binding, etc." [18] These activities necessitated constant observation and reasoning on the part of the pupils, rounded out their intellectual education and required the constant application of ideas and their relationships. In teaching a constant appeal was made to "quickness of eye, skill of hand, to the spirit of inventiveness". In calculation the pupils counted, weighed and measured; they compared lengths, magnitudes and time-intervals. How favourably this compares with the tenets of the Gandhian philosophy! "I had no difficulty in giving at the Tolstoy Farm (Transvaal) all-round development to the boys and girls for whose training I was directly responsible. The central fact there was vocational training for nearly eight hours. They had one or at the most, two hours of book learning. The vocations were digging, cooking, scavenging, sandal-making, simple carpentry, and messenger work." [19] It is interesting to observe that Gandhiji's system as described by himself in the above quotation is not materially different from that of Robin, though both had evolved it independently. Gandhiji's system was then in a germinal stage, and it has been fully evolved since. He himself says that "that experiment has been since much enriched." [20] Like Robin he also made vocational training supplementary to intellectual training in the beginning, but later on he improved upon his past experiments and came to the conclusion "that the whole of the general education should come through the crafts and simultaneously with their progress." [21] The Zakir Husain Committee prescribed spinning and weaving, carpentry, agriculture, fruit and vegetable gardening and leather work as basic crafts for schools with an option to choose any other craft for which

[18] Adolph Ferriere: *The Activity School* (Edited by K. G. Saiyidain), p. 39.

[19] *Harijan*, 18-9-'37.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] *Ibid.*, 16-11-'37.

local and geographical conditions were favourable and which satisfied the condition that " every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today, but scientifically. That is to say, the child should learn the why and wherefore of every process." [22] The fundamental idea which distinguishes Gandhiji from all his predecessors is that he does not merely add " to the curriculum one other subject — weaving, spinning, or carpentry — while all other subjects are still taught in the traditional way ".[23] The end of the manual work was, according to Robin, essentially educational, but he could not say how education was to be woven around the manual activities, nor did he make a vocational craft an integral part of education, as Gandhiji does. It should, however, be acknowledged that Robin's philosophy of education was much nearer Gandhiji's than that of his predecessors.

The psychological tendency in education initiated by Pestalozzi and ably supported by Herbart found in Froebel its greatest exponent, for he elaborated the conception of child psychology and the child's tendency to activity. To Froebel education beginning with the spontaneous activity of the child was more largely an emotional and volitional than an intellectual training. He started from the dominant idealistic philosophy of Kant, Schelling, Hegel and Fichte. The fundamental tenet of this entire philosophical movement was to find the explanation of reality and of life in the fundamental unity of existence of nature and of man in the absolute spirit. According to Froebel, " All things have come from the Divine Unity, from God, and have their origin in the Divine Unity, in God alone. God is the sole source of all things. In all things there lives and reigns the Divine Unity — God." [24] The object of education is the realization of this destiny, the development of this essence into unity with the absolute. It is needless to say how this object of education is in complete accord with Gandhiji's

22 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 122.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

24 Paul Monroe: *A Brief Course in the History of Education*, p. 332.

ultimate aim of education discussed by us in the preceding chapters.

According to Froebel, the mind is not so much possessed of activity as it is activity. Through this activity it realizes itself, builds up its own world, becomes conscious of itself, and works out its own destiny. Even a hostile government inspector had to comment as follows in 1825 on the Froebelian philosophy :

> "Self-activity of the mind is the first law of this instruction; therefore the kind of instruction given here does not make the young mind a strong box, into which, as early as possible, all kinds of coins of the most different values and coinage, such as are now current in the world, are stuffed; but slowly, continuously, gradually, and always inwardly, that is, according to a connection found in the nature of the human mind, the instruction steadily goes on, without any tricks, from the simple to the complex, from the concrete to the abstract, so well adapted to the child and his needs that he goes as readily to his learning as to his play." [25]

Self-activity means the desire of the child to enter into the life of others and the life around him ; the desire to help, to find out, to discover, to participate in common activities, to create, to discover the identity or connection between itself and the activities of others — the discovery which constitutes knowledge. Self-activity alone, said Froebel, can produce the evolution of the mind. He, therefore, made constructive work the beginning and the end of the educational process. Industrial training had been recognized as a phase of education by Rousseau, but upon social and economic grounds. Pestalozzi introduced object study and manual activities largely from the receptive point of view or that of developing sense perceptions. On purely educational grounds, Froebel gave to all manual training and constructive work the place which they occupy in modern schools in the West. Through them the child is to develop power, as each activity is to the child but an expression of some idea or purpose gained through instruction.

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[25] Paul Monroe : *A Brief Course in the History of Education*, p. 336.

There is close resemblance between the theories of Gandhiji and Froebel in so far as both lay particular emphasis on activity and constructive work in school life. In Froebel's kindergarten, the forms of expression were (i) gesture, (ii) song, and (iii) language. These forms of self-expression were to be co-ordinate. The story, for example, when told by the teacher, was to be expressed by the child, not only in his own language, but through song, or gesture, or picture, or construction of simple articles from paper, clay or other convenient material. This activity would stimulate thought, vivify imagination, train hands and eyes and co-ordinate muscles. Froebel called all the activities occupations and the materials for them, gifts. He believed that in no other way could human work be transformed into free activity and it could only become intellectual action out of what had been mere mechanical action, when the occupation of the hand was at the same time the occupation of the mind.[26] It is here that Froebel comes nearest Gandhiji. He succeeded in establishing the occupation as a means of intellectual training, but it was left to Gandhiji to assert boldly "that the whole education should be imparted through some handicraft or industry",[27] and that this handicraft should be remunerative and suited to the needs of the rural population of India. Gandhiji gave the constructive work of Froebel a concrete shape and a local habitation, though quite independently of him.

Coming to our own times, we have in John Dewey, the celebrated American philosopher, an able exponent of the activity school. He maintains that the present organization of the school does not correspond with the organization of society and the needs of the time. He firmly believes that each individual should be capable of self-respecting, self-supporting *intelligent* work and that each should make a living for himself and those dependent upon his efforts. He says: "We must use all work in wood and metal, of weaving, sewing and cooking as methods of living and

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26 Acharya Kripalani: *The Latest Fad*, p. 30.

27 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 61.

learning not as distinct studies. We must conceive of them in their social significance as types of the process by which society keeps itself going, as agencies for bringing home to the child some of the primal necessities of community life and as ways in which these needs have been met by the growing insight and ingenuity of man; in short his instrumentality, through which the school itself shall be made a genuine form of active community life instead of a place set apart in which to learn lessons." [28] Gandhiji also "envisages the idea of a co-operative community, in which the motive of social service will dominate all the activities of children during the plastic years of childhood and youth".[29] In such a school community children receive intellectual training through basic crafts which bring home to them the primal necessities of community life. Both Dewey and Gandhiji conceive of education not merely in terms of learning, but in terms of construction, use of tools, contact with nature, expression and activity. To them school is the place where children are working rather than listening, learning life by living life. Its primary business may be said to be to train children in co-operative and mutually helpful living. The virtues of such a school are learning by doing, the use of muscles, sight, and feeling, as well as hearing; and the employment of energy, originality and initiative. Both the thinkers agree so far, but the novel feature of the Gandhian philosophy consists in the fact that Gandhiji does not mean to supplement literary with manual training, but makes manual training the means of literary and intellectual training. Both Gandhiji and Dewey have, however, a profound faith in democracy by which they mean equality of opportunity among mankind, fullest development of every individual, avoidance of classes and a free voice for all in the government of all. Both believe in the self-supporting aspect of education. However, when Dr. Zakir Husain reminded Gandhiji of the failure of Dewey's scheme in America, the latter

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[28] Acharya Kripalani: *The Latest Fad*, p. 34.

[29] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 124.

replied : " I think he could not succeed in his scheme, not because it was very expensive, but because he could not work it on a large scale. My scheme is absolutely different, because it is a rural one." [30]

We have something approximating to the Gandhian philosophy of education in the teaching of Marx and his followers in Russia, despite the radical differences in the ideologies of Gandhiji and Marx. In the first volume of his *Capital*, Marx writes :

> " Although the education clauses of the Factory Act go a very little way, at least they embodied a proclamation that the giving of elementary instruction is to be a necessary accompaniment of child labour. The success of the Act in this respect gave the first proof that it is possible to combine education and physical culture with manual labour ; and on the other hand, to combine manual labour with education and physical culture. By questioning the school masters, the factory inspectors discovered that the factory children, although they receive only half as much instruction as the regular day scholars, learn quite as much and often more. This can be accounted for by the fact that with only being at school for one half of the day they are always fresh and nearly always ready and willing to receive instruction. The system on which they work, half manual labour and half school, renders each employment a rest and a relief to the other. Consequently, both are far more congenial to the child than would be the case were he constantly kept at one."

Both Marx and Prince Kropotkin advocated *education integrale* or complete education in which the pernicious distinction between culture and labour was conspicuous by its absence. They aimed at giving such an education that, on leaving school at the age of 18 or 20, each boy and girl would be endowed with a thorough knowledge of science which would enable them to be useful workers, and at giving them a general knowledge that would enable them to take their place in the grand world of the manual production of wealth.

Pinkwitch, the official chronicler of Soviet education, placed " the labour of the people at the centre of their education ". He conceived of labour not from the standpoint

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30 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 73.

of a specialist, but from that of a builder of new life, who regardless of his profession must have a clear comprehension of the relations and interdependence of various forms of labour. To him labour "does not mean labour process nor self-service nor school-work or shop but the central axis of the entire school." Acharya Kripalani is of opinion that "as a matter of fact the Soviet System of education makes the nearest approach to Gandhiji's ideas." With due respect to the learned Acharya, one may be permitted to point out that the Soviet System does not seek to impart the knowledge of all subjects through manual work as Gandhiji does — a fact which gives the Gandhian philosophy a stamp of novelty and originality. The Project Method preached by Kilpatrick and other followers of Dewey in America and the Complex Method in Russia make some manual work the centre of education, but the Wardha Scheme of Gandhiji is based on a different ideology altogether. As Dr. Zakir Husain pointed out, "the way in which Mahatmaji has placed his present scheme is, certainly, original." [31] Acharya Kripalani humorously refers to how the general order for polytechnizing of education was carried out in a Russian village. It was decreed "that every school must be attached to a productive unit of some sort — a factory or a State or collective farm. A certain village in Zadjhikistan had received the decree. Now there was neither factory nor farm near enough to this village; yet the decree must be carried out. Some one on the Education Committee remembered that there was a barber's shop. The village school was attached to the barber's shop as the nearest productive unit." [32] Gandhiji does not attach a school to a factory or a workshop; to him the school itself is the workshop where work is an essential instrument of learning.

In our own times, we hear of a number of educational experiments based on the activity and interest of the child. We have the Montessori Method, the Dalton Plan, the

31 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 95.

32 *The Latest Fad*, p. 42.

Heuristic Method and the Gary System, all of which lay down activity in one form or another as an integral part of education. They have their roots in the teachings of philosophers like Pestalozzi, Froebel or Dewey. Dazzled by the plethora of such latest fads, a sceptic would naturally ask : " If there are so many latest methods of education which are practised in different parts of the world with conspicuous success, where is the need for one more fad at a time when we should concentrate upon the pertinent problems with which the country is confronted ? " Gandhiji dabbled in education, not because he was accustomed to dabble in every phase of life under the sun, but because he realized as " a visionary and a practical man " that education is the pivotal activity of society, on which depend its peace, progress and prosperity, and it is the most potent instrument of reform — social, political or moral. He, therefore, touched the root of the problem, when he evolved a system of education that would be " the spearhead of a silent social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequences ".[33]

Is Gandhiji's philosophy of education entirely original or is it old wine in new bottles ? Has he borrowed stray and scattered thoughts from the past educational thinkers and put them together producing a patch-work or has he digested them like a bee before producing a philosophy, which, though new in the accepted sense of the term, can still be called the product of the past formative influences ? It would be presumptuous even for the most ardent admirer of Gandhiji to claim that Gandhiji evolved a philosophy entirely new in its content and formulation. As a matter of fact, no thinker is completely free from the formative influences of his predecessors. In this sense no work of art or literature is original. An original work to be of value must start from where a contemporary or a predecessor left it. It is only through the imitation of the precursors that a beginner can reach the point at which originality becomes valuable. To quote Sir Percy Nunn : " The most

[33] *Harijan*, 9-10-'37.

original minds find themselves only in playing the sedulous apes to others who have gone before them along the same path of self-assertion." [34] It is well known that Wagner imitated the forms of the masters of opera before he developed his own original form of music-drama. Einstein must imitate the thought of Newton before he can advance upon it. In their earlier works, the voices of Kalidas and Shakespeare cannot be distinguished from those of their contemporaries and/or predecessors. In fact, every great thinker has to draw on the thoughts of his predecessors before there is a full flowering of his genius.

We have already discussed the points of contact and difference between Gandhiji and some of the above thinkers. What debt, if any, does Gandhiji owe to them? We have seen that the germs of his educational philosophy can be perceived in the teachings of the great thinkers of the past in the East and in the West, even though he had not studied them. It redounds to the credit of Gandhiji as an educational thinker that his philosophy, though based on personal experience and experiment, is in line with the educational theory evolved by a long line of thinkers, from Comenius down to Montessori. His educational philosophy is original in the sense that he arrived at it through personal experience without drawing on the accumulated experience of others. It may not be original in the sense that the like of it was never preached by anybody in the past; but it should be noted that its presentation and adaptation on a nation-wide scale are undoubtedly novel and original. In the words of Acharya Vinoba Bhave: "It may not be a new thing, but it has been presented in a new light." [35] Referring to the teachings of the Western philosophers, he further observes: "The Westerners may have accepted manual training as a part of their curricula, but they are exploiting nations, and manual training does not for them mean freedom from exploitation." [36] Gandhiji

[34] *Education: Its Data and First Principles*, p. 141.
[35] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 75.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

himself says: "I do know that the aim in the Middle ages or any age was never to develop the whole man through crafts. The idea is original." [37] What Gandhiji means is that manual training and education are inseparable. He holds "that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education. Only every handicraft has 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.....One imparts ten times as much in this manner as by reading and writing..... This is a revolutionary proposal, but it saves immense labour and enables a student to acquire in one year what he may take much longer to learn." [38] Gandhiji's scheme eschews violence, for, as Kaka Kalelkar points out: ".....true education must be given through non-violence; and this is a central idea in Gandhiji's educational scheme." [39] Dr. Zakir Husain who at first said that "those who are working in the educational field will not find Mahatmaji's scheme very new" [40] admitted at a later stage that "the way in which Mahatmaji has placed his present scheme is, certainly, original." [41]

Above all things Gandhiji preaches the gospel of love in education, which when put into practice should enable the right type of teacher to "draw forth the best that is in the child through understanding, sympathy and appreciation of each child's precious individuality." [42] He expects teachers to exercise the sweet compulsion of love, and thereby put the child not only in its own resources, but on its honour. The gospel of love had been stressed by the past educationists, but Gandhiji makes love the sole compulsion and direction in the training of children, since when love begins to rule education, the problem of punishment

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37 *Harijan*, 16-10-'37.
38 *Ibid.*, 31-7-'37.
39 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 80
40 *Ibid.*, p. 66.
41 *Ibid.*, p. 95.
42 *The Teachers World*, 4-2-'48.

vanishes, for Gandhiji thinks that children have a finer sense of honour than adults. In the words of Mr. K. G. Saiyidain: "He wanted to oppose the miraculous power of Love to the power of the Atom Bomb and in the words of the Urdu poet

> "Love has not yet admitted defeat;
> Do not therefore give it up in despair." [43]

Before Gandhiji's days, education in India was limited to the use of books and there was no vital relationship between education and life. Gandhiji gives a new orientation to education in order to build up the type of the social order that he had cherished. While the minds of professional educational experts were engaged in superfluous and unimportant issues, his penetrating vision cut through all the fruitless verbiage and went straight to the heart of the problem. He evolved a philosophy on the basis of his knowledge of life acquired, not through books, but by participating actively in the life of the masses, their occupations and activities, their joys and sorrows. He is, therefore, justified in asserting "My scheme is absolutely different, because it is a rural one." [44] In this as in other matters, it is his experience and knowledge of the conditions of the country that enabled him invariably to lay his finger on the right spot. Gandhiji's educational forte is not practical details, but the fundamental truth beneath them, viz., that Indian children must be educated in terms of their surroundings. Instead of going to school to forget the home and live in a world as far as could be from the world of home, the child should find in the school a continuation of home with the same surroundings, the same problems, the same occupations.

Gandhiji thinks that all syllabuses should be woven round vocational training, and, if it is training of the right sort, it is bound to be self-supporting. The children, as they grow up, should evolve not into costly, but into useful citizens, whose education should not be a drain on the

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[43] *Journal of Education & Psychology*, April, 1948.
[44] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 73.

slender resources of the nation, but should add to its wealth. Others talked about productive labour, but Gandhiji made it the centre of education and means of supporting education. The activity through which the child is educated is not a mere frivolous play ; it educates the child as well as supports the school and is to him " a kind of insurance against unemployment ".[45] This is certainly a novel idea the like of which was never heard of in any part of the world. To Gandhiji self-support is the crux ; " . . . . in fact self-support is the acid test of its reality." [46] He has no doubt in his mind that " the tremendous problem will become easy when the education you give will become both self-supporting and self-acting." [47]

When Gandhiji talks about education through the medium of a craft, he has at the back of his mind one of the basic crafts of India's villages, the produce from which should be saleable and the proceeds applied to the upkeep of the school. He would have nothing to do with machines, for " by working with the machines we have become machines ourselves, having lost all sense of art and handwork. If you still think that we cannot do without machines, the scheme I have placed before you will be futile. You wish to keep our villages alive by means of machines and think of imparting education to the village children through them. I am confident that this would be impossible in our country." [48]

Another unique feature of the Gandhian philosophy of education is, as Shri K. G. Mashruwala points out, " the application of the law of non-violence in the training of the child as a prospective citizen of the world ".[49] His " plan springs out of non-violence ", for " if we want to eliminate communal strife and international strife, we must start with foundations pure and strong by rearing

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45 *Harijan*, 11-9-'37.
46 *Ibid.*, 2-10-'37.
47 *Ibid.*, 11-9-'37.
48 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 73.
49 *Harijan*, 4-12-'37.

our younger generation on the education I have adumbrated." [50] Europe is no example for Gandhiji, for " it plans its programmes in terms of violence because it believes in violence. I would be the last to minimize the achievement of Russia, but the whole structure is based on force and violence. If India has resolved to eschew violence, this system of education becomes an integral part of the discipline she has to go through." [51]

We have discussed in brief some of the salient features of Gandhiji's educational philosophy, which distinguish it from the educational theory as evolved by his predecessors and contemporaries, and which can aptly be regarded as his original contribution of great value to the educational philosophy in general. It is no exaggeration to say that Gandhiji has revolutionized the concept of education and at no distant date the educational practice all over the world will be influenced by his teachings. Let us refer in passing to some other unique features of his philosophy :

1. Gandhiji specially mentions the *takli* as the handicraft through which the *whole* education should be imparted. He is convinced that the *takli* is the only practical solution of our problem. [52]

2. He is keen on finding the expenses of a teacher through the product of the manual work of his pupils, because he is convinced that there is no other way to carry education to crores of our semi-starved and half-naked children.

3. Such an integral, all-sided education through remunerative labour would make children self-confident and brave by their paying for their own education by their own labour. [53]

4. The scheme rescues education from the four walls of the class-room.

5. It is rooted in our culture and civilization and is eminently suited to the genius of our people.

6. The scheme is absolutely *new* for India.

7. It is universal in application, because it is to be common to all — Hindus, Muslims, Parsees and Christians.

8. It stresses practical religion, the religion of self-help.

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[50] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 65.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 66.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

9. The ideal of citizenship is implicit in the scheme.[54] It aims at securing the minimum education of citizens for the intelligent exercise of their rights and duties in a democratic State.

10. It envisages the idea of a co-operative community, in which the motive of social service will dominate all the activities of children.[55]

11. Gandhiji wishes "that true education should result not in the lust for material power, but in spiritual force."[56]

CHAPTER VI

THE EVOLUTION OF GANDHIJI'S EDUCATIONAL THEORY

It must have been apparent from our discussion in the preceding chapter that Gandhiji's philosophy of education is not the result of any study of modern or ancient educational movements in India or elsewhere. His educational theory is 'original', 'new', 'epoch-making' and 'revolutionary'. It evolved out of his wide and long experience of the political, social and economic life of his country. As a keen student of men and their surroundings, Gandhiji realized at an early age that education was the only sovereign remedy for all the ills and evils with which India had been afflicted for centuries. From the dim beginnings of history, we find on the long path of human evolution the foot-prints of sages, seers, saints and prophets, who have been the standard-bearers of man's spiritual progress. They come throughout the trackless centuries to illumine the dark continents of man's mind and keep the flame of spiritual life burning even at the cost of their lives. Gandhiji has so far been the last to come in that line of saints and prophets, and was the true representative of that Great Order. He has upheld its great traditions by sacrificing his life for the noble ideals he preached throughout his life. He focussed his attention on education during the latter

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54 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 123.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 124.

56 *The Teachers World*, 4-2-'48.

part of his life, because he found in education the only means of his country's salvation.

The existing system of education in India, which was of foreign import, was unsuited to the genius and culture of the people and its radical overhauling to suit the needs of society was long overdue. It had become inert and ceased to progress. It had as a matter of fact ceased to be educational. Consequently, no reform could be expected through minor adjustments. The improvements suggested by various committees, of which we had heard so much, did not go to the root of the matter and we were in need of an upheaval. The true state of affairs has been vividly described in the following Press Communique issued by the Government of Madras on June 26, 1937 :

> "The scheme of studies for elementary schools is not sufficiently related to the life and surroundings of both parents and pupils. This is particularly so in the case of rural elementary schools. The stereotyped methods now generally employed by school masters, many of whom do not belong to rural areas, tend to make study in the school something foreign and extraneous, and therefore something difficult and uninteresting to the majority of the pupils. The teaching of nature study, for example, from a text-book without its being in any way related to the actual life in and around the school is of no practical value. There is little or no training in the powers of observation, hardly any practical work and no interest in gardening. The teaching usually tends to divorce the pupil from village life and hereditary occupations rather than help to train better villagers."

In order to make a proper appraisal of the Gandhian philosophy of education, we should have a clear picture of the educational system which was introduced during the British period and has been in existence up to the present day. When the Portuguese had gained a foot-hold in the country, Franciscan, Dominican, Jesuit and other Roman Catholic missionaries began to arrive and organize educational institutions in different parts. Soon afterwards, other missionaries, Government officials and a few enlightened Indians contributed to the rise and growth of the modern educational system, which soon gained immense popularity with our young men and women for various reasons and by the end of the nineteenth century, it completely

replaced the old indigenous system. The setting for such a system of education was provided by the social, political and constitutional history of India, as well as by the social, political and educational developments in contemporary England. It is rightly remarked that "a change in the educational policy of England had its echoes in Indian education sooner or later." [1] When the British came to India, a system of local self-government was in vogue. Hindu culture and civilization could survive through centuries largely because of this system of self-governing councils which had large powers both executive and judicial. Dr. Radhakumud Mukerji points out that it "provided a sort of Noah's Ark in which were safely protected the vital elements of Hindu civilization against the overwhelming political deluges that swept over the country from time to time." [2] These village communities ran public institutions like temples, monasteries, hospitals and schools. With the advent of British rule, the system of these village republics was disintegrated with consequent adverse effects on the indigenous system of education provided by it. [3]

The year 1835 was a turning point in the history of Indian education, for it was in that year that Macaulay wrote his famous minutes in favour of the adoption of English as the medium of instruction. Dealing with the aim of teaching English in India, he said :

> "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern — a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." [4]

Macaulay's minutes gave a definite turn to the new current of Indian education, which was later attended with far-reaching consequences. The system had its own drawbacks, for it strengthened our chains of bondage, but it was not without some merits. In the words of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru : "English education brought a widening of the

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1 Nurullah and Naik : *History of Education in India*, pp. xii, xiii.
2 *Local Self-Government in Ancient India*, p. 11.
3 Jawaharlal Nehru : *The Discovery of India*, pp. 26, 27.
4 *Selections from Educational Records*, Part I, p. 117.

Indian horizon, an admiration for English literature and institutions, a revolt against some customs and aspects of Indian life, and a growing demand for political reform." [5]

Thus the introduction of English and European culture led to results — both good and evil ; but the latter far outnumbered the former, and Gandhiji was compelled to remark in 1931 at the Royal Institute of International Affairs that India was more illiterate then than it had been fifty or a hundred years before. Let us see some more aspects and evil consequences of the modern educational system :

1. Macaulay and his compatriots mistook the nature of education. As Dr. K. L. Shrimali points out, " It was a mistake to think that Indians could be educated by implanting a foreign system and destroying indigenous culture." [6]

2. The system divorced the child from his physical and social surroundings, for the courses taught in schools were entirely unrelated to Indian life.

3. It created new 'castes' in India, one knowing English and the other innocent of it, the former looking down upon the latter.

4. It laid exclusive emphasis on literary education, as its primary aim was to prepare young men for subordinate Government posts.

5. It failed to develop a sense of citizenship in the student.

6. The progress in primary education under British rule was extremely slow.

7. There has been great wastage and ineffectiveness throughout the whole educational system.

8. There has been a neglect of mass education, for it was believed that, when the classes were educated, they would carry down the culture to the masses by the process of 'filtration'.

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[5] *The Discovery of India*, p. 319.

[6] *The Wardha Scheme*, p. 11.

It was against such a background that the educational theory of Gandhiji evolved. The glaring defects of the educational system prevalent in India thrust themselves upon his attention ; and it became increasingly clear to him that the whole system was rotten to the core and stood in need of a complete overhaul. While inaugurating the Wardha Conference on the 2nd October, 1937, he said :

> "I am convinced that the present system of primary education is not only 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, affect urban ways and get a smattering of something which may be anything but education." [7]

The defects of the existing system have been set out graphically in the Report of the Zakir Husain Committee :

> "Indian opinion is practically unanimous in condemning the existing system of education in the country. In the past it has failed to meet the most urgent and pressing needs of national life, and to organize and direct its forces and tendencies into proper channels. Today, when quick and far-reaching changes are re-shaping both national and international life and making new demands on the citizens, it continues to function listlessly and apart from the real currents of life, unable to adapt itself to the changed circumstances. It is neither responsive to the realistic elements of the present situation, nor inspired by any life-giving and creative ideal. It does not train individuals to become useful productive members of society, able to pull their own weight and participate effectively in its work. It has no conception of the new co-operative social order which education must help to bring into existence, to replace the present competitive and inhuman regime based on exploitation and violent force." [8]

Gandhiji's educational theory was evolved with the object of satisfying the basic needs of the country. It is the outcome of his experiments in South Africa and India. Thus practice having preceded theory, Gandhiji's philosophy can be called *a posteriori* rather than *a priori*. Gandhiji's theory in contrast with that of most other philosophers is, therefore, objective rather than subjective, experimental rather than speculative. It is dominated by a scientific attitude and aim. Its data are the facts of experience which are communicable and verifiable. Gandhiji

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[7] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 60.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

observed certain facts, classified them, experimented with them on a sufficiently large scale, judged them and drew conclusions from them, unbiased by personal feeling. He seems to have followed the famous educational dictum, "You will never fail to find a good theory to support a good practice, but reverse this order and you will seldom be able to deduce a good practice from however good a theory." The soundness of this procedure can be perceived from the teachings of Sir John Adams who states that "though theory may be treated apart from practice, it does not follow that practice can be safely carried on apart from theory." [9] Wherever there is practice, there is implicit theory, which becomes explicit when there is reflection upon the process implied in it. At the earliest stages, greater attention is given to the practical, and the consideration of the reasons for our actions is left to a later period. Both theory and practice are present at all stages of educational development, practice correcting theory and theory improving practice. Theory is thus a critical examination of the experience gained in practice and in its turn it submits its findings to the test of practice. Sir John Adams rightly maintains "that practice stands for the conservative processes, theory for the progressive." [10]

Gandhiji's educational theory and practice have followed the same steps of the evolutionary process as outlined above. In the beginning, Gandhiji protested against the existing system of educating children and tried his own at home, at the Phoenix Settlement and at the Tolstoy Farm in South Africa. He then reflected upon the experience thus gained, improved upon it accordingly and tried it subsequently. He repeated the same process after his return to India. Thus his educational theory and practice evolved side by side, until he was able to perfect them in 1937 into a coherent and consistent philosophy of education. It would be worth while to trace the origin and evolution of his

9 *The Evolution of Educational Theory*, p. 3.
10 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

theory which may revolutionize educational practice all over the world at no distant date when it is properly appraised and appreciated by our professional educationists.

Gandhiji himself has told us that three great moderns have left a deep impress upon his life and captivated him. Raychandbhai by his living contact; Tolstoy by his book, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* and Ruskin by his *Unto This Last*. They exerted a formative influence on his philosophy of life and education. He could perceive the defects of the existing system of education, while he was at school, where English was "the medium of instruction in most subjects from the fourth standard. I found myself completely at sea." [11] The seeds of discontent sown at the high school stage, sprouted and took deep root in his mind during his stay in London. When he was called to the bar on the 10th June, 1891, at the age of twenty-two, he could realize how helpless he was, as "it was easy to be called, but it was difficult to practise at the bar." [12] He had read with interest *Legal Maxims*, but did not know how to apply them in his profession. He had no knowledge of the world, a *sine qua non* for a lawyer, because what he had acquired as a student was only theoretical knowledge unrelated to practical life. He had studied Shakespeare's physiognomy, but had not acquired the knack of finding out the Shakespeares walking up and down the streets of London. It was in such a state of mind that he began to realize the importance of practical training and knowledge of the world as necessary concomitants of education. He was in a state of mental see-saw, when he landed at Bombay in 1891 after sailing on a rough sea. The outer storm was to him a symbol of the inner. The former left him unperturbed, but the same could not be said about the latter. It was at this time that he was introduced by his friend, Dr. P. J. Mehta, to the Gujarati poet and philosopher, Raychandbhai or Rajachandra, who was "a man of great character and learning". [13] Raychandbhai was a real

11 Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, p. 29.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 106.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 112.

seeker after truth. Gandhiji had occasions to meet the heads of various faiths later on, but, to quote his own words, "no one else has ever made on me the impression that Raychandbhai did. His intellect compelled as great a regard from me as his moral earnestness, and deep down in me was the conviction that he would never willingly lead me astray and would always confide to me his innermost thoughts. In my moments of spiritual crisis, therefore, he was my refuge."[14] In spite of this regard for Raychandbhai, Gandhiji could not enthrone him in his heart as his *guru*, but all the same the latter was on many occasions his guide and helper. He was an apostle of truth and non-violence and we can say that he played no small role in moulding Gandhiji's philosophy of truth and non-violence, which influenced his life and teachings later on. These two principles have also influenced his educational theory, which "springs out of non-violence".[15]

The influence exerted by Tolstoy and his teachings on the plastic mind of Gandhiji while he was young is of inestimable value. He acknowledged his debt of gratitude to the Russian sage when he said: "Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* overwhelmed me. It left an abiding impression on me."[16] All the books read by Gandhiji seemed to pale into insignificance before the independent thinking, profound morality and the truthfulness of Tolstoy's book. Besides, he read Tolstoy's *The Gospels in Brief*, *What Then Shall We Do*? and other books which "made a deep impression on me. I began to realize more and more the infinite possibilities of universal love."[17] The following extracts from a letter written by Tolstoy to Gandhiji are indicative of the debt Gandhiji owed to Tolstoy for the formulation of his philosophy in general and educational theory in particular:

> "The longer I live, and especially now when I vividly feel the nearness of death, I want to tell others what I feel so

14 Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, p. 113.
15 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 65.
16 Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, p. 172.
17 *Ibid.*, p. 198.

particularly clearly and what to my mind is of great importance — namely, that which is called passive resistance, which in reality is nothing else than the teaching of love uncorrupted by false interpretations.

"That love....is the highest and the only law of human life and in the depths of his soul every human being (as we see most clearly in children) feels and knows this; he knows this until he is entangled by the false teachings of the world. This law was proclaimed by all, by the Indian as well as by the Christian, Hebrew, Greek and Roman sages of the world....

"In reality, as soon as force was admitted into love, there was no more and there could be no more love as the law of life, and there was no love at all, except violence, i.e. the power of the strongest. Thus, Christian mankind has lived for nineteen centuries."

If we say that Gandhiji learnt his first lessons in *ahimsa* from Raychandbhai we can as well assert that the roots of his Gospel of Love lay in the teachings of Tolstoy. His philosophy of passive resistance is not negative in character; it is the use of love in its positive form. To Gandhiji's mind, *ahimsa* is the same as love. He drew upon the best of both the sages and boldly declared:

"In its positive form, *ahimsa* means the largest love, greatest charity. If I am a follower of *ahimsa*, I must love my enemy.... This active *ahimsa* necessarily includes truth and fearlessness." [18]

Gandhiji believed that "when non-violence is accepted as the law of life it must pervade the whole being and not be applied to isolated acts." [19] It was, therefore, quite natural that he incorporated the Gospel of Love which is nothing but the positive aspect of non-violence in his theory of education and assigned to it a place of honour in it.

The germs of Gandhiji's thesis that education should be imparted through some handicraft or industry can also be perceived in the teachings of Tolstoy, as he himself admitted in his inaugural speech at the Wardha Conference on the 22nd October, 1937:

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[18] *Speeches and writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, published by Natesan, Madras, p. 346.

[19] *Harijan*, 5-9-'36

"The late Madhusudan Das was a lawyer, but he was convinced that without the use of our hands and feet our brains would be atrophied, and even if it worked, it would be the home of Satan. Tolstoy had taught the same lesson through many of his tales." [20]

Thus Raychandbhai and Tolstoy set Gandhiji's mind to vigorous thinking and prepared the ground for the formulation of his philosophy. They whetted his thirst for knowledge based on experience and experiment and awakened his critical faculty which enabled him 'to read and hear not to believe and take for granted, but to weigh and consider'. They strengthened his belief in the eternal values of life and set him definitely on the path of a life of love and service that would lead him from darkness to light, from selfishness to service, from hate to love, from ignorance to right knowledge and ultimately to Truth which is God.[21]

The third person who exercised the greatest influence on the life and philosophy of Gandhiji was Ruskin. His book, *Unto This Last*, gripped his mind so much so that he found it impossible to lay it aside, once he had begun it during his twenty-four hours' journey from Johannesburg to Durban in 1904. He could not get any sleep that night and determined to change his life in accordance with the ideals of the book. It brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in his life. Referring to the contribution it made to the moulding of his thoughts, Gandhiji says:

"I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin, and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life. A poet is one who can call forth the good latent in the human breast. Poets do not influence all alike, for every one is not evolved in an equal measure.

"The teachings of *Unto This Last* I understand to be:

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

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20 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 65.

21 *Young India*, 31-12-'31.

2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.

3. That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.

"The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realized. The third had never occurred to me. *Unto This Last* made it as clear as daylight for me that the second and the third were contained in the first. I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice." 22

Here we reach a point at which Gandhiji's educational theory is taking a definite shape. His mind, after being exposed to the formative influences exerted by Raychandbhai and Tolstoy and the consequent perturbation, begins to settle down to a definite line of thought. The foundation of his philosophy is now laid and the details of the superstructure may be settled in the light of the experience gained from experiments and observation. Ruskin's philosophy from which Gandhiji drew his initial inspiration was influenced by the teachings of Rousseau who maintained the supremacy of Nature and claimed for sense-impression and doing a place of importance in education. According to him, "Every youth should learn to do something thoroughly with his hands to know what touch means." This idea gripped the mind of Gandhiji and he began to feel that education to be real and effective cannot be divorced from work. Referring to the influence of Ruskin on the educational theory of Gandhiji, Shri Mahadev Desai says :

"I was reading recently Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, and his preface to the first edition was most revealing. It contained the germ not only of Gandhiji's proposition but even the idea of the schools being "self-supporting". He talks of training schools for boys, which should be connected with "manufactories and workshops", and suggests that "any man, or woman, or boy, or girl, out of employment, should be at once received at the nearest school, and set to such work as it appeared, on trial, they were fit for, at a fixed rate of wages determinable every year". In a foot-note he added: "Indirectly they (these schools) would be far more than self-supporting. The economy in crime alone (quite

22 Gandhiji : *Autobiography*, p. 365.

one of the most costly articles of luxury in the modern European market) would suffice to support them ten times over. Their economy of labour would be pure gain and that too large to be presently calculated ".[23]

Shri Desai, however, maintains that the sense in which Gandhiji used the word *self-supporting* is slightly different. Gandhiji's conception of the self-supporting aspect of education was indeed unique when it was placed in its final form before the country, but in its germinal stage it was indistinguishable from that of Ruskin. At that stage, Gandhiji like Ruskin believed that education should be accompanied by manual work, so that it might pay its expenses and make the child an earning unit.

Gandhiji was a man of action. He would practise the ideals which lay nearest his heart. He commenced the experiment of his newly-formed theory of education in his own home, for he held that " the education that children naturally imbibe in a well-ordered household is impossible to obtain in hostels." [24] He could not give his children literary education either to their or to his satisfaction. He did not regret not having sent them to public schools, which would never have taught them the simplicity and the spirit of service that they showed in their lives. He changed his mode of life altogether and introduced simplicity in his home partially at Durban and then completely at Johannesburg in the light of Ruskin's teachings.[25] His passion for doing personally all physical labour increased. He began to bring his children under that discipline. In co-operation with his friend, Mr. Henry Polak, and the children, he worked the iron-wheel of a hand-mill for getting hand-ground flour. " The grinding proved a very beneficial exercise for the children. Neither this nor any other work was ever imposed on them, but it was a pastime to them to come and lend a help, and they were at liberty, to break off whenever tired." [26] The children helped the

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[23] *The Year Book of Education* (1940), pp. 442, 443.
[24] Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, pp. 245, 246.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 379.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 379.

servant also in his work. They attended to the cleaning of the closet. "This proved a good training for the children. The result was that none of my sons developed any aversion for scavenger's work, and they naturally got a good grounding in general sanitation. There was hardly any illness in the home at Johannesburg, but whenever there was any, the nursing was willingly done by the children." [27] This was an important experiment of Gandhiji with the education of children. It taught them the first lessons in voluntary discipline, dignity of labour, self-help and general sanitation.

It need not be inferred from this that Gandhiji was indifferent to the literary education of his children. It is true that he would not hesitate to sacrifice it if a choice were to be made between purely literary education and the ideals of service and self-help. He used to get them to walk with him daily to the office and back home — a distance of about five miles in all. This gave them a fair amount of exercise. Gandhiji tried to instruct them by conversation during these walks. All his children except Harilal who had stayed away in India were brought up in Johannesburg in this manner.[28] This was not an ideal education according to the traditional standards, but "I hold that I sacrificed their literary training to what I genuinely, though may be wrongly, believed to be service to the community. I am quite clear that I have not been negligent in doing whatever was needful for building up their character. I believe it is the bounden duty of every parent to provide for this properly." [29]

Gandhiji's views on the linguistic problem were also formed at this time. It was his "conviction that Indian parents who train their children to think and talk in English from their infancy betray their children and their country. They deprive them of the spiritual and social heritage of the nation, and render them to that extent unfit

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[27] Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, p. 380.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 380.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 381.

for the service of the country." [30] Gandhiji, therefore, made a point of always talking to his children in Gujarati. Polak never liked this, but Gandhiji stuck steadfastly to his views and acted accordingly. Though his sons suffered for want of full literary education, "the knowledge of the mother-tongue that they naturally acquired has been all to their and the country's good, inasmuch as they do not appear the foreigners they would otherwise have appeared." [31]

It was in the year 1904 that Gandhiji embarked upon an undertaking of great significance in his life. We have seen the effect Ruskin's *Unto This Last* had produced on his mind. It was at this time that Gandhiji and his colleagues, Sjts. Madanjit and Mansukhlal Nazar started the *Indian Opinion* to serve the cause of Indians in South Africa. So long as it was under Gandhiji's control, the *Indian Opinion* "was a mirror of part of my life".[32] He always aimed at establishing an intimate and clean bond between the editor and the readers. He soon proposed that the *Indian Opinion* should be removed to a farm, on which every one should labour, drawing the same living wage, and attending to the press work in spare time. Shri West, Shri Chhaganlal Gandhi, Shri Maganlal Gandhi and Shri Rustomji welcomed the project and they purchased twenty acres of land about two and half miles from Phoenix station and fourteen miles from Durban. Thus the Phoenix Settlement was started in 1904 and the *Indian Opinion* continued to be published there in spite of numerous odds. The inmates of the Settlement were expected to follow the ideal of plain living and high thinking. Chastity, control of the palate, voluntary poverty, physical labour, fearlessness, self-help and tolerance were to be practised by them. They were supposed to put character building before literary training in the scheme of education.[33] From Phoenix to Tolstoy Farm, from Tolstoy Farm to the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati and from the Satyagraha Ashram

30 Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, p. 381.
31 *Ibid.*, p. 382.
32 *Ibid.*, p. 348.
33 R. M. Patel: *Gandhijini Sadhana*, p. 98.

to Gandhi Seva Sangh at Sevagram and thence to the Sarvodaya Samaj after the assassination of Gandhiji we have the cyclic regeneration, like that of the mythological bird Phoenix, of Gandhiji's ideals. [34]

In Phoenix, Gandhiji translated into practice his philosophy of education. About thirty children belonging to the inmates of the Settlement received their education according to Gandhiji's ideal which was set out in his book *Hind Swaraj* in 1908 while he was returning from London to South Africa.[35] The children in the Phoenix Settlement were required to spend three hours at school, two hours on agriculture and two hours in the printing press. Besides, they would read their lessons at night, time permitting. Thus they spent the whole day on their study and manual work, which kept their thoughts and behaviour clean and pure and made up for the deficiency in literary training. They had discussions with Gandhiji on some important event, a great man or a great book, while working in the garden or the kitchen. Thus they got knowledge side by side with manual labour.[36]

Gandhiji put his views on education in black and white for the first time in his book, *Hind Swaraj*, in 1908. His views did not undergo any material change later on, even though they passed through different stages of evolution with the passage of time until we got his perfect philosophy of education in 1937. He maintained in *Hind Swaraj* that literacy was not the aim of education, that the purpose of our educational system, founded by Macaulay was to strengthen our shackles of bondage, that the use of English as a language of our intercourse was outrageous, that every Indian must possess a working knowledge of Hindi and that there was no escape from religious education in India, which would never lend countenance to atheism.

The Phoenix Settlement was mainly concerned with the publication of the *Indian Opinion* and practice by its

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[34] Preface by Kaka Kalelkar to *Satyagrahashramano Itihas*, p. X.

[35] R. M. Patel: *Gandhijini Sadhana*, p. 109.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

inmates of certain ideals which Gandhiji had imbibed from Ruskin. In 1911 Gandhiji felt the need of an *ashram* where the *satyagrahis* could stay with their families and lead a religious life. With the active support of his German co-worker, Hermann Kallenbach, Gandhiji started an *ashram* in the Transvaal and named it Tolstoy Farm, both of them being great admirers of the Russian saint, Count Leo Tolstoy. The whole institution was based on religious principles and it was inhabited by Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Parsis. Everybody practised his own religion without disrespect to others and tried to achieve self-improvement.

The Tolstoy Farm proved to be an ideal laboratory for Gandhiji's educational experiments. As the Farm grew, it was found necessary to make some provision for the education of its boys and girls. Gandhiji would not introduce the existing system even if it came to letting the children go without the so-called education. He firmly believed "that under ideal conditions, true education could be imparted only by the parents, and that then there should be the minimum of outside help, that Tolstoy Farm was a family, in which I occupied the place of the father, and that I should so far as possible shoulder the responsibility for the training of the young." [37] He gave the first place to the culture of the heart or the building of character, and felt confident that moral training could be given to all alike. He regarded character-building as the proper foundation for the education of the young and had no doubt in his mind that, if the foundation was firmly laid, the children could learn all the other things by themselves. He did not dispense with literary training altogether, as he himself says, "....as I fully appreciated the necessity of a literary training in addition, I started some classes with the help of Mr Kallenbach and Sjt. Pragji Desai." [38] Nor did he underrate the building of the body. This they got in the course of their daily routine, for as there were no servants

[37] Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, p. 407.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 408.

on the Farm, all the work, from cooking down to scavenging was done by the inmates. They looked after trees and did gardening. The children's work included digging pits, felling timber and lifting loads. They took delight in the work and did not need any other exercise or games. This was manual work side by side with education, but by and by Gandhiji introduced manual vocation. Mr Kallenbach was sent to a Trappist Monastery with this object in view. In the Trappist Monasteries where the monks of the Catholic Church resided, much importance was attached to the dignity of manual labour to which they devoted five hours everyday. The monks lived by the labour of their hands, with the result that the task appointed for labour was seriously undertaken and was of such a nature as to make them *self-supporting*. In the schools under them children were taught by the monks the dignity of human labour, and handicrafts formed an integral part of education and school life.[39] Mr Kallenbach learnt shoemaking there and returned to the Farm. Gandhiji learnt it from him and taught it to others. Mr Kallenbach knew carpentry also. They introduced vocational training on the Tolstoy Farm and fixed eight hours a day for imparting it. "They had one or, at the most, two hours of book learning. The vocations were digging, cooking, scavenging, sandal-making, simple carpentry, and messenger work. The ages of the children ranged from six to sixteen."[40] One of the chief aims of this vocational training was to give "all-round development to the boys and girls for whose training I was responsible."[41] Whatever the youngsters learnt, they learnt cheerfully, because there was always a teacher co-operating and actually working with them. Thus Gandhiji "provided for the physical training on Tolstoy Farm, and incidentally for the vocational. Though this was hardly done in a way to satisfy me, it may be claimed to have been more or less successful."[42] At that stage, there was

39 C. J. Varkey: *The Wardha Scheme of Education*, p. 18.
40 *Harijan*, 18-9-'37.
41 *Ibid.*
42 Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, p. 410.

no effort on the part of Gandhiji to weave education around a handicraft. What he did was to make vocation supplement education and enable the child to be self-supporting.

He gave three periods at the most to literary training. Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati and Urdu were all taught, and tuition was given through the mother-tongue of the boys. English was also taught. A little Sanskrit was taught to the Gujarati Hindu children, and elementary history, geography and arithmetic were taught to all the children. He never felt the want of text-books. He felt that the true text-book for the pupil was his teacher. It was laborious for them to remember what they had learnt from books, but they could repeat easily what he had imparted to them by word of mouth. "Reading was a task for them, but listening to me was a pleasure, when I did not bore them by failure to make my subject interesting. And from the questions that my talks prompted them to put, I had a measure of their power of understanding." [43]

Gandhiji believed that every student should be acquainted with the elements of his own religion and have a general knowledge of his own scriptures. Long before he undertook the education of the youngsters of the Tolstoy Farm, he had realized that the training of the spirit was a thing by itself. To develop the spirit is to build character and to enable one to work towards a knowledge of God and self-realization.[44] In his view, all training without culture of the spirit was of no use and might be even harmful. How then was this spiritual training to be given? "Just as physical training was to be imparted through physical exercise, and intellectual through intellectual exercise, even so 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." [45] In short, the

[43] Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, p. 412.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 413.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 414.

teacher must be an eternal object-lesson to the boys and girls living with him. Gandhiji also stressed the importance of non-violence in the education of children by his opposition to corporal punishment. Even though cases of misconduct on the part of the boys often occurred, he never resorted to corporal punishment. Thus in his endeavour to impart spiritual training to the boys and girls under him, he came to understand better and better the power of the spirit. His experiment at the Tolstoy Farm convinced him that, " if good children are taught together with bad ones and thrown into their company, they will lose nothing, provided the experiment is conducted under the watchful care of their parents and guardians. Children wrapped up in cotton-wool are not always proof against all temptation or contamination." [46]

Gandhiji reveals his keen insight into human nature when he says : " If I was to be their real teacher and guardian, I must touch their hearts. I must share their joys and sorrows, I must help them to solve the problems that faced them, and I must take along the right channel the surging aspirations of their youth." [47] Here we have Gandhiji's gospel of love in education — a corner-stone of his educational philosophy. Once when he was in Johannesburg, he received tidings of the moral fall of two of the inmates of the Phoenix Settlement. News of an apparent failure or reverse in the Satyagraha struggle would not have shocked him, but this news came upon him like a thunderbolt. How did he deal with these delinquents ? Of course, not in the manner of a jail superintendent. Gandhiji was a born teacher and psychologist. He knew that unwise handling of the problem might lead to disastrous consequences. His aim was to guide the delinquents to better adaptations, to healthy outlets of their energies, and to bring about a change of heart in them, and not to be a heartless butcher driving the sheep to the guillotine. He did not like to resort to negative repression, reprimands, moralizing

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[46] Gandhiji : *Autobiography*, 417.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 418.

and the "don't method". He wanted to wean them from the path of moral turpitude by love, sympathy and understanding and not by fear which is the black godmother of all our ills and evils. He "felt that the guardian or teacher was responsible, to some extent at least, for the lapse of his ward or pupil. So my responsibility regarding the incident in question became clear to me as daylight..... I felt that the only way the guilty parties could be made to realize my distress and the depth of their own fault would be for me to do some penance."[48] So he imposed upon himself a fast for seven days and a vow to have only one meal a day for a period of four months and a half. The anger with the guilty parties subsided and gave place to the purest pity for them. Gandhiji would not advise a common teacher to resort to fasting whenever there was a delinquency on the part of his pupils. He "held, however, that some occasions do call for this drastic remedy. But it presupposes clearness of vision and spiritual fitness. Where there is no true love between the teacher and the pupil, where the pupil's delinquency has not touched the very being of the teacher and where the pupil has no respect for the teacher, fasting is out of place and may even be harmful."[49]

Gandhiji's political championship of the community left him little time to conduct the experiment on anything like a satisfactory scale for a long enough period ; and finally he had to disband the colony after the political settlement had been reached.

With the return of Gandhiji to India towards the end of 1914, another phase of his life commenced. Since his return, he began to look upon the present system of education as not only wasteful but even harmful. Before he reached home, his party from Phoenix had already arrived in India. They were put in the Shantiniketan Ashram, where Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and his people showered love upon them. Gandhiji also joined them there.

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[48] Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, pp. 418, 419.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 419.

It was here that he met Kaka Kalelkar for the first time. The Phoenix family had been assigned separate quarters. Maganlal Gandhi was at their head and he had made it his business to see to it that all the rules of the Phoenix Ashram were scrupulously observed. By dint of his love, knowledge and perseverance, he had made his fragrance felt in the whole Shantiniketan. Immediately on arrival, Gandhiji mixed with the teachers and students of Shantiniketan and engaged them in a discussion on self-help. "I put it to the teachers that, if they and the boys dispensed with the services of paid cooks and cooked their food themselves, it would enable the teachers to control the kitchen from the point of view of the boys' physical and moral health, and it would afford to the students an object-lesson in self-help..... The boys welcomed it, if only because of their instinctive taste for novelty."[50] So they launched the experiment. Dr. Tagore expressed the view that "the experiment contains the key to Swaraj."[51] Pearson, Nagendra and other inmates of Shantiniketan formed themselves into batches to cut vegetables, clean the grain and attend to the sanitary cleaning of the kitchen and its surroundings. It was a delight to Gandhiji to see them work spade in hand. A party of students played on the *sitar* before the cleaning party in order to beguile the tedium of the operation. "All alike took the thing up with zest and Shantiniketan became a busy hive."[52] The Phoenix party worked their own kitchen and the food cooked in it was of the simplest kind. Shantiniketan boys also started a similar kitchen ; but the experiment was not resumed by them after an intervening vacation.

Gandhiji's stay at Shantiniketan was temporary, for he had left South Africa with a determination to found an Ashram in India on the ideals of the 'Phoenix'. He, accordingly, founded the Satyagraha Ashram on the bank of the Sabarmati at Ahmedabad on the 25th May, 1915. There

50 Gandhiji : *Autobiography*, p. 465.
51 *Ibid.*, p. 465.
52 *Ibid.*, p. 466.

were about twenty inmates in the beginning, all from South Africa. A school was attached to the Ashram for the literary training of the children and the illiterate grown-ups. In addition to literary training, spinning and carpentry were the main crafts for all alike. There being no servants, the inmates themselves did cooking, cleaning, water-fetching, etc.[53] There were animated discussions in the Ashram as to the contents, curricula and method of education. Gandhiji wanted to make his school at the Satyagraha Ashram "a model for others to copy".[54]

Gandhiji's pre-occupations with politics, which touched the welfare, not of a small community, but of a vast country, slowed down the pace of the experiment and we had to wait for a number of years before we could have his fully evolved philosophy of education in 1937. It was perhaps in the best interests of the country that Gandhiji gave political freedom the highest priority in his activities and let the educational reconstruction of the country wait for an opportune time, for without political freedom, how could his theory of education have been practised on a country-wide scale? His co-workers were alike caught in the maelstrom of his various campaigns. But in spite of all this, Gandhiji was not totally indifferent to his educational activities. As a result of the discussions going on in the Satyagraha Ashram between Gandhiji and the inmates and among the inmates themselves, Gandhiji came to certain definite conclusions regarding education in 1932.[55] "I must admit," says Kaka Kalelkar, "that all these views were not acceptable to the teachers of the Ashram in their entirety. There was certainly a difference of opinion among them as to what amount of stress ought to be laid on a particular principle and how to reconcile two or three conflicting elements. But the main difficulty arose out of administration of those two institutions — the Ashram and its school. The Wardha Scheme was born out of these

[53] Mahatma Gandhi: *Satyagrahashramno Itihas* (Guj.), p. 7.

[54] *The Year Book of Education* (1940), p. 436.

[55] Mahatma Gandhi: *Satyagrahashramno Itihas* (Guj.), Preface by Kaka Kalelkar, p. vii.

educational, or as Gandhiji put it, spiritual disputes. Gandhiji came to the conclusion that the development of rural industries of national importance should be in the hands of the educationists and that too on educational lines." [56] Maganlal Gandhi insisted that industry should occupy the central place. Kaka Kalelkar maintained that there could be no two opinions on this issue, "but the introduction of industry in education must be on educational lines, not on those of a factory. It was through the conflict between us that the Wardha Scheme or the education based on village crafts was born." [57]

The following are the conclusions Gandhiji arrived at regarding education in 1932. He laid these down on paper while he was in detention in the Yeravda prison after his return from the Second Round Table Conference. What is known as the Wardha Scheme was but only a step forward.

"1. Boys and girls should be taught together.

2. Their time should be mostly spent on manual work under the supervision of a teacher. Manual work should be considered as part of education.

3. Work should be entrusted to each boy and girl after ascertaining his or her inclinations.

4. The child should know the why and the wherefore of every process.

5. General knowledge should be imparted to the child as soon as it is able to understand things. This knowledge should precede literary education.

6. The hand of the child should be trained to draw geometrical figures before he learns to write, that is, good handwriting should be taught from the beginning.

7. The child should learn to read before he is able to write; i.e., he should learn to recognize letters as if they were pictures and then draw their figures.

8. By this method and by word of mouth, the child should acquire much knowledge before he is eight years old.

9. Children should not be compelled to learn anything.

10. The child should be interested in whatever he learns.

11. The process of teaching should be conducted in a playway, for play is an essential part of education.

56 Mahatma Gandhi: *Satyagrahashramno Itihas* (Guj.), p. vii.

57 P. C. Gandhi: *Jivannun Parodh* (Guj.), Preface by Kaka Kalelkar, p. viii.

12. All education should be imparted through the mother-tongue of the child.

13. Every Indian child should learn Hindi-Urdu (i.e. Hindustani) as a national language before his literary training commences.

14. Religious education should be deemed necessary. It should be given not through books but through the life of the teacher and by word of mouth.

15. The second stage of the child's education begins when he is nine and lasts upto sixteen.

16. Co-education would be desirable even during this period, if it is practicable.

17. During this period, the Hindu child should learn Sanskrit and the Muslim Arabic.

18. Manual labour has a place in education during this period also. The time for literary training should be increased according to need.

19. The child should learn some vocation as a preparation for his future life.

20. He should acquire a general knowledge of World History, Geography, Botany, Astronomy, Arithmetic, Geometry and Algebra.

21. A boy or a girl of sixteen years should know sewing and cooking.

22. In the third stage which begins at sixteen and ends at twenty-five, a young man or woman should receive education according to his or her desire and circumstances.

23. The education commencing at the age of nine should be self-supporting. The student, while he is learning, should be engaged in such a vocation that its produce may meet the expenses of the school.

24. Production should, no doubt, begin right from the start. But it may not be enough to meet the expenses during the initial years.

25. Teachers cannot possibly have big salaries; but they must get enough to maintain themselves. They should be animated by a spirit of service. He must have a good character.

26. Huge and costly buildings are not necessary for education.

27. English can and should have a place in the syllabus only as a language. Just as Hindi is our lingua franca, English is a language of international intercourse and commerce."[58]

Gandhiji admits that there was no complete agreement between him and his co-workers in the Ashram and that

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[58] Mahatma Gandhi: *Satyagrahashramno Itihas* (Guj.), pp. 81-84.

his theory of education was still on the anvil. All were, however, agreed that a vocation, preferably spinning, should have a central place in education, that education should be largely self-supporting and that it should be vitally connected with our rural life and civilization.[59] There was very little of education in the Ashram in the traditional sense of the term ; but everybody young and old, man and woman, had a thirst for knowledge awakened in him or her. Gandhiji considered this to be a good augury, for in his view there is no time-limit for true education, which really begins when school education ends. He exploded the myth that there could be no education without an educator and came to the conclusion that every man is the real teacher of himself, that experience is a great school, that the knowledge acquired at school is often superficial and that a grown-up stands in need of development, perseverance and self-confidence rather than school education. The education in the Ashram was going on on these lines and it met with considerable success, according to Gandhiji, "for every department there, was a school." [60]

Let us go back a little to 1920, when Gandhiji launched his major educational experiment by starting the Gujarat Vidyapith. The motto of the Gujarat Vidyapith, namely, *Sa vidya ya vimuktaye*, is pregnant with profound significance. Gandhiji, explaining the motto, said : "It means : That is knowledge which leads to salvation. On the principle that the greater includes the less, national independence or material freedom is included in the spiritual. The knowledge gained in educational institutions must therefore at least teach the way and lead to such freedom." [61] Commenting on this motto, Kaka Kalelkar observed :

> "Man is in bondage. He is ignorant. He is assailed by his native impulses and is tied to the post by circumstances, with the result that his soul is suppressed, having no scope for development. True education is that which liberates him from all these encumbrances. Right knowledge or education is that alone

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59 Mahatma Gandhi : *Satyagrahashramno Itihas* (Guj.), pp. 84, 85.
60 *Ibid.*, pp. 87, 88.
61 *Young India*, 20-3-'30.

which frees the body from disease and debility; hands, feet and other organs of action from the dead weight of inertia; the heart from hardness and malice; the whole man from all types of bondage,...sentiment from sensuality; strength from intoxication; and the soul from the grip of baseness and pride."

Gandhiji set out his views on National Education before the public in 1921 so beautifully that we cannot resist the temptation of reproducing them fully in his own words :

"In my opinion the existing system of education is defective, apart from its association with an utterly unjust Government, in three most important matters :

(1) It is based upon foreign culture to the almost entire exclusion of indigenous culture.

(2) It ignores the culture of the heart and the hand, and confines itself simply to the head.

(3) It is imparted through a foreign medium.

"Almost from the commencement, the text-books deal, not with things the boys and the girls have always to deal with in their homes, but things to which they are perfect strangers. It is not through the text-books, that a lad learns what is right and what is wrong in his surroundings. The higher he goes, the farther he is removed from his home, so that at the end of his education he becomes estranged from his surroundings. He feels no poetry about the home life. The village scenes are all a sealed book to him. His own civilization is presented to him as imbecile, barbarous, superstitious and useless for all practical purposes. His education is calculated to wean him from his traditional culture. And if the mass of educated youths are not entirely denationalized, it is because the ancient culture is too deeply embedded in them to be altogether uprooted even by an education adverse to its growth.

"Secondly, whatever may be true of other countries, in India at any rate where more than eighty per cent of the population is agricultural and another ten per cent industrial, it is a crime to make education merely literary and to unfit boys and girls for manual work in after-life. Indeed I hold that as the larger part of our time is devoted to labour for earning our bread, our children must from their infancy be taught the dignity of such labour. Our children should not be so taught as to despise labour. There is no reason why a peasant's son after having gone to school should become useless as he does become as agricultural labourer. It is a sad thing that our schoolboys look upon manual labour with disfavour, if not contempt. Moreover, in India, if we expect, as we must, every boy and girl of school-going age to

attend public schools, we have not the means to finance education in accordance with the existing style, nor are millions of parents able to pay the fees that are at present charged. Education to be universal must therefore be free. Therefore, our children must be made to pay in *labour* partly or wholly for all the education they receive.

"The introduction of manual training will serve a double purpose in a poor country like ours. It will pay for the education of our children and teach them an occupation on which they can fall back in after-life, if they choose, for earning a living. Such a system must make our children self-reliant. Nothing will demoralize the nation so much as that we should learn to despise labour." [62]

Gandhiji thus preached that "our schools and colleges should become almost, if not wholly, self-supporting, not through donations or State aid or fees exacted from students, but through remunerative work done by the students themselves." [63] It should be remembered that, even at this time, Gandhiji believed in the necessity of "having industrial training *side by side with* literary training." [64] (italics ours) He recognized the "necessity of pursuing industrial training in order to make education directly self-supporting". [65] He wanted the students to recognize the dignity of labour and to regard ignorance of manual occupation as a mark of disgrace. In support of his argument he quoted the instance of America: "In America, which is the richest country in the world and where therefore perhaps there is the least need for making education self-supporting, it is the most usual thing for students to pay their way wholly or partially." [66] Gandhiji vehemently opposed the system of free-studentship which "lies and should lie like a load upon a conscientious lad's mind throughout his life. No one likes to be reminded in after-life that he had to depend upon charity for his education. Contrarily, where is the person who will not recall with pride those days, if he had the good fortune to have had

62 *Young India*, 1-9-'21.
63 *Ibid.*, 2-8-'28.
64 *Ibid.*
65 *Ibid.*
66 *Ibid.*

them, when he worked in a carpentry-shop or the like for the sake of educating himself — mind, body and soul ? " [67]

Referring to the place of *ahimsa* in education, Gandhiji says :

> " *Ahimsa* in education must have an obvious bearing on the mutual relations of the students. Where the whole atmosphere is redolent with the pure fragrance of *ahimsa*, boys and girls studying together will live like brothers and sisters in freedom and yet in self-imposed restraint ; the students will be bound to the teachers in ties of filial love, mutual respect and mutual trust..... In the hands of the educationist, therefore, it ought to take the form of the purest love, ever fresh, an evergushing spring of life expressing itself in every act.... One may be sure that when the Vidyapith is filled with the atmosphere of this *ahimsa*, its students will no more be troubled by puzzling conundrums." [68]

The educational views of Gandhiji were circulated to tens of thousands of teachers throughout Britain as early as 1931, through an interview he gave to the *Teachers World*. It contained some of the cardinal principles of his educational philosophy. In this interview he stressed his gospel of love as the sole compulsion and directing force in the training of children ; the doctrine of forgiveness ; the meaning of true education which should result not in the lust for material power, but in spiritual force ; the teaching of practical crafts ; the importance of home education ; the education of parents so as to enable them to undertake adequately the moulding of their children.[69]

Gandhiji made an original contribution of considerable importance to the solution of the vexed problem of sex-education, which had been ignored in India. In 1936, he expressed his views on this subject in the *Harijan* :

> "Sexual science is of two kinds : that which is used for controlling or overcoming the sexual passion and that which is used to stimulate and feed it. Instruction in the former is as necessary a part of child's education as the latter is harmful and dangerous and fit therefore only to be shunned." [70]

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67 *Young India*, 2-8-'28.
68 *Ibid.*, 6-9-'28.
69 *The Teachers World*, 4-2-'48.
70 *Harijan*, 21-11-'36.

It seemed to Gandhiji that it was necessary to impart to young pupils a knowledge about the use and function of the generative organs to a certain extent, so that they might not be misled into abusive practices. " I am strongly in favour of teaching young boys and girls the significance and right use of their generative organs. And in my own way I have tried to impart this knowledge to young children of both sexes, for whose training I was responsible." [71] The sex-education for which Gandhiji stood had for its object the conquest and sublimation of the sex passion. To quote his own words :

> "Such education should automatically serve to bring home to children the essential distinction between man and beast to make them realize that it is man's special privilege and pride to be gifted with the faculties of head and heart both ; that he is a thinking no less than a feeling animal." [72]

Gandhiji's views on sex-education are in complete accord with the findings of modern psychologists who also hold that we should regard the subject as something that all people ought to know, that its teaching should begin with the teaching of biology and that we should not speak of the subject as if it were something sacred, sentimental and mysterious. Gandhiji's insight revealed to him that science of sex is one of the most useful, and strangely enough, one of the most neglected of all sciences. The child has an impulse to know, and yet he does not want to know it because of the social and ethical taboos imposed on him by his super-ego. Thus there is attraction and repulsion at the same time, giving rise to a mental conflict in the sub-conscious area of his mind. The origin of most of our behaviour problems and delinquency in later life can be traced to such a mental conflict during the first few years of the child's life. The giving of sex-instruction in the right way will satisfy his curiosity and lay a solid foundation of his personality in his early years.

Gandhiji does not see eye to eye with psychologists on the question of who should teach the science of sex. The

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71 *Harijan*, 21-11-'36.
72 *Ibid.*

latter hold that the person to give this knowledge is the mother or the father, if he is asked. The teacher has also to answer questions when put to him. Gandhiji holds that such knowledge can be imparted only by those who have studied sexual science, i.e., the science of self-control and have acquired mastery over self. To the question, who should teach this true science of sex? Gandhiji replies:

> "Clearly, he who has attained mastery over his passions. To teach astronomy and kindred sciences we have teachers who have gone through a course of training in them and are masters of their art. Even so must we have as teachers of sexual science, i.e., the science of self-control, those who have studied it and have acquired mastery over self. Even a lofty utterance, that has not the backing of sincerity and experience, will be inert and lifeless, and will utterly fail to penetrate and quicken the hearts of men, while the speech that springs from self-realization and genuine experience is always fruitful." [73]

When psychologists say that the parents and teachers are entitled to teach the science of sex, they do not mean that it is within the competence of all sorts of parents and teachers to teach it. They also believe that this knowledge can be best given by those parents and teachers who have a balanced outlook on life and have succeeded in solving their own problems. Like Gandhiji they also maintain that this knowledge should be individual in reply to questions and not class-room teaching, and that general information pertaining to the subject can be given through biology. Youths have their peculiar personal problems and so they approach their teacher for relief from anxiety. They want to know whether or not their impulses are right. If they are not satisfied with the explanation offered by the teacher, they would have recourse to the 'rotten' literature that would throw them into a bottomless pit of confusion and do them more harm than good. The anxiety resulting from the belief that they are in an uncontrollable grip of the unknown will lead them to disaster, unless it is resolved and self-confidence is restored in them.

We now come to the year 1937 in which Gandhiji's views on education took their final shape and developed into a

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[73] *Harijan*, 21-11-'36.

philosophy of education after a long drawn-out process of experience and experiments for forty years in South Africa and India. All the scattered elements of his educational theory cohered and coalesced to form a structure which ensured for him an abiding place among the greatest educational philosophers of the world. By this time, he came to the conclusion that "the whole education should be imparted through some handicraft or industry".[74] We have seen that before this time also he had advocated the teaching of handicrafts to the students, "but the occupational training, then, was far from serving an educational purpose. The crafts were taught only for the sake of the crafts, without any attempt to develop the intellect as well".[75] Now Gandhiji not only made handicraft the centre round which education must revolve, but prescribed spinning or *takli* as the most suitable handicraft for our countless countrymen living in rural areas. He found in the *takli* the only practical solution to our problem. This does not mean supplementing literary with manual training, but making manual training the means of literary training. This constitutes the pivot of Gandhiji's educational theory and may be regarded as his unique and lasting contribution to educational thought. It should be noted that the *takli* or *charkha* is not merely a yarn-producing machine of an old age. It is a centre round which a culture of peace can be built up. Consequently, it has to take the central place in all stages of education. Shri K. G. Mashruwala rightly observes:

> "*Khadi* itself may not take root unless the *charkha* becomes a part of the child's life from infancy, and remains so till the end of its life. As the *charkha* symbolized the entire Gandhian constructive programme, it is no wonder that Gandhiji laid stress in his last note on the 'Lok-Sevak Sangh' (vide *Harijan*, dated 15th February, 1948) that a *lok-sevak* shall organize the education of the village folk from birth to death along the lines of *Nayi Talim* in accordance with the policy laid down by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh."[76]

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74 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 61.

75 *Ibid.*

76 *Journal of Education and Psychology*, April, 1948, p. 10.

The greatness of Gandhiji as an educationist consists not merely in the fact that he gave the world a sound theory of education, but in the way in which he demonstrated its utility and efficacy on an unprecedented scale. We shall now take up the detailed consideration of a very important aspect of Gandhiji's educational theory, which is universally known as the Wardha Scheme or Basic National Education.

CHAPTER VII

THE WARDHA SCHEME

We have already seen that Gandhiji lays particular stress on the need for a social order which would be conducive to each man's realizing the highest aim of his life not only without coming in the way of others pursuing the same ideal, but actually helping and co-operating with them in their search after Truth. The social order Gandhiji contemplates for the highest good of the individual as well as of society has to be based on truth and non-violence. If we accept this principle, we are bound to accept its corollaries also. Acharya J. B. Kripalani believes that "a social order based upon these principles excludes all exploitation, economic, social, political or even religious." [1] Whenever there is exploitation, man's divine dignity is offended and he becomes a mere means and not an end in himself. With the disappearance of exploitation, there is social justice and equality of opportunity for all. Love and service take the place of hatred, jealousy and personal aggrandizement. In such a society there is no cleavage between haves and have-nots, classes and masses. There is no concentration of power, social position or worldly goods in the hands of a few. Kaka Kalelkar points out that, if such a non-violent social order is to come into being, we need an organized army of peace. Where the social order is based upon non-violence, penance and self-control take the place of

1 *The Latest Fad*, p. 81.

gun-powder, and every soldier practising them is a protector of the social order.

What Gandhiji contemplates is a classless society of workers. In his society there is no room for idlers, shirkers and parasites. He believes that such a society cannot be built round centralized big industry, for it leads to exploitation. The non-exploiting society of Gandhiji's conception must rely upon moral force and moral sanctions. Gandhiji proposes to build the economic and social structure of society on decentralized industry and agriculture with a scope for co-operative enterprise in both the fields. He, therefore, advocates cottage and village industries on the basis of limited private property.[2] He is also opposed to big zamindaris. He does not consider any kind of physical labour low or degrading ; all work is honourable and sacred to him. According to him, the humblest work must be performed by the individual for himself, and, if necessary, for others. He dislikes the hierarchy of classes or castes based upon birth, wealth or profession.

The non-violent social order of Gandhiji's vision is to be based upon the system of village swaraj. Gandhiji's idea of village swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its vital needs, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. The prime concern of every village will be to grow its own food and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. If there is more land available, it will grow useful money crops, excluding tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a theatre, a school and a public hall. It will have its own water-works ensuring clean water supply. As far as possible, every activity will be conducted on a co-operative basis. Non-violence with its technique of *satyagraha* and non-co-operation will be the sanction of the village community. The government of the village will be conducted by the *panchayat*, annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum

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[2] Acharya J. B. Kripalani: *The Latest Fad*, p. 84.

prescribed qualifications. "Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and his government. He and his village are able to defy the might of the world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village's honour." [3]

When the British came to India, there was in the country such a system of self-governing republics called village *panchayats*. It was under the British rule that this system was disintegrated, leading to the drainage of village population to the industrial urban areas where they were doomed to lead the life of sub-men.

Gandhiji wants to reconstruct Indian society after the pattern outlined above, taking into account India's cultural heritage of the past as well as its present social and economic conditions and future needs. In order to realize this ideal, he evolved a comprehensive and connected programme of fight and constructive work for the guidance of the individual and the nation. His principles and programmes are organically connected forming one whole. The individual and the nation must have a particular character, so that they might play their role in the reconstruction of the new social order. To quote the words of Acharya Kripalani :

> "In the light of this character is conceived the new system of education. Beginning with truth and non-violence in political life Gandhiji has evolved his schemes of *charkha* and *khadi*, removal of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity, emancipation of women, (not in the Western sense on the basis of equal opportunities for the enjoyment of physical life, but equal opportunities for social service and individual advance through it), and the revival and the introduction of new village industries. From these he has proceeded on to his new scheme of education. Education has come last. Naturally, for education must follow practice. But it is there for the sake of all that has preceded, for the sake of the entire scheme of life. It is to prepare the growing child for the place he will occupy in the future in this just and moral society, free from all exploitation. It is for the formation of his

[3] *Harijan*, 26-7-'42.

character in the light of the requirements of such a society. It is the coping-stone of Gandhiji's socio-political edifice." [4]

It will be seen from this that Gandhiji evolved a scheme of education which would be instrumental in creating a social order envisaged by him. After trials and experiments extending over a period of forty years, Gandhiji finalized this scheme of education in 1937 for its application on a nation-wide scale. The new scheme called the Wardha Scheme or Basic National Education was suddenly heralded by Gandhiji in the *Harijan*. He dropped a veritable bomb-shell on the public by announcing his revolutionary scheme. His ideas ran counter to current notions and the accepted orthodox beliefs of educationists. There was a storm of protests from the so-called specialists. "The new ideas were styled reactionary, anti-revolutionary, medieval, unpractical, faddist, spiritual, etc." [5] There was a chorus of dissent from friends and opponents. The faithful few waited for further elucidation. The opponents contended that the scheme was the most impossible of all the impossible schemes proposed by Gandhiji. The government officials derided it with the shrug of their shoulders. Gandhiji answered his critics and filled in the details for the guidance of those who cared to understand it. This brought him a few supporters and made some converts.

Just about this time the Marwadi High School, renamed Navabharat Vidyalaya, at Wardha was celebrating its Silver Jubilee. The management conceived the idea of calling on this occasion a small conference of nationally-minded educationists to discuss the plan of education Gandhiji had been propounding in the columns of the *Harijan*. Gandhiji approved of the idea and consented to preside; and the All-India National Educational Conference was held at Wardha on the 22nd and 23rd of October, 1937, under his presidentship. The attendance at the conference was restricted to those who were invited on the score of their deep interest in the problem. The

[4] *The Latest Fad*, pp. 102, 103.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Conference was not expected to be spectacular. There were no visitors and it was purely a business meeting.

Gandhiji made a long inaugural speech wherein he dwelt at length on the salient features of his educational philosophy. This was followed by a critical discussion of all the aspects of the plan, in which eminent educationists like Dr. Zakir Husain, Professor K. T. Shah, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Kaka Kalelkar, Shri Mahadev Desai and many Ministers of Education took part. Eventually the Conference unanimously adopted the following resolutions :

1. That free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale.

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

3. That the process of education throughout this period should centre round some form of manual labour and productive work and 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.

4. That this system of education would be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers.

The Conference thereafter appointed a committee of leading educationists with Dr. Zakir Husain as its Chairman with the object of preparing a detailed syllabus on the lines of the above resolutions. This Committee examined the problem of education as it had emerged from the Wardha Conference in all its aspects and submitted its report to Gandhiji on the 2nd December, 1937. This Report embodies what is known as the Wardha Scheme or Basic National Education.

Now let us describe the outstanding features of the Wardha Scheme :

1. **Free Compulsory Education**

Education should be free and compulsory 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 guardians so desire

it.[6] This universal minimum education is styled Basic National Education by the Committee. According to Gandhiji, however, "A more correct though much less attractive description would be Rural National Education through village handicrafts. 'Rural' excludes the so-called higher or English education. 'National' at present connotes truth and non-violence."[7] While the existing system is of foreign importation and anti-national, Gandhiji's plan is purely national.

One need not conclude from this that Gandhiji and the Zakir Husain Committee were not alive to the need of pre-primary, post-primary, higher and adult education. In fact, Gandhiji's 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 to 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."[8]

The Committee also observed :

> "We feel very strongly the necessity for some organization of pre-school education, conducted or supported by the State, for children between the ages of three and seven. A painful consciousness of the realities of the situation, chiefly financial, prevents us from making this recommendation. We are anxious, however, that the State should not overlook its ultimate responsibility in the matter. We are confident that, if the scheme of basic education suggested here, with its intimate relation to home life, is firmly established, it will go a long way towards helping the pre-school child to get a better home training than he now does. It will also help considerably in the great work of adult education which will have to be taken up in right earnest at no distant date."[9]

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[6] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 145.

[7] Foreword to the Second Edition of *Basic National Education*, published by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh.

[8] *Harijan*, 2-10-'37.

[9] *Educational Reconstruction*, pp. 145, 146.

Gandhiji 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.

Gandhiji wants to leave higher education to private enterprise for meeting national requirements whether in the various industries, technical arts, belles-lettres or fine arts. The State universities should be, according to Gandhiji, purely examining bodies, self-supporting through the fees charged for examinations. In Gandhiji's own words :

> " Universities will look after the whole of the field of education and will prepare and approve courses of studies in the various departments of education. No private school should be run without the previous sanction of the respective Universities. University charters should be given liberally to any body of persons of proved worth and integrity, it being always understood that the Universities will not cost the State anything except that it will bear the cost of running a Central Education Department." [10]

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 focussed his attention, in the first instance, on the education of the children between seven and fourteen years. He did not underrate the importance of the 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. " I think," he said, " we can postpone the question of higher education for some time ; but the problem of primary education cannot be postponed even for a minute." [11]

2. **Craft As the Centre of Education**

Education should be imparted through some craft or productive work, which should provide the nucleus of all the other instruction provided in the school. According to the Zakir Husain Committee, " Modern educational thought is practically unanimous in commending the idea of

[10] *Harijan*, 2-10-'37.

[11] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 96.

educating children through some suitable form of productive work. This method is considered to be the most effective approach to the problem of providing an *integral* all-sided education." [12]

The Committee laid down certain conditions for securing the full advantages of this method :

> "First, the craft or productive work chosen should be rich in educative possibilities. It should find natural points of correlation with important human activities and interests, and should extend into the whole content of the school curriculum..... The object of this new educational scheme is *not* primarily the production of craftsmen able to practise some craft *mechanically*, but rather the exploitation for educative purposes of the resources implicit in craft work. This demands that productive work should not only form a part of the school curriculum — its craft side — but should also inspire the *method* of teaching all other subjects. Stress should be laid on the principles of co-operative activity, planning, accuracy, initiative and individual responsibility in learning." [13]

Thus 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.

3. **Self-supporting Aspect of the Scheme**

This leads us to one of the most important features of the Scheme, viz., its self-supporting aspect. What is intended to be conveyed by this aspect is that the product of the craft must be economically paying. As Gandhiji himself puts it, "You have to start with the conviction that looking to the needs of the villages of India our rural education ought to be made self-supporting if it is to be compulsory." [14] Gandhiji holds that the child at the age of fourteen, that is, after finishing a seven years' course, should be discharged as an earning unit. His plan aims at imparting education and simultaneously cutting at the root of unemployment. The Zakir Husain Committee fully endorsed the self-supporting basis of the scheme ; but at

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12 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 120.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

14 *Harijan*, 18-9-'37.

the same time deemed it necessary to sound a note of warning against certain dangers in the working of this Scheme :

> "....in the working of this scheme the economic aspect may be stressed at the sacrifice of the cultural and educative objectives. Teachers may devote most of their attention and energy to extracting the maximum amount of labour from children, while neglecting the intellectual, social and moral implications and possibilities of craft training. This point must be constantly kept in mind in the training of teachers as well as in the direction of the work of the supervisory staff and must colour all educational activity." [15]

It is expected that efforts will also be made to see to it that the money value of the work done covers the pay of the teacher. The State should provide the rest of the expenses for school-buildings, furniture, books, and all the apparatus and tools required for craftwork. The State should also undertake to utilize the produce of the craft for its own requirements or those of the local bodies where the school is situated. It would be incumbent on the State to provide marketing facilities for any excess of goods produced.

4. **The Medium of Instruction**

The thorny problem of the medium of instruction has been settled in a bold and realistic manner by the Zakir Husain Committee in the light of the views expressed by Gandhiji from time to time. The Basic National Education is to be imparted through the mother-tongue. The Committee observed :

> "The proper teaching of the mother-tongue is the foundation of all education. Without the capacity to speak effectively and to read and write correctly and lucidly, no one can develop precision of thought or clarity of ideas. 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." [16]

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15 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 125, 126.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 127.

5. The Cult of Non-violence

It is an indisputable fact that the Wardha Scheme is imbued with Gandhiji's cardinal creed of non-violence. As Shri K. G. Mashruwala points out, "It (the Segaon Method) is the application of the law of non-violence in the training of the child as a prospective citizen of the world." [17] Shri Mahadev Desai gave a lucid exposition of the cult of non-violence as applied to education by Gandhiji. In his speech at the Wardha Conference, he said :

> "The idea of self-supporting education cannot be divorced from the ideological background of non-violence, and unless we bear in mind that the new scheme is intended to bring into being a new age from which class and communal hatred is eliminated and exploitation is echewed, we cannot make a success of it. We should, therefore, approach the task with firm faith in non-violence and in the faith that the new scheme is evolved by a mind that has conceived non-violence as the panacea for all evils. Those who talk of the Machine Age do not know of the dangers ahead of us, and labour under the illusion that socialization tacked on to industrialization is the solution of all evils." [18]

6. Ideal of Citizenship

In the opinion of the authors of the Wardha Scheme, the ideal of citizenship is very important, because in modern India citizenship is destined to become increasingly democratic in the social, political, economic and cultural life of the country. To quote the words of the Zakir Husain Committee :

> "The new generation must at least have an opportunity of understanding its own problems and rights and obligations. A completely new system is necessary to secure the minimum of education of the intelligent exercise of the rights and duties of citizens. Secondly, in modern times, the intelligent citizen must be an active member of society, able to repay in the form of some useful service what he owes to it as a member of an organized civilized community. An education which produces drags and parasites— whether rich or poor — stands condemned. It not only impairs the productive capacity and efficiency of society but also engenders a dangerous and immoral mentality. This scheme is designed to produce *workers*, who will look upon all kinds of useful work— including manual labour, even scavenging— as

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17 *Harijan*, 4-12-'37.

18 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 94.

honourable, and who will be both able and willing to stand on their own feet. Such a close relationship of the work done at school to the work of the community will also enable the children to carry the outlook and attitudes acquired in the school environment into the wider world outside. Thus the new scheme which we are advocating will aim at giving the citizens of the future a keen sense of personal worth, dignity and efficiency, and will strengthen in them the desire for self-improvement and social service in a co-operative community." [19]

7. **The Idea of a Co-operative Community**

The Scheme envisages the idea of a co-operative community, in which the motive of social service will dominate all the activities of children during the plastic years of childhood and youth. Even during the period of school education, they will feel that they are directly and personally co-operating in the great experiment of national education.

It was on the basis of the above principles that the Zakir Husain Committee prepared the main outline of correlated programme of work for the whole period of seven years. It is expected that during this period the child will acquire "the essential modicum of social and civic training".

The following items are to be included in the syllabus :

I. **The Basic Craft**

The craft or productive work chosen should be rich in educative possibilities. The object of the Wardha Scheme is not primarily the production of craftsman who can practise a craft mechanically, but the "exploitation for educative purposes of the resources implicit in craftwork". The Committee recommended three suitable basic crafts, viz., (1) agriculture, (2) spinning and weaving; and (3) cardboard-work, woodwork and metal-work. It felt confident that the contents of the general curriculum could be correlated with or conveyed through any of these crafts. In order to work out an effective and natural co-ordination of the various subjects and to make the syllabus a means of adjusting the child intelligently and actively to his environment, the Committee chose three centres, intrinsically

[19] *Educational Reconstruction*, pp. 123, 124.

interconnected, as the foci for the curriculum, viz., the physical environment, the social environment, and the craft-work which is their natural meeting point since it utilizes the resources of the former for the purposes of the latter.

It should be borne in mind that the Zakir Husain Committee "really attempted to draft an activity curriculum, which implies that our schools must be places of work, experimentation and discovery, not of passive absorption of information imparted at second-hand. So far as the curriculum is concerned, we have stressed this principle by advocating that all teaching should be carried on through concrete life situations relating to craft or to social and physical environment, so that whatever the child learns becomes associated with his growing activity." [20]

It should be noted that the craft is to be the core of the Wardha Scheme and not merely an additional subject. This is a revolutionary aspect of Gandhiji's educational philosophy and its significance should not be lost sight of, if the Wardha Scheme is to be correctly appraised. Explaining his plan to a teacher who had combined manual training with literary training in a school for a number of years, Gandhiji said :

> "I am afraid, you have not sufficiently grasped the principle that spinning, carding, etc. should be the means of intellectual training. What is being done there is that it is a supplementary course to the intellectual course. I want you to appreciate the difference between the two. A carpenter teaches me carpentry. I shall learn it mechanically from him, and as a result I shall know the use of various tools; but that will hardly develop my intellect. But if the same thing is taught to me by one who has taken a scientific training in carpentry, he will stimulate my interest too. Not only shall I then have become an expert carpenter but also an engineer. For, the expert will have taught me mathematics, also told me the differences between various kinds of timber, the place where they come from, giving me thus a knowledge of geography and also a little knowledge of agriculture. He will also have taught me to draw models of my tools, and given me a knowledge of elementary geometry and arithmetic. It is likely that you do not correlate manual work with intellectual

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20 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 157.

training which is given exclusively through reading and writing. I must confess that all I have up to now said is that manual training must be given side by side with intellectual training, and that it should have a principal place in national education. But now I say that the principal means of stimulating the intellect should be manual training."[21]

II. The Mother-tongue

In the syllabus of the mother-tongue, the Zakir Husain Committee stressed both the creative and utilitarian values of language and literature. By the end of the seven years' course, the following objectives are expected to be achieved : [22]

1. The capacity to converse freely, naturally and confidently about the objects, people and happenings within the child's environment.
2. The capacity to speak lucidly, coherently and relevantly on any given topic of everyday interest.
3. The capacity to read silently, intelligently and with speed written passages of average difficulty. (This capacity should be developed at least to such an extent that the student may read newspapers and magazines of everyday interest).
4. The capacity to read aloud — clearly, expressively and with enjoyment — both prose and poetry.
5. The capacity to use the list of contents and the index and to consult dictionaries and reference books, and generally to utilize the library as a source of information and enjoyment.
6. The capacity to write legibly, correctly, and with reasonable speed.
7. The capacity to describe in writing, in a simple and clear style, everyday happenings and occurrences, e.g., to make reports of meetings held in the village for some co-operative purpose.
8. The capacity to write personal letters and business communications of a simple kind.

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21 *Harijan*, 11-9-'37.

22 *Educational Reconstruction*, pp. 127, 128.

9. An acquaintance with, and interest in, the writings of standard authors, through a study of their writings or extracts from them.

III. **Mathematics**

The objective kept in view by the Committee is to develop in the pupil the capacity to solve speedily the ordinary numerical and geometrical problems arising in connection with his craft and his home and community life. Pupils are also expected to gain a knowledge of business practice and book-keeping.

The teaching of mathematics is not to be confined merely to the facts and operations of number. In this connection the Committee points out :

> " It should be closely co-ordinated with life situations arising out of the basic handicraft and out of the great variety of actual problems in the life of the school and the community. Measurements of quantities and values in these connections would supply ample opportunity for the development of the reasoning capacities of the pupils." [23]

In order to make mathematics real to the child the Committee indicated how its various processes could be correlated with the various craft processes :

> " If the children learn their four simple rules by actually working out the problems which arise in their craft-work and gardening and by dealing with figures which will also throw light on the economic and social facts of their village or town or country, if there is practical measuring and field-work and calculations of expenditure and of rural indebtedness, the learning of mathematics not only becomes an active process, but also a means of interpreting and understanding the social environment." [24]

IV. **Social Studies**

The course in social studies is to include history, geography, civics and current events. It attempts to adjust the child to his social 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.

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[23] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 129.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

The Committee has laid down the following objectives of social studies : [25]

1. To develop a broad human interest in the progress of mankind in general and of India in particular.

2. To develop in the pupil a proper understanding of his social and geographical environment, and to awaken the urge to improve it.

3. To inculcate the love of the motherland, reverence for its past, and a belief in its future destiny as the home of a united co-operative society based on love, truth and justice.

4. To develop a sense of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

5. To develop the individual and social virtues which make a man a reliable associate and trusted neighbour.

6. To develop a feeling of respect for world religions.

V. **General Science**

The Committee laid down that the curriculum should include nature study, zoology, physiology, hygiene, physical culture, chemistry and a knowledge of the stars. The objectives of teaching all these sciences are : [26]

1. To give pupils an intelligent and appreciative outlook on nature.

2. To form in the pupils habits of accurate observation and of testing experience by experiment.

3. To enable them to understand the important scientific principles exemplified in

(a) the natural phenomena around ; and

(b) the application of science to the service of man.

4. To introduce them 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.

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 grades the syllabus in general science should be so modified as to include domestic science for girls. In the

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[25] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 160.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 132.

sixth and seventh grades the girls will be allowed to take an advanced course in domestic science in place of the basic craft.

VI. **Drawing**

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. The objectives are : [27]

1. To train the eye in the observation and discrimination of forms and colours.

2. To develop the memory for forms.

3. To cultivate a knowledge of and appreciation for the beautiful in nature and in art.

4. To draw out the capacity for tasteful design and decoration.

5. To develop the capacity to make drawings of objects to be constructed.

These objectives can be achieved by drawings made by children to illustrate material read or observed, and by objects and memory drawings, e.g., drawings of plants and of animal and human forms correlated with work in general science, handicraft, etc.

VII. **Music**

The Committee did not draft a regular syllabus for music, because it was not possible to give scientific training in music to all children. It, therefore, recommended that in all classes there should be a course of choral singing set to standard tunes and time, with an elementary acquaintance with the chief Indian *ragas* and *tals*. Those who are not musically gifted or who have any objection to learning *ragas* and *tals* may be excused. The songs are to be carefully selected and should include national songs, folk-songs, devotional songs, seasonal songs, festive songs, and a few songs in simple, quick rhythm

[27] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 134.

suitable for group-singing in connection with their craft-work and physical training. With regard to the objective of music, the Committee made the following observation :

> "The objective is to teach the pupils a number of beautiful songs and to cultivate in them a love for beautiful music. The child's natural sense for rhythm should be developed by teaching him to keep his own time by beating with the hand. Walking in time to a fixed rhythm can be a great aid in achieving this. Care should be taken to select only the best and most inspiring songs and the artistic interpretation of some healthy and elevating theme. Special emphasis should be placed on group or choral singing." [28]

VIII. **Hindustani**

The Committee included Hindustani as a compulsory subject in the school curriculum in order to ensure that all the children might have a reasonable acquaintance with a common *lingua franca.* To quote the words of the Committee :

> "As adult citizens they should be able to co-operate with their fellow-countrymen belonging to any part of the country. In teaching the language the teacher should in various ways quicken in the students the realization that this language is the most important product of the cultural contact of the Hindus and Muslims in India. It is the repository — in its more advanced forms — of their best thoughts and aspirations. They should learn to take pride in its richness and vitality and should feel the desire to serve it devotedly." [29]

Having touched upon the various aspects of the Wardha Scheme, we would do well to consider its merits and defects, so that we may be in a position to assess its intrinsic worth and find out what part it is likely to play in our educational reconstruction. Shri B. G. Kher, Chief Minister of Bombay State, presiding over the Bombay City Basic Education Conference on the 11th March, 1950, hit the nail on the head when he said : "In this age of democracy, the success of all social services will be measured eventually in terms of the standard of service rendered to

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[28] *Educational Reconstruction,* p. 135.
[29] *Ibid.,* p. 135.

the people." [30] He was of the view that the proper organization of basic education was linked with the bigger problem of social reconstruction and moral and intellectual re-orientation in the country. Referring to the benefit Basic Education confers upon the pupils receiving it, Shri Kher stated that the pupils leaving schools in which the Basic Education Scheme had been introduced were found to be "socially more alert and intelligent, more co-operative and had a keener consciousness of their relationship to the community". This great transformation in the attitudes of children is a marvellous achievement of the Wardha Scheme, for what is education if it does not arouse in the pupils a keen consciousness of their relationship to the community? Whatever else he may be, man is essentially a social animal and his moral, mental and material progress is conditioned by his environment, upon which he reacts and by which he is reacted upon, both the processes going on unceasingly and simultaneously. It is true that Basic Education is still in an experimental and exploratory stage, as it has not so far been tried in the context of the environment of big cities and much lee-way has yet to be made up. With the advent of independence, the educational system in India needed a revolutionary change with special reference to the needs of the country. It is fortunate for the country that the Wardha Scheme was formulated just at the time when the whole educational system stood in need of being completely overhauled.

With all its merits, the Wardha Scheme was not acclaimed by the country without demur. It is quite natural that a scheme that would affect the education of the young throughout the country cannot be accepted by the public without being fully convinced of its real worth, though it emanated from no less a personage than Mahatma Gandhi and gained support from the leading educationists of the country. Leaving aside the stock arguments advanced against the scheme, we shall confine ourselves to only such points of criticism as appear to render the scheme vulnerable.

30 *The Times of India*, 13-3-'50.

1. **More of Sentiment than of Education in the Wardha Scheme**

It is argued by some critics that there is more of sentiment than of sound educational philosophy in the Wardha Scheme. Those who advance this argument contend that the Scheme has no sound educational bottom to it, but that, as it emanates from Gandhiji, it is invested with a halo of light by his friends, followers and admirers whose name is legion. 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 anything coming from his lips or pen may well pass as authoritative and be accepted by his countless admirers as gospel truth without scrutiny. Besides, Gandhiji 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 the 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.

In a moment of wild excitement, one is apt to conceive of Gandhiji as the embodiment of all virtues attributed to God by poets and philosophers, because was it not he who raised his countrymen to the status of humanity from the depth of their sub-human existence and saved them from complete extinction ? Gandhiji devised the Wardha Scheme with the object of remaking and rebuilding the whole nation through an all-round and integrated educational process. We have already seen that his plan is based on sound psychological and pedagogical principles. It is true that a scheme which has to be introduced on a nationwide scale and is likely to affect the lives of tens of millions of our people must have " a background of fairly extensive experimental work on the lines indicated in our Report, because it is only after such practical experience that all

the possible correlations can be confidently worked out." [31] It should, however, be conceded that the Scheme is the outcome of experimental work in the field of education by Gandhiji and his colleagues, extending over a fairly long period of time. It has also been tested and corroborated by the Zakir Husain Committee, which comprised some of the most eminent and experienced educationists of India. Hence there is little scope for doubt about the soundness of the Wardha Scheme.

If the Wardha Scheme had emanated from a less important person than Gandhiji, it is doubtful if it had been accorded the same enthusiastic and whole-hearted reception throughout the length and breadth of the country. It would have perhaps remained for a long time an educational fad to be quoted, corrected, criticized and corroborated by educational thinkers. Gandhiji's pre-eminent position in India coupled with his deep insight into the needs and requirements of its vast rural population and his interest in their well-being rendered it easy for the Scheme to be put into actual practice. If the Scheme is sound psychologically and educationally, what does it matter even if there is a considerable amount of sentiment attaching to it? Here we have a sound scheme devised by a man of Gandhiji's eminence and supported by expert educationists after a searching inquiry into its feasibility. It is then accepted by the public and Government because of its sterling worth. The fact that it is expounded by Gandhiji imparts a special glamour to it and makes its working smooth and easy. This is how all great reforms take place in different walks of life. In view of these facts, it is not correct to say that there is more of sentiment than of psychology or pedagogy in the Wardha Scheme. Sentiment unchecked by reason is a guide of doubtful value, but here we have sentiment checked and strengthened incidentally by reason, making it a safe and unerring guide for the country. It is singularly unfortunate for the country that the father of the Wardha Scheme did not

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[31] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 155.

live long enough to help its expansion and nation-wide application. Gandhiji was the most relentless critic of his own philosophy and he would never brook the idea of the dogmatic acceptance of his scheme by the people. While answering some of his critics at the Wardha Conference, he said :

> " You should not accept anything out of your regard for me. I am near death's door and would not dream of thrusting anything down people's throats. The scheme should be accepted after full and mature consideration so that it may not have to be given up after a little while." [32]

2. Can Every Subject Be Taught Through a Craft ?

Another important argument advanced against the Wardha Scheme is that it is impossible to teach *all* subjects through a craft. We have seen that the importance of manual labour in education has been stressed by all leading educationists in the East as well as in the West. It was left to Gandhiji, however, to make a bold and revolutionary assertion that the craft should not be a mere appendage to regular school work, but it should be the means through which all subjects could be taught. The Zakir Husain Committee also supported this view, because " from the strictly educational point of view, greater concreteness and reality can be given to the knowledge acquired by children by making some significant craft the basis of education. Knowledge will thus become related to life, and its various aspects will be correlated with one another." [33]

Some critics argue that, although many subjects can be correlated with the basic craft, it is neither possible nor necessary to teach each and every subject of the curriculum through a craft. Gandhiji had a desire " to teach through hand-work all the subjects like history, geography, arithmetic, science, language, painting and music ",[34] but he was aware that everyone of these subjects could not be taught through a craft. He, therefore, said : " We will teach as much of these subjects through the *takli* (or any other basic craft) as possible. The rest we cannot leave

[32] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 75.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 74.

untouched." Resolution No. 3 of the Wardha Conference stated "that 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." [35] The significance of the phrase *as far as possible* cannot be lost sight of. Shri K. G. Mashruwala, perhaps the most authoritative interpreter of the Gandhian philosophy, thinks that "all training will be principally through the medium of and in correlation with such industry. Thus history, geography, mathematics, physical and social sciences and general literature will centre round and be related to that industry. Other matters in the above subjects will not be omitted, but greater emphasis will be laid on the former." [36] Mr C. J. Varkey is of the view that "in the Wardha School time-table, provision will have to be made to supplement the knowledge thus correlated with the craft by additional classes so as to bring up the knowledge in a particular subject to the matriculation standard." [37]

Gandhiji may have thought at first that it would be possible to teach *every* thing of *every* subject through a basic craft, but as he combined in himself "the visionary and practical man",[38] he could perceive the difficulties that lay in the actual working of the Scheme and was quick to modify his stand and accept the position that the knowledge imparted by the craft should be supplemented by other processes. He clearly laid down that "during the first year everything should be taught through the *takli*; in the second year other processes also can be taught side by side." [39]

3. Lack of the Requisite Type of Teachers

Even those who acquiesce in the fundamental principles of the Wardha Scheme are sceptical about its ultimate outcome because of the dearth of the requisite type of

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[35] *Harijan*, 30-10-'37.
[36] *Ibid.*, 4-12-'37.
[37] *The Wardha Scheme of Education*, pp. 68, 69.
[38] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 96.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

teachers. They maintain that, however good the Scheme may be, it rests ultimately with the teachers to practise it in the class-room. The teaching profession in India is in a bad way and it has failed to attract the best brains of the country, because it is neither adequately remunerative nor socially respectable. Teachers are the ultimate arbiters of the educational process and, unless they are contented and sincere, no scheme, however good it may be, can meet with success. Even Gandhiji acknowledged that, if teachers were not what he expected them to be, the Scheme could not make much headway and every school would degenerate into a factory as feared by some critics.

With regard to the teachers' salaries, the Zakir Husain Committee endorsed Gandhiji's suggestion that "it should, if possible, be Rs 25 and never less than Rs 20." [40] Considering the fact that the standard of living has terribly gone up since the inception of the Wardha Scheme, Gandhiji would not grudge the raising of the salary at least to an amount between Rs 60 to Rs 75. But would this salary be adequate to attract the talent of the country to the teaching profession? Everybody would agree with Gandhiji that those who take to the noble profession of teachnig should be imbued with the spirit of service and self-sacrifice if they are to be worthy of it. But we have to keep our feet on the earth and face the situation in a spirit of realism. So long as the world is what it is and human nature is still harking back to its primitive state, the conditions of service for the teachers shall have to be such as would prevent the drainage of talent to other more lucrative channels. We should, therefore, devise ways and means of improving the status of teachers, so that we may have an adequate number of well-qualified and competent teachers in whose hands the execution of the Wardha Scheme can be safely placed. The other black-coated professions of law and medicine are equally noble, and, if the members of those professions are assured at least of a decent life, it would be an act of sheer

40 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 147.

injustice and wanton cruelty to deny even a living wage to the teacher. With all our reverence for Gandhiji, we cannot help saying that the teachers, if they are of the right sort, should be decently paid, so that they may be free from worldly worries, and be able to give their undivided attention to their work. If teachers who can live on a mere pittance are forthcoming in a missionary spirit, it would be a happy augury for the country ; but as long as that golden age has not set in, we can ill afford to toy with the future of the millions of our children by consigning them to the care of ill-paid, semi-starved and discontented teachers. The services of the present teachers are not to be dispensed with, but we shall have to improve their lot and give them refresher courses of training, if the whole country is to be honey-combed with Wardha schools.

The best method for the nation-wide application of the Wardha Scheme in India would be that the Republican Government should appoint a commission of experts to examine all the aspects of the Scheme in the context of the conditions prevailing in the country and in the light of its progress so far, and to suggest the lines of its future expansion in the shortest possible time. The question of funds should not come in the way of its progress, for education should be given the highest priority in the schemes of development. The satisfactory solution of the problem of teachers is a condition precedent to the success of the Wardha Scheme. If we can afford to spend more than half the revenue of the country on the unprofitable business of killing men beyond the borders, why should we find it difficult to spend even a greater sum on the most vital nation-building activity of educating our masters ?

4. **Lopsidedness of the Reform**

It is argued by some critics that all attention is focussed on the Wardha Scheme to the utter neglect of secondary and higher education. The Zakir Husain Committee also anticipated this criticism and answered it as follows :

> " Some people are alarmed because there is no reference in this scheme to secondary or higher education, forgetting that our terms of reference were confined to a seven years' scheme of

basic education only, and they are apprehensive that we want to limit the facilities for higher education. We have only to point out that this is a scheme of universal and compulsory basic education for all children, to be followed in due course by higher education for those who are qualified to receive it; and when that scheme is drawn up, it will have to be co-ordinated with the scheme of basic education so as to ensure continuity as well as proper intellectual equipment for those who are to proceed further with their education." [41]

It will be apparent from this that the sponsors of the Wardha Scheme were alive to the need of an integrated scheme of education for all types of children at different stages. Secondary education in the conventional sense of the term ceases to exist, and together with primary education it forms the nucleus of Basic Education. It is needless to say that even Gandhiji was not opposed to the education of the highest type attainable in the world.[42] What he was opposed to was "all higher education being paid for from the general revenue".[43] He wanted universities to be self-supporting. In his opinion, "the State should simply educate those whose services it would need. For all other branches of learning it should encourage private effort." [44] Under Gandhiji's scheme there will be more and better libraries, more and better laboratories and more and better research institutions.

It is certain that, if Gandhiji had enough time, he would have given us an integrated scheme of education, embracing all stages, viz., pre-primary, primary, post-primary, higher and adult. Gandhiji was not a mere educational philosopher concerned entirely with theorizing. It cannot be emphasized too often that educational reorganization which India needs badly must be viewed as an integrated whole, embracing at once the primary, secondary and university stages, each flowing smoothly into the other. Lopsided and hasty reform confers little benefit and only creates additional problems.

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41 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 163.

42 *Harijan*, 9-7-'38.

43 *Ibid.*, 9-7-'38.

44 *Ibid.*, 9-7-'38.

The State Governments have to be very careful in introducing Basic Education. If every State follows an independent educational policy, there would be utter confusion in the field of education and the clock of reform would be set back by several years. In view of such difficulties, it is advisable that the Republican Government should chalk out an integrated educational policy for the whole country. It should bear in mind that the watch-word for all educational reform should be " Hasten slowly ".

5. **Is the Wardha Scheme Utopian ?**

Some critics dismiss the Wardha Scheme on the ground that it is a fad or phantasy of a philosopher strayed into education. They contend that it is like a Platonic idea, of which our proposed system of education can be only an imperfect copy. There are others who believe that the Scheme is Utopian and, therefore, it is beyond the realm of actual practice.

Those who have worked the Scheme during the last twelve years have no doubt in their minds that it can be successfully worked provided that earnest efforts are made both by the Government and the people in a spirit of co-operation. No doubt the Scheme labours under two grave handicaps, viz., absence of its trial on a sufficiently large scale so as to facilitate its adoption on a nation-wide scale and lack of experimental work extending over a sufficiently long period of time before it is given a final shape. This problem should be approached not dogmatically, but with an open mind. Gandhiji himself felt the need of vindicating the truth of the Scheme in some experimental schools. We have already seen that the major portion of the Scheme is psychologically sound, but, if we find in the light of our experience and experiment that certain aspects of the Scheme deserve to be modified we should not hesitate to do so, for Gandhiji never claimed infallibility or finality for any of his teachings and he was always open to correction.

It is an exaggeration to say that the Wardha Scheme is like a Platonic idea, although some of its features may be too high to be translated into practice in the present

set-up of things. To say that it is Utopian is the result of preconceived notions and deserves little attention.

6. **Does the Wardha Scheme Set Back the Clock of Civilization ?**

It is argued that the Wardha Scheme sets back the clock of civilization by preaching the use of medieval industries like spinning and weaving as the medium of education in this age of aeroplanes and hydrogen bombs. When science is progressing by leaps and bounds, what is the good, they argue, of harking back to the primitive state ?

Those who advance this argument betray woeful ignorance of our rural conditions. Real India lives in the villages and any scheme of education that ignores their needs and environments will fail to solve the problem of their education. Gandhiji's scheme is a revolution in the education of village children. Gandhiji expected the teachers to educate children in their villages so as to draw out all their faculties through some selected village handicrafts. Will it be possible or desirable for us to replace these handicrafts by modern machinery in every Indian village ? Again the handicrafts have been selected with an eye to their educative possibilities. They are the most suitable and convenient means of imparting education to the children living in the seven *lakh* villages of India. Hence it is idle to argue that we hark back to the medieval or primitive state by introducing our ancient handicrafts as the vehicles of education. Even if every village is provided with modern amenities of life like radio, electricity and motor-cars, the rural handicrafts should not be abolished in view of their wide educative possibilities. Civilization, however advanced, cannot afford to ignore its best treasures of art and industry inherited from our ancestors.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SCHEME AT WORK

We have already seen that Gandhiji regarded education as a pre-requisite for the establishment of a non-violent social order in which exploitation of any kind would be absent. Such an order would be based on equality, justice and love. He chalked out his constructive programme with the ultimate object of realizing his dream of a just social order. Education has pride of place in his constructive programme, though it came last in its evolution. He gave us the scheme of Rural National Education through village handicrafts, popularly known as the Wardha Scheme or Basic National Education. The scheme as adumbrated by him and finalized by the Zakir Husain Committee would enable "the teachers to educate the village children in their villages so as to draw out all their faculties through some selected handicrafts in an atmosphere free from superimposed restrictions and interference".[1]

Gandhiji's scheme of Basic Education is the culmination of his constructive programme that he laid before the country to achieve Swaraj. It may be said that the constructive programme contained the seeds of his scheme of Basic Education. He began with *khadi*; but during the last years of his life, he spoke more about *Nai Talim* than the *charkha* — his former favourite subject. According to Shri K. G. Mashruwala, the *charkha* "is not merely a yarn-producing machine of an old age. It is the centre round which a culture of peace could be built up. Consequently, it has to take the central place in all stages of education. *Khadi* itself may not take root unless the *charkha* becomes a part of the child's life from infancy, and remains so till the end."[2] Thus *khadi* symbolizes the entire Gandhian

[1] *Educational Reconstruction* (Second Edition): Mahatma Gandhi's Foreword.

[2] *Journal of Education and Psychology*, April, 1948.

constructive programme. Being alive to the basic needs of the vast rural populace of India, Gandhiji considered *khadi* to be the first step to the revitalization of our rural areas. The next step was the rehabilitation of Harijans through selfless social service. There were huge obstacles in this task, as the minds of the masses were to be freed from the cobwebs of ignorance and superstition. Then came the revival of village industries through which all the seven *lakhs* of our villages were to be made self-sufficient and self-governing units. It aimed at preventing the drainage of the vast rural population to insanitary industrial areas only to be condemned to a sub-human existence. In addition to these items, Gandhiji's constructive programme included prohibition, village sanitation, economic equality, emancipation of women, all of which were organically connected with his main philosophy. The constructive programme reached its highest point of development in the scheme of Basic National Education, which contains the quintessence of the entire Gandhian philosophy. It is his most outstanding contribution to world civilization, though its light is still hidden under a bushel. Though it came last, its importance is by no means the least. It represents in a concentrated form the whole of Gandhiji's constructive programme. His scheme of Basic Education and constructive programme are so closely knit together that one who wants to adopt the former cannot afford to be indifferent to the latter.

We have critically examined the various aspects of the Wardha Scheme or Basic National Education. Efforts have been made in different parts of the country during the last twelve years to implement it, and it would not be out of place here for us to take stock of its progress since its inception. It should be remembered that, in spite of its numerous merits, the scheme would not have made much headway but for Gandhiji's dynamic personality and his unique position in the country. Soon after its formulation, it was placed before the Indian National Congress at its Haripura session in February, 1938, and approved of by

that body in a comprehensive resolution which said among other things :

> " That for the primary and secondary stages a basic education should be imparted in accordance with the following principles :
>
> (i) Free and compulsory education should be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale.
>
> (ii) The medium of instruction must be the mother-tongue.
>
> (iii) Throughout this period education should centre round some form of manual and productive work, and all other activities to be developed and 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."
>
> " The Congress also requested and authorized Dr. Zakir Husain and Shri E. W. Aryanayakam to take immediate steps, under the advice and guidance of Gandhiji, to bring an All-India Board of Education into existence, in order to work out 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." [3]

Those who read between the lines of the above resolution will not fail to notice the point of difference, however small, between it and the resolutions of the Wardha Conference. The Congress resolution refers to ' some form of manual and productive work ' without touching upon its self-supporting character, whereas the Wardha Conference expects this system of education to be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers. Thus the Congress gave its *imprimatur* to the Wardha Scheme with a slight difference of emphasis on its self-supporting aspect.

Though the scheme of Basic Education received vigorous support from the eminent educationists of the country and the Indian National Congress whose claim to represent the bulk of the population of India is beyond question, it still needed the active interest of the Government for its complete success. The Central Advisory Board of Education, which is attached to the Ministry of Education, Government of India, and whose function it is to co-ordinate

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[3] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1938, vol. I, pp. 298, 299.

and guide the educational policy and programme of the Provincial Governments, appointed a committee in January, 1938, with Shri B. G. Kher, the then Premier and Minister for Education in Bombay, as its Chairman "to examine the scheme of educational reconstruction incorporated in the Wardha Scheme, in the light of the Abbott-Wood Report on General and Vocational Education and other relevant documents". The Report on Vocational Education by Abbott and Wood, who were not laymen like Gandhiji but eminent educationists, came as an unexpected support to Gandhiji's scheme. They expatiated in unequivocal language on manual work as a medium of instruction and as "a key to a boy's serenity". The Report of the Kher Committee settled the whole controversy by accepting the central principles of the scheme and thus heralded the dawn of a new era in education.

The Report of the Kher Committee was considered by the Central Advisory Board of Education, which gave its general approval to its conclusions. The following are the recommendations of the Kher Committee, which have been accepted by the Central Advisory Board of Education: [4]

1. The Scheme of 'Basic' Education should first be introduced in the rural areas.

2. The age-range for compulsion should be 6 to 14 years, but children may be admitted to the Basic school at the age of 5.

3. Diversion of students from the Basic school to other kinds of schools should be allowed after Class V or about the age of 11 plus.

4. The medium of instruction should be the language of the province.

5. A common language for India is desirable. This should be Hindustani with both the Urdu and Hindi scripts. Option should be given to children to choose the script and provision should be made for teaching them in that script. Every teacher should know both scripts.

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[4] C. J. Varkey: *The Wardha Scheme of Education*, pp. 170, 171.

6. The Wardha Scheme of Basic Education is in full agreement with the recommendations made in the Abbott Wood Report so far as the principle of learning by doing is concerned. This activity should be of many kinds in the lower classes and later should lead to a basic craft the produce from which should be saleable and the proceeds applied to the upkeep of the school.

7. In the lowest classes education should be carried on through the activities.

8. Certain elements of cultural subjects cannot be correlated with the basic craft, and must be taught independently.

9. The training of teachers should be reorganized and their status raised.

10. No teacher should receive less than Rs 20/- per mensem.

11. Efforts should be made to recruit more women teachers.

12. Basic schools should be started only when suitable trained teachers are available.

13. The curriculum will need revision in the light of experience.

14. English should not be introduced as an optional subject in Basic schools.

15. The State should provide facilities for every community to give religious teaching.

16. No external examinations need be held. At the end of the Basic school course a leaving certificate based on an internal examination should be given.

17. Pupils wishing to join other schools at the age of about 11 plus should also be granted a leaving certificate.

18. Promotion from class to class will be determined by the school, though the results of the internal examinations should be subject to the supervisors' inspection.

The Kher Committee made the following interesting observation on the self-supporting character of the Wardha Scheme." [5]

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[5] C. J. Varkey: *The Wardha Scheme of Education*, pp. 171, 172.

'The fundamental principle of the Wardha Scheme is education through productive craft activity. Perhaps the word *creative* would be preferred to *productive* by educationists, as the word *productive* may be and has been read to imply that economic production outweighs educative development. We emphasize that the Wardha Scheme stresses the educative value of craft-work. That saleable material will be produced in the higher classes of the Basic schools is no objection to the scheme. Indeed, unless saleable material is produced, the educative possibilities have not been satisfactorily exploited. The income from the sale of such material might well be applied to the upkeep of the school."

It may be observed that the recommendations of the Kher Committee were not mandatory on the Provincial Governments, who were simply advised to re-orientate their educational policy and programme in the light of these recommendations with necessary modifications to suit local conditions.

In pursuance of the resolution passed by the Congress at Haripura, an All-India Education Board to be known officially as the Hindustani Talimi Sangh was brought into being in April, 1939, at Segaon near Wardha in Madhya Pradesh. The immediate task that lay before the Sangh was to vindicate the truth of the Scheme in some experimental schools. It undertook extensive research work in the field of Basic Education and was anxious to co-operate with Government and non-Government institutions that had started experiments with Basic Education. The time was favourable for receiving the co-operation of the Provincial Governments, for the Congress was in office in seven out of the eleven provinces of India. The Education Ministers of these provinces had participated in the deliberations of the Wardha Conference and were a party to the resolutions adopted there. The Hindustani Talimi Sangh requested them to start basic schools in their provinces as an experimental measure in the first instance. It also requested the national institutions to co-operate in the introduction and spread of Nai Talim.

The first year of Basic Education was the year of hope and inspiration. The Governments of Bombay, Bihar and Orissa constituted Boards of Basic Education and appointed

Special Officers of Basic Education with the object of supervising and promoting it. Within a year ten training centres were started by the Governments of Bombay, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Kashmir. Among the national institutions, the Jamia Milia Islamia of Delhi and Andhra Jatiya Kalashala of Masulipatam undertook the training of teachers, and the Maharashtra Vidyapith of Poona and the Gujarat Vidyapith of Ahmedabad started basic schools of their own. A wave of enthusiasm swept over the whole country, as could be seen from the keen interest evinced in this ' latest fad ' by the Government as well as the people all over the country.

The first year of Basic Education was mainly devoted to the training of teachers. In the second year, more basic schools were started, as more trained teachers were made available through the co-operative endeavour of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh and the training centres at different places in the country. In April 1939, the Bihar Government started 30 new basic schools in the district of Champaran. In June 1939, the Bombay Government introduced Basic Education in 58 district board schools and 28 other schools in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnatak. During this year, a few new training schools were also opened. The number of training schools in the whole country in May 1939 rose to 14.

After a year and half of experimental work, it was felt that a conference of workers engaged in Basic Education should be held, so that they might discuss the difficulties confronting them and decide on a common policy in the light of their experience. In response to the invitation of the Bombay Government, the first All-India Basic Education Conference was held in Poona. It was also attended by educationists of different shades of opinion. The Conference reached the following conclusions after a free exchange of views on the working of the scheme during the preceding one and a half years :

1. The Conference realizes that education in India has greatly suffered on account of the very early introduction of English in the course of studies. It also realizes that

Indian languages have suffered a great deal as vehicles of instruction by their not being used as a medium of education, not to speak of the injustice and harm done to the students by forcing them to learn things through a foreign tongue. This Conference, therefore, recommends that it should be made a rule that not only in Basic schools but in all schools throughout India no English should be taught till the students have acquired a regular education for seven years through their mother-tongue. (This does not apply to those whose mother-tongue is English).

2. Basic National Education has made steady and encouraging progress during the last two years, and the accounts of experiments and experiences given by official and private workers hold out the hope that it will, in due course, bring about a revolution in the existing system of education in the country.

3. The work of Basic National Education is of such vital importance to the future of the country that it should be continued without interruption, whatever the political changes that may occur in the near future.

In order to meet the enormous capital and other forms of expenditure which will be incurred in making seven years' basic education free, universal and compulsory, it is the duty of the Central Government to bear its due share of the total expenditure on this most important activity of national reconstruction.

4. The minimum duration of the training given to Basic school teachers should be one year, and it should be an integral process, not bifurcated into several periods.

5. Every attempt should be made to make the teachers village-minded so that they may sympathetically understand the special problems of village life and strive to deal with them.

6. In provinces where the expansion of Basic Education proceeds at a rapid pace, with the object of transforming as many of the existing schools as possible into Basic schools within a few years, some of the Basic schools should be selected for intensive work and teaching organized under controlled experimental conditions, and the results worked

out at these should be made available to the rest of the schools.

7. Teachers for rural and urban areas should be trained in the same training institutions and not separately, so that they might develop a common, national outlook.

8. Due emphasis should be placed on the teaching of art in Training and Basic schools so that it becomes an integral element in craft-work.

9. The technique of training for teachers of Basic Education has yet to be evolved out of practical experience in the different types of Basic Training schools and colleges.

10. Experience of the last two years' work has demonstrated the fact that it is possible and educationally useful to teach through the correlated technique.

11. This correlation should not, however, be unnecessarily forced, and teaching should be correlated not only to the basic craft but also to the child's physical and social environment, which offers equally rich possibilities for this purpose and enrich the children's basic knowledge profitably. In order to exploit the full educational possibilities of the Scheme, it is necessary to train our general teachers as craftsmen also ; the purpose in view will not be achieved if craftsmen are associated with teachers in the work of the Basic schools.

12. In the choice of the basic craft for any school the predominant occupation of the people in the locality should be taken into account, and, in deciding the number of schools centring round each craft in any area, reference should be made to the distribution of various occupations in that locality.

13. In calculating the comparative cost of Basic Education, we should take into account the fact that it aims at covering the greater part of what is included in our secondary schools at present.

14. In order to form an accurate idea of how far the various products of children's craft-work will be marketable, the requirements of school, the locality, local bodies and the Government should be ascertained and assessed.

and this assessment should be used as a guide to the distribution of crafts in the Basic schools.

15. It is desirable to have a special supervisor for schools in each compact area in order to supervise and co-ordinate the day-to-day work of the schools whose number should not be so large as to make effective and frequent supervision impossible. The supervisor should also be in close touch with the training centre, which should work as a laboratory and should prepare detailed schemes of co-ordinated work for various grades. This supervisor should, as far as possible, be a teacher as well as a well-trained craftsman : but, if such a supervisor is not available for the time being, each compact area should have a craft supervisor in addition to the educational supervisor.

The conclusions of the Conference were reached in a spirit of hope and enthusiasm, but the political situation in India and the world was fast deteriorating. The World War II broke out, unleashing terrible forces of destruction. India was plunged headlong into the whirlpool of the war without the consent of its people, with the result that the Congress Ministries relinquished office after lodging a vigorous protest against the high-handed and autocratic policy of the Governor-General. Everybody asked : When the Congress is out of office, what would be the fate of the Wardha Scheme ? The Poona Conference resolved that in spite of political hurdles, the progress of the scheme should not be checked by any consideration, if the best interests of the country were to be safeguarded. The President of the Conference declared in unequivocal terms that the scheme would have to stand on its own merit, if the Congress left office.

It is surprising to note that the progress of Basic Education was not much adversely affected during the second year, even though the political situation had altered considerably.

In the third year (1940-41), the scheme began to receive a set-back in some provinces. The Orissa Government, on the advice of their Director of Public Instruction, decided that the scheme could no longer be continued,

looking to the best interests of the province. They, therefore, passed orders to dissolve the Board of Basic Education, the Training School and fifteen basic schools with effect from the 1st March, 1941. This hasty step of the Government did not chill the enthusiasm of the workers engaged in Basic Education in Orissa, who continued their work with unabated vigour independently of any support from the Government. Shri Gopabandhu Chaudhari, Secretary to the Government Board of Basic Education kicked off Government service and undertook the work of Basic Education on behalf of the people with the co-operation of a dozen teachers, who had also followed suit.

At the end of the third year, the Second All-India Basic Education Conference was held at Jamianagar in April, 1941. It was attended among others by the representatives of the Departments of Education of Bombay, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Kashmir and the workers in non-Government basic schools. The country was in the midst of a life-and-death struggle. The struggle adversely affected the progress of Basic Education, which was still in its infancy. The following message of Gandhiji to the Conference indicated the nature of the work for the next two years :

> "I hope that the Conference will realize that the success of the effort is dependent more on self-help than upon Government, which must necessarily be cautious even when it is well-disposed. Our experiment to be thorough has to be at least somewhere made without alloy and without outside interference".[6]

The Conference reviewed the work done so far and reached the following conclusion :

> "This Conference is happy to note that the reports of Government, non-Government and other basic schools lead to the conclusion that this education has greatly improved the health and behaviour of the children and promoted their mental development. The children attending the basic schools are full of energy and self-confidence, and can express themselves more clearly. They acquire the habit of co-operation and are free from social and other bonds. The Conference hopes that still better results will accrue from this education in future."[7]

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[6] *Report of the Fifth All-India Basic Education Conference* — 1949, p. 26.

[7] *Samagra Nai Talim*, p. 11.

The Quit India Movement launched by the Indian National Congress on August 9, 1942, under the leadership of Gandhiji stirred the entire nation. The struggle diverted the attention and energy of the national workers from the field of Basic Education. Institutions were closed, workers were pushed behind prison bars and it seemed for the time being that Basic Education was out of the picture of national life. During this period of storm and stress, the Wardha Scheme could not make much headway for obvious reasons. The Government was apathetic to it and the workers were engaged in the struggle for the emancipation of the nation from foreign yoke. It is noteworthy that the fury of the storm and the thundering of the gathering clouds could not extinguish the lamp lighted by Gandhiji. Though its light was bedimmed for a short while, it began to shine with greater brilliance on the release of Gandhiji from jail. He came out of jail with a new vision of Nai Talim. One of his first utterances after his release from detention was :

> "I have been thinking hard during the detention period over the possibilities of Nai Talim until my mind became restive.
>
> "We must not rest content with our present achievements. We must participate in the homes of the children. We must educate their parents. Basic Education must become literally education for life." [8]

This illuminating redefinition of Basic Education as "co-extensive with life itself" marks an important stage in the evolution of Gandhiji's educational philosophy. Through his talks and writings, Gandhiji tried to explain this new conception of *Nai Talim* as education for life through life. "It has become clear to me," he said, "that the scope of Basic Education has to be extended. It should include the education of everybody at every stage of life." [9]

It was deemed necessary at this stage that the workers engaged in Basic Education should meet together to discuss this new interpretation of *Nai Talim*, to assess its progress during the preceding five years and to plan the future

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8 *Report* — 1949, p. 27.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

programme in the light of this discussion on the enlarged scope of the movement. The Third All-India Basic Education Conference was, therefore, held at Sevagram in January, 1945. It was opened by Gandhiji with the following memorable words :

> "Up to the present, although our education was new, we have lived as it were in a bay, sheltered from the open sea, and protected in another way also, in that our work was restricted in its scope. Now we are being driven out of our bay and thrust into the open ocean. There we have no guide except the pole-star. That pole-star is village handicrafts. Our field now is not merely the child of seven to fourteen years, the field of Nai Talim stretches from the hour of conception in the mother's womb to the hour of death. So that our work has become very great, yet our workers remain the same.
>
> "Let us not care about that. Our real friend is God who is Truth. He will never deceive us. This Truth can be our friend only when we stick to truth and care for nothing else. There is no room in it for show, for egoism, for anger and cruelty. We become teachers of the villagers, that is to say, we become true servants of the villagers. The reward is work, and the witness is our own heart — there is no other. Whether or not we have a friend in the search for Truth, makes no difference.
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> "This Nai Talim does not rely on money. The cost of Nai Talim comes from the education itself. Whatever objections may be raised, I know that real education is self-supporting. There is no shame in that, but there is novelty. If we can do it, if we can show that this is the way to the true development of the mind and the brain, then those who laugh at us today will sing the praise of Nai Talim and Nai Talim will become universal. And the seven *lakhs* of villages which today display our poverty will themselves become prosperous: their prosperity will come not from without, but from within, from the true industry of every villager. May this dream be a true vision!" [10]

The most important task that lay before the Conference was how to work out this conception of Nai Talim as education for life through life into an educational programme. After a thorough examination of all the aspects of the problem, the Conference divided this programme into the following four parts corresponding to the four stages of life :

1. Adult Education or education of men and women in all stages of life, including the care and education of the

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[10] *Report* — 1949, p. 28.

expectant mother and the mother, while the baby is yet dependent on her.

2. Pre-Basic Education or the education of children under seven.

3. Basic Education or the education of children from seven to fourteen.

4. Post-Basic Education or the education of adolescents who have completed Basic Education.

The Conference appointed four committees to prepare and revise schemes of education for these four stages of life. Sevagram was chosen as the first field for work on a complete programme of *Nai Talim.*

A pre-basic school was opened accordingly and beginnings were made to work out a programme of adult education according to the following objectives: "The aim and object of adult education is to educate the village adults to lead a better, fuller and richer life, both as individuals and as social units. This education should be imparted through some suitable rural handicraft and other creative and recreative activities. It is education for life through life. It will touch the life of the villager at all points and will utilize all life situations for the above purpose." As Shri E. W. Aryanayakam points out, "This programme of pre-Basic and adult education for the village, closely co-ordinated with each other as two aspects of one integral educational process, forms the basis of *Nai Talim.*" [11] Gandhiji meant the same thing, when he said, receiving the purse of the Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Trust: "The scope 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, especially with regard to deficiency diseases." [12]

It was the dream of Gandhiji that in a few years, there would be real wealth in our villages and the villagers would

[11] *Report* — 1949, p. 29.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 30.

be clean and healthy, peaceful and happy. He went to the length of saying that, if this did not happen, he would understand that there was something wrong with our work in *Nai Talim.*

A committee was appointed to revise the first syllabus of Basic Education prepared by the Zakir Husain Committee in March 1938, and to plan a complete educational programme of eight years on the basis of the experience gained since the inception of the scheme. The following were the main features of the programme of a complete eight years' Basic Education placed before the Conference :

Objectives :

The ultimate objective of Basic Education is to help all boys and girls in India to grow into :

i. Citizens of a new social order based on co-operative work as envisaged by *Nai Talim,* with an understanding of their rights, responsibilities and obligations in such a society.

ii. Individuals, whose personalities have had opportunities of balanced and harmonious development.

The social aspect of this education is given the first place to bring out clearly the philosophy of *Nai Talim* which accepts individual good, not as an end in itself, but as an integral part of the common good.

The first batch of pupils in the basic schools in Bihar and Sevagram completed their course of seven years in January, 1947, and it was imperative to define the objectives and the programme for the next stage. A Committee was, therefore, appointed to go into the whole question. The task before the Committee was not merely an extension of the Basic syllabus. It was no longer a question of preparing children for their future life, but it was a question of training adolescents to fulfil their functions as men and women, as parents, wage-earners and citizens on the completion of the course. Shri E. W. Aryanayakam rightly observes : " If *Nai Talim* is education for life, the course of Post-Basic Education must not only give the students a vocation or train them for all-round individual life, but

must also prepare them for wise parenthood and creative citizenship in the new social order." [13]

The following were accepted as the objectives of Post-Basic Education :

1. Post-Basic Education like Basic Education should be developed round some form of productive work, or socially useful activity.

2. The social objectives of Post-Basic Education remain the same as in Basic Education.

3. This education must be complete in itself.

4. The course of studies should be developed round activities necessary for the development of the nation, from which the pupils may choose according to their capacity and natural bent.

5. Each course of studies will develop according to the necessities of the course, the average period being three to four years.

6. The medium of instruction should be the regional language.

7. The course should be so organized that the pupils earn enough for their balanced diet and other minimum necessities through the activity or activities selected as the centre of their educational programme.

8. The ultimate objective of *Nai Talim* is that every boy and girl should also receive Post-Basic Education. This will entail no additional expenditure for the State, as it is expected that Post-Basic Education will be a self-sufficient unit both economically and educationally.

9. The greatest necessity before the nation today is that of teachers of *Nai Talim*. Therefore, the first task before the institutions of Post-Basic Education is that of preparation of teachers. The objective of *Nai Talim* can be fulfilled by organizing an institution of Post-Basic Education as a self-sufficient, self-reliant society fulfilling all its necessities in balanced diet, clothing, intellectual and recreational life through co-operative work.

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13 *Report* — 1949, p. 33.

When the members of the Committee met Gandhiji, he threw out the challenge that Post-Basic Education must and should be entirely self-supporting. At the instance of Gandhiji, it was decided to start two experiments in Post-Basic Education, one in Kumarabag, (Champaran, Bihar) and the other at Sevagram. The results of the experiments fully justify Gandhiji's expectation regarding the self-sufficiency aspect of Post-Basic Education.

Almost all the State Governments have introduced Basic Education through their Education Departments. The programme of Basic Education accepted by them, was, however, one of four to five years only, the reason for the curtailment of the minimum demand of eight years being the financial one.

The Hindustani Talimi Sangh carefully examined the educational and financial aspects of Basic Education and passed the following resolution :

> "The Sangh noted with satisfaction the results reported from several quarters with regard to production of useful goods when craft-work was given its rightful place in the educational programme. The results justify the hope that in schools where the significance of craft-work as an educative force is fully realized, production will be enough to meet the running cost of the schools. This is, however, possible only in full basic schools of 7 or 8 grades, as the last three grades contribute much more than proportionately to the total craft-production of the school. The Sangh views with misgiving the tendency in some provinces to reduce the duration of basic education to five years for financial reasons. The Sangh also believes that the continuation of education to the eighth grade will, if craft-work is properly organized, entail no nett extra expenditure. For educational as well as financial reasons, the Sangh feels convinced that the duration of basic education should in no case be reduced to less than eight years." [14]

The following talk of Gandhiji given a few days before his tragic assassination admirably sums up his philosophy of education in its ultimate form :

> "Basic Education is generally interpreted as education through craft. This is true to a certain extent, but this is not the whole truth. The roots of *Nai Talim* go deeper. It is based on truth and non-violence in individual and collective life. Education

[14] *The Report* — 1949, pp. 35, 36.

is that which gives true freedom. Untruth and violence lead to bondage and can have no place in education.

"This true education must be easily available to every one. It is not meant for a few *lakhs* of city people but must be within easy reach of millions of villagers. This education cannot be given through the dry leaves of books. It can only be given through the book of life. It does not need any expenditure in money. It cannot be taken away by force. It can have nothing to do with the teaching of sectarian dogmas or ritual. It teaches the universal truths common to all religions.

"The teachers of *Nai Talim* can do their work effectively, only if they have faith in truth and non-violence. Then they can draw even the hardest hearts towards them, as a magnet. A teacher of *Nai Talim* must have all the qualities of the wise man described in the second chapter of the Gita." [15]

This was the task left behind by the Father of the Nation for the workers in the field of *Nai Talim*.

The Fourth All-India Basic Education Conference was held in April, 1948, at Bikram in Bihar under the shadow of gloom cast over the whole country by the dastardly assassination of Gandhiji. The Conference reviewed the progress of *Nai Talim* since its third session at Sevagram in 1945. Much water had flowed under the bridge during the intervening period. The long-cherished dream of Gandhiji was realized and the nation which had been in bondage for about two centuries had cast off the shackles and witnessed the dazzling light of independence. With the dawn of independence, it was legitimately hoped that *Nai Talim* would gather full momentum and play the role expected of it by Gandhiji in the process of regenerating the nation. The Conference, therefore, reiterated its faith in the efficacy of *Nai Talim* as the most potent instrument of evolving a new social order of Gandhiji's conception and reaffirmed its pledge to work strenuously for the realization of this ideal.

In her report on the progress of *Nai Talim* in all its aspects, Shrimati Ashadevi made a pointed reference to its self-supporting character. Reminding the conference of the words of Gandhiji that all true education should be self-supporting, she observed that self-support should not be

15 *The Report* — 1949, p. 36.

taken merely in its economic sense. Its true meaning was, she continued, that *Nai Talim* should evolve a new social order in which all persons are self-reliant not only for the satisfaction of their material needs, but also in matters intellectual as well as spiritual.[16]

The Fifth All-India Basic Education Conference was held in May, 1949, at Perianaickenpalayam near Coimbatore. In his welcome address, Shri T. S. Avinashilingam Chettiar appealed to the Conference not to "forget that the essence of education consists not in giving items of knowledge, but in the cultivation of good habits in the physical, moral and intellectual spheres. The various activities should inculcate hygienic habits, social sense and citizenship and ability to think about the welfare of others rather than oneself. The child must also be taught to face his daily problems courageously, not to be daunted by failures, but to persist in the effort for things which are good and right. And the activities provided in the scheme of Basic Education do provide for these possibilities."[17]

In his inaugural address, Shri Vinoba Bhave expressed his belief that the best method of evolving the *Sarvodaya Samaj* is through *Nai Talim*, which has now been accepted by educationists as well as some Provincial Governments. He had neither any doubt nor anxiety about the fact that sooner or later all the provinces would accept it. He had, however, one anxiety : What will be the shape of this new education when it becomes a part of Government machinery ? He feared "that its form may be so changed that it will be difficult to recognize it, and it may not fulfil the high hopes we cherish from it. One is reminded of the proverb : 'I tried to fashion the God Ganapati, but it turned out to be a monkey.' No one is to blame when this happens, because the Government department is an old piece of machinery, and when new wine is poured into old bottles, such a result is inevitable. Therefore, we should be alert and prepared to meet this danger. You are all

16 *Das Salka Kam*, p. 101.

17 *The Report* — 1949, p. 7.

educational experts. You ought to give your thought to this, and make every effort to see that the method of *Nai Talim* is worked out before our people in its true form. For this purpose, it is necessary that a few model schools should be run, where our ideals can be demonstrated clearly to the people. We should never dilute our ideals to make them more easily acceptable, either to the government or to the people." [18] Shri Bhave deprecated the tendency on the part of some Provincial Governments to reduce the seven years' course of *Nai Talim* to one of four years, as *Nai Talim* being a complete whole cannot be divided into parts.

In his presidential address, Dr. Zakir Husain emphasized " the fact that if we are to create a good social order in our country, it is essential that some of our best men and women, particularly of the younger generation, should give this task their life-long devotion and not run after lucrative jobs in offices, which is the dominant mood of the present age." [19]

Keeping the picture of the progress of Basic Education in different parts of India before itself, the Conference proceeded to the discussion of the stages of *Nai Talim*, viz., Pre-Basic, Basic, Post-Basic and *Samagra Nai Talim*, and some special subjects like Administrative Problems, Training of Teachers, Assessment of Work and the Need for Literature.

In his closing address, Dr. Zakir Husain exhorted the teachers to do the work with humility, as, of all social workers, he has the least right to be impatient. " Next to a mother," he continued " a good teacher has patience greater than all." He concluded his speech with these words : " If we can go back with love, and not only love but reverence, for the children, we shall be better teachers. You never know what may lie hidden in any little child — a prophet, a seer, a leader of men." [20]

The Sixth All-India Basic Education Conference was held at Angul in Orissa, in April 1950. The Sarvodaya

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18 *The Report* — 1949, pp. 8, 9.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 146.

Sammelan was also in session there at the same time. The Gandhi Seva Sangh of constructive workers who believed implicitly in Gandhian principles of social reconstruction was dissolved in 1940. Gandhiji wanted the Congress itself to be transformed in the post-freedom era into a Loka-sevak Sangh. He observed that a *loka-sevak* " shall organize the education of the village folk in accordance with the policy laid down by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh ".[21] The Congress not being amenable to such transformation, the constructive workers formed the Sarvodaya Samaj two years ago. The Sarvodaya Sammelan at its session at Angul in April, 1950, decided to form a new association called the Sarva Seva Sangh. The name is derived from the merger into it of all the associations for constructive work founded by Gandhiji such as the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, the All-India Village Industries Association, etc. *Sarva Seva* connotes all-round, co-ordinated service.

It was a unique scene to witness more than 1,000 delegates to the All-India Basic Education Conference at Angul, sitting under mango trees and spinning silently. The Education Ministers of Orissa and the Punjab and the Directors of Public Instruction of different States, prominent educationists and more than 500 basic teachers attended the Conference. Shri Madhava Menon, the Education Minister of Madras, presided. Delegates from the various States and from East Pakistan and Ceylon attended.

Pandit Mishra, Education Minister, Orissa, gave the history of Basic Education in that State, which, in his opinion, was the pioneer State in Basic Education work since 1937, and concluded by saying that Basic Education was the only solution for the future prosperity of the country.

Shri Madhava Menon in his speech drew pointed attention of all present to the fact that an honest society could be built up on Basic Education only. Speaking on the imperative need of charity to others, he observed : " We should be a little more charitable to others, who have no

21 *Harijan*, 16-2-'48.

missionary or fanatic zeal for Basic Education. There are many who are sceptic about it. Even Congressmen are included in that list." [22] He described the present educational position as "very frightening" and felt that only Basic Education could save the country from that "frightening situation".

It will be seen from the above account that Basic Education has taken firm root in the country. The critics of the scheme, however, wish that it should still be regarded as an experiment, because in that concept lies the possibility of its adjustments, alterations and improvements. No scheme of education, they maintain, since the days of ancient Greece and Rome has been accepted as final and perfect. It is one thing, they argue, to say that the scheme presents the nearest solution to Indian educational and social problems and another to say that Basic standards should alone be regarded as the norm. Others hope that the child under the Basic Scheme will have its natural, spontaneous and harmonious growth and that during its growth through infancy, childhood and adolescence, it will meet with such healthy adjustments and modifications as will enable it to rise to its full stature as a healthy adult.

The Bombay Government has been doing pioneering work in the field of Basic Education. Under the guidance of its able and energetic Educational Adviser the State has been rapidly advancing to the goal of making primary education free and compulsory throughout the State. Its policy has been to introduce gradually Basic Education in all primary schools of the State within a prescribed time and the first five-year plan is being implemented without let or hindrance. Replying to the ill-informed criticism of the policy of the Government with regard to Basic Education, the Director of Publicity, Government of Bombay, issued a press-note on the 10th April, 1950. Besides refuting the criticism of Basic Education it refers to the practical achievements of the Wardha Scheme, which are so

22 *The National Standard*, 10-4-'50.

important that the following extract from the note bears quotation *in extenso* : [23]

"The misunderstanding still persists in certain quarters that this scheme aims merely at the production of articles with conscripted child labour, and that its main object is to make education self-supporting through the sale of articles prepared by the pupils. It is also alleged that on account of the attention given to craft work, the standard of academic attainments of the pupils in Basic schools is likely to be lower than that of those in the ordinary primary schools.

"On such grounds it has been argued by some critics that the large amount of money spent on Basic Education and in teaching crafts in primary schools is a waste of public money. In view of such misconceptions, it seems necessary not only to state briefly the case for Basic Education but also to place before the public a short factual account of the correct position of Basic Education in the State.

"The main features which distinguish the Basic schools from other schools are that children learn academic subjects more effectively through the technique of correlation; they learn a basic craft and they take active part in community life and social work in the village. To this type of work they have to devote about one-third, if not more, of their total time, thus leaving proportionately less time for the study of academic subjects.

"Careful enquiries have revealed that the progress of these children in academic studies has not suffered in any way. On the contrary, it is on the whole considerably better than that in ordinary schools.

"The following figures of Primary School Certificate Examination results pertaining to the last three years are relevant in this connection.

Percentage of passes from all Basic schools —
1947 : 47.1 ; 1948 : 50.0 ; 1949 : 58.0.

Percentage of passes from ordinary primary schools in these Districts (Satara, East Khandesh, Surat and Dharwar) —
1947 : 40.0 ; 1948 : 38.4 ; 1949 : 41.4.

"Education through activity is the more effective approach to the problem of providing an integral, all-sided education, and a Basic school is essentially a centre of activity. The following activities have become a regular feature of almost every Basic school and through it children learn to carry out their social and civic responsibilities and get training in citizenship. They also serve to make Basic schools social centres for the young and the old alike.

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[23] *The Times of India*, 11-4-'50.

1. **Cleanliness campaign in villages:** Public opinion has been aroused and the programmes are carried on with increasing co-operation from the villages.

2. **Celebration of religious and national festivals and jayantis:** Each school celebrates about a dozen such festivals during the year. The local people take a keen interest and closer contact is established between the villagers and the school.

3. Entertainment programmes and simple dramatization of educative topics are performed by children.

4. Manuscript magazines are a regular feature of all the schools and they give ample scope for the development of the literary and artistic talents of the pupils.

5. *Vastra Svavalambi* groups have been formed in some Basic schools and they produce cloth necessary for their own use. The pupils are rightly proud of their achievement in this respect.

6. Each school has some kind of 'self-government' to train children in managing their own affairs.

7. Regular and systematic excursions and contact with nature provide ample scope for teaching academic subjects in a concrete and realistic manner.

8. Children have taken part in the 'Grow More Food' and 'Tree Planting' Campaigns. Every 'agriculture-bias' school maintains compost pits and gives demonstrations in compost-making.

9. Children work as volunteers at the time of local fairs, festivals, functions, etc., etc., and thus establish a living contact with the village and its activities and do feel at home in their work.

10. In all Basic schools in the State, emphasis is laid more on the educative value of the activity and the economic and productive aspects are not permitted to drive that consideration into the background. However, experience shows that self-sufficiency is possible with regard, at least, to the recurring cost on craft-work."

It will be manifest from the concluding lines of the above press-note that Basic Education as it is practised deviates considerably from the lines chalked out by Gandhiji and finalized by the Zakir Husain Committee. The self-supporting character of the scheme as defined by Gandhiji was its acid test. By self-supporting education Gandhiji meant that the produce from the craft-work which formed the backbone of education should meet the salaries of the

teachers. The Zakir Husain Committee also gave its unstinted support to this condition.

The State of Bombay has been in the vanguard of progress, so far, at least, as Basic Education is concerned. After ten years' experiment, the Government is led to the conclusion that "self-sufficiency is possible with regard, at least, to the recurring cost on craft-work". This open confession by the Government deserves serious consideration at the hands of those who take to the scheme with the zeal of a fanatic and refuse to budge an inch from the original stand taken by Gandhiji, who, it may be noted, never claimed infallibility or finality and who was ever ready to adjust his views to the changing circumstances. His conclusions were no doubt based on his personal experiences and experiments in South Africa and India, but they were limited in scope. Again one cannot expect a common teacher to work with the same zeal and in the same spirit of service as Gandhiji's co-workers did. Being aware of this difficulty, Gandhiji wished that his scheme should be first tried and experimented upon in a spirit of enquiry and modified, if necessary, before it was adopted. He plainly said to the delegates to the Wardha Conference : "Before making the scheme compulsory and universal, we shall have to vindicate its truth in some experimental schools. If the scheme fails, no Mahatma should be able to save it." [24] In our opinion, if the scheme is to serve the purpose for which it was brought into being, it is necessary that we should adopt a scientific attitude to it and not merely accept every word of it in a dogmatic manner. The greatest reverence can be shown to Gandhiji not by a blind acceptance of his scheme but by our readiness to modify it in the light of our experience to suit the needs of time, place and circumstance. Critical reflection on experience is the prime condition of progress, and the moment we cease to reflect, the mind becomes inert and credulous.

The scheme of Basic National Education has been tried during the last twelve years and now we should be in a

[24] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 96.

position to estimate its role in the process of regenerating our country which is fortunately an independent republic and to foresee the difficulties that are likely to crop up in the path of its progress. It is needless to repeat that the Wardha Scheme not only aims at "learning by doing" — a fundamental principle of education — but it actually helps and systematically encourages the present-day need of the country, viz., the education of the masses and not only of the classes as at present. Some educationists criticize the scheme without realizing the magnitude of the problem, the appalling poverty of the people and the colossal apathy and backwardness of the rural populace combined with hereditary abhorrence for any kind of education among the agricultural and industrial millions. The advent of independence has released a tremendous force of enthusiasm, and people want to lay their hands on anything and everything to make the country prosperous and powerful. Herein comes Basic Education with its mass appeal and psychological background to enthuse and influence the people.

Learning by doing is the proper way of education. Pupils can be taught history and geography, geometry and arithmetic, physiology and hygiene and writing and the regional language in correlation with the various arts and crafts such as spinning and weaving, modelling and clay-work, paper-work and fret-work, etc. Physical education and extra-curricular activities should also find a proper place. Various team-games, excursions, school functions, social gatherings and parents' gatherings should form part of the school activities. Pupils should take an active part in flag salutations, and recite national songs with reverence and solemnity.

Teachers should also be trained to take an intelligent interest in the work they do. Wastage of energy should be avoided and unnecessary duplication in teaching the same subjects should be discontinued. We want to give our pupils such training as would develop them into good and useful citizens. This the Wardha Scheme can do

successfully. It is the most suitable way to educate our masters.

The Sargent Report had recommended the implementation of a scheme of post-war educational reconstruction requiring forty years for its fulfilment. Its implementation involved the expenditure of a huge sum of money, which a poor country like India could ill-afford to raise. The progressive public opinion regarded the time span as too long, as it implied that towards the end of the present century we should have a measure of educational provision which many progressive countries provide today. During 1949, the Kher Committee reviewed the position and recommended a 16-year plan for the introduction of free and compulsory primary education — the plan envisaging that the expenditure on primary education should be shared by the Centre and States in the proportion of 30 : 70 ; and the education to be imparted being Basic Education with necessary modifications to suit local needs.

A few years ago, the idea of introducing Basic Education on a large scale was regarded as Utopian. Today the States which are unable to adopt it are on the defensive and apologetic. This in itself marks a welcome change in administrative psychology.

We have, however, some reasons to be anxious about the ultimate form Basic Education will take after passing through the administrative machinery of the Government. Its original form may be so altered, mutilated and vitiated as to make it impossible for one to recognize it. Its practical results would fall far short of the great expectations raised in the minds of the people by its advocates in the past. It is, therefore, necessary for the Government to resist any attempt by the officials to pour new wine into old bottles. Those who know the essence of *Nai Talim* should be in charge of it. They should see to it that Basic Education reaches the masses in its unadulterated form. A number of model schools should be run, so that people may have an ideal before them.

Of late, we hear it loosely said that the seven-year syllabus of Basic Education should be reduced to four years.

Such a dangerous proposal, if carried into practice, will militate against the spirit of the Wardha Scheme, which is an indivisible, integral whole. Such changes in the scheme will create utter confusion and defeat the very purpose underlying it.

The whole world is enveloped in darkness which can be dispelled only by the light of Gandhian philosophy, which aims at building a better world full of love and fellow-feeling and free from the besetting sins of greed and exploitation. Its dynamic aspect, viz., the Wardha Scheme of education, will make us better men and women sharing equal rights and opportunities as citizens of the world, which will be a vast family closely knit together by bonds of affection and brotherhood. Shall we be wise enough to give a fair trial to the teachings of Gandhiji, which we spurned in his life-time ? Gandhiji had eternal faith in the goodness of the human heart and let us hope and pray that we shall justify his faith by thought, word and deed.

CHAPTER IX

DOMINANT PHILOSOPHICAL TENDENCIES

The subject of philosophical inquiry is reality. A major question of philosophy has, however, always been and will always be : " What is man ? " The consideration of the heavens, the moon, and the stars is subsidiary to the all-absorbing questions of the nature of life, the nature of man, his origin and destiny and the goal of his strivings. Thus in philosophy we are concerned either with the metaphysical problem concerning the nature of reality, or the human problem concerning the nature of man. Views on the former are monistic, dualistic, or pluralistic according as reality is conceived to consist of one, two or several substances. Monism is the favourite theory of most philosophers, who seek to reduce the world-stuff to one substance. Thales suggested water as the ultimate substance, his successors suggested air or fire. Dualism is the view that conceives of reality as comprising the world of things and

that of our inner experience. Those two substances are, in other words, matter and mind. Monists try to reduce mind to matter or matter to mind, thus giving rise either to materialism or idealism. Materialism asserts that matter is the ultimate substance and that mind is identical with the brain. Idealism asserts that the true reality is spiritual or mental in nature.

Materialism appeared in ancient Greece in the conception that atoms, empty space, and motion were the fundamental postulates by means of which other things were to be explained. In modern times it again takes atoms, space, and the Newtonian laws of motion and asserts that everything can be reduced to them.

It is not our purpose to take up a detailed consideration of these modes of philosophical thought. We are mainly interested in their application to education, for theories and systems of education are reflexes of modes of philosophical thought. We shall also consider how far these philosophical doctrines are reflected, of course unconsciously, in Gandhiji's theory of education. It should be remembered that Gandhiji never sat down to work out his scheme of education by rigorous deduction from a philosophical doctrine as a major premise. It is only in a wide sense that we find similar trends of thought in philosophy and Gandhiji's educational scheme. If such similarities exist, it is due, not to any study of philosophy on the part of Gandhiji, but to the resourcefulness and alacrity of his mind.

(A) **Naturalism**

Naturalism is closely allied to materialism. It asserts that nature, the existence of things in time and space subject to a system of causal laws, is sufficient to account for all the facts and phenomena of the universe. It has several forms. Physical naturalism looks onward to external nature and tries to fit life, mind and man into its framework. The second form of naturalism is called mechanicalism, which regards man as a machine. Biological naturalism seeks to explain man in terms of the lower forms of life. It regards animal and human development as continuous and stresses

the nature man inherits from pre-human ancestors. It regards natural impulses as good in themselves. Nature in the sense of man's instincts, primitive emotions and unsophisticated judgments is held to be a more reliable guide to conduct than reflection.

In educational theory naturalism advocates, as Adams points out, a system of training which does not depend upon schools and books, but upon the manipulations of the actual life of the educand.[1] Its aim is to create conditions in which natural development will take place. It protests against the established systems that have become stereotyped. It stands for simplicity and is averse to sophistication. Its watch-word is "Back to Nature".

Aristotle was perhaps the first naturalistic educator. His educational aim was to develop man's nature for rational living. Among the other great naturalistic philosophers have been such noted thinkers as Comte, Darwin, Democritus, Hobbes, Thomas Huxley, Lamarck, Locke, Karl Marx and Herbert Spencer. Rousseau, although his aims were idealistic, may be called a naturalist as well as a pragmatist. In his view, "Men are devoured by our towns."[2] Emile was, therefore, to be taken away from his parents, away from society, and educated in contact with nature by an ideal teacher, for "God makes all things good: man meddles with them and they become evil."[3] Education is to be firmly based on the nature of the child, which is believed to be good. Monroe thinks that it was Rousseau who first proclaimed the view "that education finds its purpose, its process, and its means wholly within the child life and the child experience".[4] Naturalists hold that education is merely the fostering of natural development, and true education takes place when the nature, powers, and inclinations of the child are allowed to develop freely. In short, the child rather than the educator, the school, the book, or the subject of study is in the foreground. Rousseau

1 *The Evolution of Educational Theory*, p. 251.
2 *Emile or Education*, p. 26.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
4 *Text-book in the History of Education*, pp. 571, 572.

can be justly claimed as a precursor to the new educators who fix their attention upon the pupil as the centre of their interest. Sir John Adams calls this attitude *paido-centric*, borrowing this neologism from Stanley Hall.

Having outlined the essential features of naturalism, let us see if Gandhiji is entitled to be called a naturalist and, if so, what contribution he has made to the naturalistic philosophy of education. Neither physical naturalism nor mechanicalism can find any place in Gandhian philosophy, for they are forms of naive materialism. The only form of naturalism which would appeal to Gandhiji is the biological one, as it stresses human nature and seeks to provide for its full development. It is, therefore, impossible for us to assert that Gandhiji is a thorough-going naturalist; but his writings do contain certain statements which entitle him to an honoured place among the naturalistic philosophers who have made a lasting contribution to the philosophy of education. Like Rousseau Gandhiji protests against the traditional system of education and decries the civilization which has condemned man to a subhuman existence. In his tirade against the traditional system, Gandhiji observes :

> "I am convinced that the present system of primary education is not only 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, affect urban ways and get a smattering of something which may be anything but education." [5]

Regarding the place of text-books, about which we hear so much, he says :

> "I do not even remember having made much use of the books that were available. I did not find it at all necessary to load the boys with quantities of books. I have always felt that the true text-book for the pupil is his teacher. I remember very little that my teachers taught me from books, but I have even now a clear recollection of the things they taught me independently of books. Children take in much more and with less labour through their ears than through their eyes. I do not remember having read any book from cover to cover with my boys." [6]

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[5] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 60.

[6] Gandhiji : *Autobiography*, pp. 411, 412.

We can see from this Gandhiji's deep insight into human psychology and how he emphasizes the need for restoring the child to his rightful place in the scheme of education. He is all the more dissatisfied with the existing text-books which are based upon foreign culture to the almost entire exclusion of the indigenous.[7]

Gandhiji approaches the problem of education with an open mind. He asks his readers to study his views on education "without allowing their pre-conceived and settled notions about the existing mode of education to interfere with the free flow of their reason."[8] He regards our educational system as of foreign import and hence quite unsuited to our indigenous culture and the needs of our countless countrymen residing in villages. Gandhiji prefers to describe his scheme of education as Rural National Education through village handicrafts. He expects "the teachers to educate village children in their villages so as to draw out all their faculties through some selected handicrafts in an atmosphere free from superimposed restrictions and interference."[9] There is the danger of this "atmosphere free from superimposed restrictions and interference" being interpreted as freedom to follow any and every inclination to action that may arise in our minds. Such freedom is mere licence, which Gandhiji would never brook. The debate between freedom and discipline is but one facet of the debate between naturalism and idealism. Freedom is the cry of the naturalists, while discipline is that of the idealists. Gandhiji avoids both the extremes and strikes a middle path by stating that the individual is not free to follow stray impulses. It is rather by denying himself such freedom that he becomes master in his own house, achieving the higher freedom to follow the light that is in him, unhampered by the chains of his lower nature. He holds that self-discipline is the only freedom worth the name. "That man is free who is conscious of himself as

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7 *Young India*, 1-9-'21.

8 *Harijan*, 2-10-'37.

9 Foreword to *Basic National Education*.

the author of the law which he obeys." [10] Stressing the need for discipline, Gandhiji says : "If boys and girls do not learn discipline in their school days, money and time spent on their education is so much national loss." [11] This discipline is not to be imposed from without ; it should arise spontaneously from the inner springs of life. In Gandhiji's view, voluntary discipline is the first requisite of freedom.[12] It will be realized that Gandhiji bridges the gulf between extreme forms of naturalism and idealism by evolving the concept of voluntary discipline which is intended to connote that "if children are to find themselves they must be allowed a sufficient degree of freedom ; if they are to develop their powers to the fullest they must be prepared to accept the appropriate discipline and training." [13]

The fact that a basic craft is the centre of education has led some educators to the mistaken belief that the scheme of education as devised by Gandhiji is entirely craft-centred. It is true that a craft is to be the means of education, but after all it is a means and not an end in itself. It should be remembered that Gandhiji is a great lover of children whose personality he always holds in high esteem. As he does not attach much importance to literary training, schools, books and teaching aids are not so important from his point of view as the child whose personality is to be harmoniously developed through a craft. It is, therefore, legitimate to conclude that the child and not the craft is the centre of education in Gandhiji's plan. To use a current pedagogical term suggested by Sir John Adams, we can say that Gandhiji's plan of education is *paido-centric*. Answering the criticism that the scheme is not child-centred, the Zakir Husain Committee observes :

> "We fail to understand how this scheme, based on activity, and the study of the child's physical and social environment, can

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[10] T. H. Green, quoted by Lord Halifax in a speech to Oxford University, 27-2-'40.

[11] *Harijan*, 17-2-'46.

[12] *Ibid.*, 18-8-'46.

[13] *Handbook of Suggestions*, p. 25.

be less child-centred than the present education which is entirely book-centred!" [14]

Thus we conclude that Gandhiji has a strong claim to be ranked among the leading naturalistic educators of the world. His claim consists in his opposition to the prevailing school education, his cry of "Back to Nature", his belief in the essential goodness of child nature, his emphasis on activity as the essential aspect of child nature, his aversion to artificiality and pedantry and his tendency to simplicity in life, language and literature. He cannot, however, be called an extreme naturalist. Like Rousseau he believes that Nature and rural environments are important educative agencies, but he does not hold with him that the child should be segregated from the baneful influence of man and society. In Gandhiji's philosophy of education physical as well as social environments play a significant role. His attempt at rescuing education from the four walls of the school-room cannot be passed over in silence.

(B) **Idealism**

The fundamental proposition of idealism is that the mental or spiritual is more real than the material, and that true reality is spiritual rather than material. Idealists believe that the objective universe is only an embodiment of mind and hence the study of the humanities is more important than that of the positive sciences. We have a long list of philosophers who can be called idealists, the most outstanding among them being Socrates, Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Berkeley, Kant, Hegel, Fichte and Schopenhauer. The chief among the idealists who made an important contribution to the philosophy of education were Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Herbert and Proebel.

Idealism stresses the dignity of man and the distinctiveness of his nature. Professor James Ross maintains that "Human personality is of supreme value and constitutes the noblest work of God." [15] Adams asserts that, of the many ideals of education, self-realization is the "one that

14 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 157.

15 *Groundwork of Educational Theory*, p. 115.

is specially associated with idealism ".[16] It is interesting to note that the difference between idealistic and naturalistic aims is just the difference between self-realization and self-expression. Self-realization should not be taken in its narrow sense of an isolated or self-sufficient attitude on the part of the individual. As Rusk points out, " Man's higher or spiritual nature is essentially social."[17] Hence an individual can realize his full potentialities only as a member of the society. If we accept this interpretation of self-realization, we do full justice to the social aim in education. The educator should, therefore, regard his pupil not as " a particular and exclusive individual being ", but as " a being in whom a new and universal life seems to emerge ".[18]

Idealists are of the view that culture, art, morality and religion lead us to the heart of reality, and, therefore, education must be religious, moral, intellectual and aesthetic. They are not indifferent to the physical aspect of education also, as they believe that none of these aspects may be neglected if a harmoniously balanced personality is to be the result. Emphasizing the need for physical education, Professor James Ross points out :

> " Nor must we forget the physical aspect of education, which may be seen as two-fold. Firstly, the health and fitness of the body must receive due attention, for without such health and fitness the pursuit of the spiritual values is seriously handicapped. Secondly, there must be a fostering of the bodily skills that are the executive instruments of man's invention, enabling him to create an artefactual physical environment more in accordance with his desires and needs than the one given him. Physical and spiritual activities are not, of course, entirely separable ; but have a certain amount of common ground. Moral values, which are spiritual, can be found in physical activities ; intellectual values are pursued in the application of skills to the problems of the physical environment ; and aesthetic values are discovered in the mastery man acquires over his material in his crafts." [19]

In the light of the basic principles of idealism we have just discussed, let us consider if and to what extent

[16] *The Evolution of Educational Theory*, p. 298.
[17] *The Philosophical Bases of Education*, p. 43.
[18] Eucken : *Life's Basis and Life's Ideal*, p. 343.
[19] *Groundwork of Educational Theory*, pp. 134, 135.

Gandhiji's philosophy of education is idealistic. A study of his writings will lead one to the conclusion that Gandhiji is an idealist to the core. Idealism is ingrained deeply in his nature, as can be seen from his upbringing and early education. His father had little religious training, "but he had that kind of religious culture which frequent visits to temples and listening to religious discourses make available to many Hindus." [20] His mother was saintly and deeply religious. "She would not think of taking her meals without her daily prayers." [21] Gandhiji started life with such a parental heredity and it is but natural that his outlook was intensely idealistic. The supreme aim in life for the individual is, according to Gandhiji, to awaken the sense of divinity within and completely identify oneself with the Universal Spirit that pervades everything.

Gandhiji has revitalized the traditional conception of religious life, which would necessitate one's withdrawal from the worldly life for concentration upon spiritual austerities. He believes that one who wants to serve God must serve His creatures. He demonstrated by personal example that service unto man is service unto God. The goal of life is self-realization, which can be attained by penance, renunciation and service. Gandhiji does not want the seeker after Truth to withdraw from society and lead an ascetic life far from the madding crowds. Man should live in society and be ever ready with the weapon of satyagraha to defend it from hostile forces which tend to disrupt its essential unity. Satyagraha should always be a weapon for vindicating human dignity, for the preservation of moral values and never for mere material gains.

Gandhiji wants to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. He points the way through personal example for the application of the principles of all religions to life here and now in order that God may be realized by every one in this life.

It is in the fitness of things that Gandhiji's idealism forms the basis of his philosophy of education. It is reflected

20 Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, p. 12.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

in the ultimate aim of education, which he formulated in the following words :

> "Long before I undertook the education of the youngsters of the Tolstoy Farm I had realized that the training of the spirit was a thing by itself. To develop the spirit is to build character and to enable one to work towards a knowledge of God and self-realization. And I held that this was an essential part of the training of the young, and that all training without culture of the spirit was of no use, and might be even harmful." [22]

He does not underrate the building up of the body through physical exercise. He wishes that physical drill, handicrafts, drawing and music should go hand in hand.[23] He realizes the value of religious education and, therefore, advocates the training of the spirit, which would lead to self-realization.

Like other idealists Gandhiji also seeks to produce a harmoniously balanced personality through education which provides for physical activities like care of body and skills and spiritual activities which are intellectual, moral, aesthetic and religious.

It would not be out of place here to compare Gandhiji with other noted idealists in the West. Like Rousseau, whose philosophy was essentially idealistic, Gandhiji demands the teaching of the child rather than the study of books and the teaching of the subject-matter. Like Pestalozzi he is imbued with the idea that the child is the centre of the educational progress. Education, they hold, is the birthright of all and its aim is the natural, progressive, and harmonious development of the powers and capacities of the human being. Gandhiji's eagerness to make primary education universal is in complete accord with Pestalozzi's belief that education is the birthright of all. Like Herbart Gandhiji conceives the purpose of education to be moral character. Herbart's psychological doctrine of interest was fundamental to his whole educational philosophy. According to him educational progress is possible, if the child is interested in the activity. Gandhiji seeks

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22 Gandhiji : *Autobiography*, p. 413.

23 *Harijan*, 11-9-'37.

to stimulate the interest of the child in a basic craft by making it purposive through its self-supporting character. Both of them emphasize the need for correlating school subjects as required in actual life and avoiding isolated subject-matter teaching. Like Froebel Gandhiji believes that the individual's potentialities exist in a dormant state in his original nature from childhood, and that it is the function of education to awaken these latent powers and stimulate them to their fullest development. Both of them discern in the divine plan a symbolism which means that behind all activities there exist spiritual meanings and values. Out of this symbolism they developed the theory of self-activity as the method of instruction and stressed the importance of creativeness on the part of the child in his education. They feel that social environments are essential to the educational process and that the school should be a miniature society.

(C) Pragmatism

As compared with naturalism and idealism, pragmatism is a doctrine of recent growth. It maintains that a true judgment is one which gives satisfactory results in experience. It regards satisfactory working and utility as the criteria of the true and the good. Truth is something which happens to a judgment and, if a belief works, we have a right to hold it.

Pragmatism protests against the impersonal interpretation of existence by naturalism and also revolts against academic absolutism of idealism. It is the outgrowth of a meeting attitude of mind between the conjectures of naturalism and idealism. It is critical of both naturalism and idealism for being monistic. It tries to make the best of both material efficiency and idealistic tendencies, and is perhaps a step on the way to a new idealism. Academic philosophers who desire a system of philosophy which will ultimately establish the nature of man and the reality do not take to pragmatism, because it is too pluralistic, relativistic, temporal and tentative for them. The leading pragmatists include James, Schiller, Dewey and Kilpatrick.

There are three types of pragmatism. We have the humanistic pragmatism which holds the true to be that which best satisfies human nature as a whole. The experimental pragmatism maintains that whatever can be experimentally verified, whatever works is true. The biological pragmatism which is also known as instrumentalism stresses thought as an instrument and its function as adapting the human organism to its environment.

James accepted pragmatism as a means of harmonizing science and religion. His thesis is that man is essentially a practical being whose mind helps him in adapting him to life. Dewey is a biological pragmatist for whom the aim of education is the development of a social efficiency by means of which one is able to join freely and fully in the common activities of life.

The pragmatist believes that the child is a potential creator of values in a given environment. The data of education, he thinks, are the child and his physical and social environment, the interaction between the two constituting the child experience. To quote the words of Professor James Ross :

> "Pragmatism in education aligns itself with naturalism in starting with the child as he is; but, perhaps more consciously and deliberately than naturalism, it seeks to modify the original nature of the child by providing him with a helpful type of experience, particularly that of a social character, in which he has direct participation. It is the child's nature to experiment with life, and he is encouraged to do this, to contrive new responses to deal with the new situations of which his educator sees that he has a plentiful supply." [24]

Pragmatism wants the child to acquire for himself the knowledge and skills necessary to deal effectively with the situations of real life. Education is not so much teaching the child, as encouraging him to learn for himself through experimental, creative activity. Hence "learn by doing" is a maxim of pragmatists, who distrust bookishness and believe that the child learns much better from his own activity than from constant instruction. Their method is

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[24] *Groundwork of Educational Theory*, pp. 137, 138.

to put the child into situations and provide him with the means of dealing with them successfully. Instead of working at separate subjects the pupil is encouraged to draw freely upon all knowledge that is relevant to the activity. School studies are to be integrated inside the school, as their counterparts are integrated in the world outside. The principle of integration is the life and experience of the pupil and his present activity.

The most important contribution of pragmatism to the philosophy of education is the Project Method (called the Complex Method in Russia), which puts in the foreground of the learning process a definite problem to be solved. The problem comes first and the learning is incidental to its successful solution. "The general idea of this method is," Professor Godfrey Thomson points out, "that school time shall be filled with real tasks which the pupils themselves genuinely wish to carry out, which, if possible, they have themselves suggested, and which will involve the acquisition as a by-product of the formal school subjects, such as reading, arithmetic, a modern language, and the rest." [25]

Projects may be individual or social. The latter are called socialized activities which involve participation in social relationships, division of labour, and willing acceptance of responsibility to the community. They also provide rich experience in co-operation.

It should, however, be noted in this connection that, since all learning is to be incidental to the projects, there are likely to be gaps and lack of system or vagueness in knowledge. "Incidental learning, though most important, is not enough," says Professor Godfrey Thomson.[26] One needs the regular course in its proper place. He, therefore, concludes that "a judicious mixture of regular drilling with incidental learning is probably best.... A man's best work is done as play, and a boy's too; but both the man and the boy need and welcome opportunities for being

[25] *A Modern Philosophy of Education*, p. 87.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

definitely taught and drilled in the weapons necessary to prosecute their playtime occupations.[27]

Let us see if and to what extent Gandhiji's approach to philosophy and education is pragmatic. Gandhiji believes in the absoluteness of truth, but its realization demands sustained experimentation. He, therefore, calls his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. He simply wants to tell the story of his numerous experiments with truth, for his life consists of nothing but those experiments which are of political as well as spiritual nature.[28] The experiments which he relates in his *Autobiography* are spiritual or rather moral; for, in his view, the essence of religion is morality. He does not claim any degree of absoluteness or perfection for these experiments. He clearly observes :

> "I claim for them nothing more than does a scientist who, though he conducts his experiments with the utmost accuracy, forethought and minuteness, never claims any finality about his conclusions, but keeps an open mind regarding them. I have gone through deep self-introspection, searched myself through and through, and explained and analysed every psychological situation. Yet I am far from claiming any finality or infallibility about my conclusions. One claim I do indeed make and it is this. For me they appear to be absolutely correct, and seem for the time being to be final. For if they were not, I should base no action on them. But at every step I have carried out the process of acceptance or rejection and acted accordingly. And so long as my acts satisfy my reason and my heart, I must firmly adhere to my original conclusions."[29]

It will appear from this that like an experimental pragmatist Gandhiji believes that whatever can be experimentally verified is true. He does not claim finality or absoluteness for such a truth. Truth capable of verification is relative truth for Gandhiji. Thus Gandhiji believes in two kinds of truth, viz., relative truth which is capable of verification and Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God.[30] He says :

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27 *A Modern Philosophy of Education*, pp. 95, 96.
28 Gandhiji : *Autobiography*, p. 4.
29 *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 6.
30 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

"... as long as I have not realized this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and buckler.... .....Often in my progress I have had faint glimpses of the Absolute Truth, God, and daily the conviction is growing upon me that He alone is real and all else is unreal."[31]

When Gandhiji talks of the Absolute Truth and self-realization or *Moksha*, he ceases to be a pragmatist. It should be noted in this connection that the difference between idealism and pragmatism is broadly the difference between the accepting of values towards the realization of which effort is to be directed, and the regarding of them as something verifiable by man himself. Pragmatism is thus within measurable distance of dynamic idealism. Rusk regards it as "merely a stage in the development of a new idealism..... an idealism that will do full justice to reality, reconcile the practical and the spiritual values, and result in a culture which is the flower of efficiency and not the negation of it."[32]

Gandhiji's pragmatic approach to education can be seen from the fact that like a pragmatist he wants the child to acquire for himself the knowledge and skills necessary to deal effectively with the situations of real life. The pragmatist's Project Method has much in common with Gandhiji's craft-centred education. Both of them are based upon the principles of activity and interest. They are to be the means of intellectual development of the child as well as of acquiring knowledge of different subjects. Like a pragmatist Gandhiji maintains that the child should acquire the knowledge of different subjects by actually working out the problems which arise in his craft-work.

Like Dewey Gandhiji is democratic, and his objection to any divorce between thinking and doing is both psychological and philosophical, inasmuch as he sees in it a parallel with the division of society into aristocratic and mechanic. His school must be a doing school, and, *therefore*, a thinking school. Gandhiji does not hold that effort and

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31 Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, p. 6.

32 *The Philosophical Bases of Education*, p. 33.

interest are opposed or separable, and he wants them to be combined in school-work.

There is, however, a difference between the Project Method and Basic Education. The number of projects is unlimited, for a project is "a problematic act carried to completion in its natural setting" [33] whereas Gandhiji wants the number of basic crafts to be restricted to the few that are suited to the needs and environments of our rural populace. Again the projects are not expected to be remunerative like the basic crafts. The Project Method expects a child to learn different subjects through suitable projects, while Gandhiji is of the view that *all* subjects should be taught through a *single* basic craft chosen with an eye to the child's environments.

Like the advocates of the Project Method Gandhiji seeks to relate knowledge significantly to the life of the people. Like Professor Godgrey Thomson, Gandhiji and the Zakir Husain Committee realize that incidental learning is not enough and that there must be logical arrangement and systematization in instruction. They, therefore, advocate the correlation and integration of subjects.

Like a project the basic craft is also to be a socialized activity involving participation in social relationships, division of labour and willing acceptance of responsibility to the community. It also provides rich experience in co-operation. As Shri K. G. Mashruwala points out, "Social sciences and hygiene will not be taught as mere class-room subjects, but by planning joint and several programmes of service to the whole village not excluding dumb creatures. The school shall be the centre for radiation of culture to the surrounding society." [34]

It will be realized from all these considerations that Gandhiji's contribution to the pragmatic philosophy of education is unique. The introduction of a basic craft as the centre of education, the co-ordination and correlation of the content of the curriculum, the close relationship of

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[33] Stevenson: *The Project Method of Teaching*, p. 43.

[34] *Harijan*, 4-12-'37.

education with actual life, the method of learning by doing, the individual initiative, the sense of social responsibility and emphasis on experiment as the means of discovering truth are some of the outstanding features of Gandhiji's pragmatic philosophy of education. The Americans have been turning to Dewey's pragmatic philosophy for guidance in planning their system of education. It is to be hoped that, at no distant date, educationists all over the world will turn to Gandhiji's philosophy for rejuvenating and revitalizing their outworn systems of education.

A careful study of Gandhian philosophy will demonstrate that naturalism, idealism and pragmatism are complementary rather than contradictory in his philosophy of education; idealism being *fundamental* and naturalism and pragmatism being merely *contributory*. Does not Rousseau represent a combination of conflicting doctrines of education? Gandhiji's educational philosophy is naturalistic inasmuch as it takes full account of child nature and stresses its study. It is *naturalistic* in its setting, *idealistic* in its aim and *pragmatic* in its method and programme of work. To emphasize one aspect of his philosophy to the neglect of the others is to see the part and identify it with the whole. The real greatness of Gandhiji as an educational philosopher consists in the fact that the dominant tendencies of naturalism, idealism and pragmatism are not separate and independent in his philosophy, but they fuse into a unity, giving rise to a theory of education which would suit the needs of the day and satisfy the loftiest aspirations of the human soul. This and not the scheme of Basic Education is his greatest achievement.

CHAPTER X

SOME BASIC ASPECTS OF GANDHIJI'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

In the preceding chapters, we have made a passing reference to the basic aspects of the Gandhian philosophy. We have seen that Gandhiji's philosophy is not the outgrowth of whims and fancies, but is based upon sound psychological data confirmed by the latest researches in the field of psychological study. Its sociological and economic aspects too have been incidentally touched upon. We now propose to dwell at length upon these fundamental aspects of the Gandhian philosophy of education so as to be able to determine Gandhiji's contribution to education.

(A) **Psychological Aspects**

Though Gandhiji may not be called a student of psychology in the accepted sense of the term, he was a keen observer of human nature manifesting itself in behaviour, and arrived at conclusions quite in line with the modern trends of psychology.

It is acknowledged that the character and amount of education possible for a man are determined by his mental equipment and that educational theory and practice are conditioned by the nature of human behaviour. Man inherits a certain native equipment in the form of capacities and tendencies, which serve as a basis for the complex adjustments which education attempts to direct for the good of the individual and society. An educational psychologist is interested in how natural interests and emotional drives can stimulate learning, how the rate and quality of learning are affected by environments, how individuals differ in their capacity to learn, through what activities the mind best acquires and retains knowledge and how feelings can find expression in graceful movements, refined appreciations and healthy activities. These are some of the points upon which the educator seeks psychological data as the basis for any sound plan of education.

Gandhiji was opposed to stuffing children's minds with all kinds of information without ever thinking of stimulating and developing them. His insight into human nature led him to the belief that it is through activity that the child can make intellectual progress. The child's tendency to spontaneous activity is the basis of education. He does not believe in an activity for its own sake. In his view, the activity through which the child's mental, physical and spiritual faculties are to be cultivated should not be a mere side activity, but a central purposive activity like a handicraft or manual work. To quote his own words :

> " Let us now cry a halt and concentrate on education of the child properly through manual work, not as a side activity, but as a prime means of intellectual training." [1]

His activity is not a mere playway in the fashion of the Westerners, but an economically remunerative activity through which he seeks to impart education and simultaneously cut at the root of unemployment. " You have to train the boys," he writes, " in one occupation or another. Round this special occupation you will train up his mind, his body, his hand-writing, his artistic sense, and so on." [2]

Gandhiji thus starts with the child's manual and constructive activity which appeals to his interests and dominant tastes. We have seen that Locke, Rousseau and Pestalozzi also believed in some form of manual work as an essential accompaniment of education. Pestalozzi provided for industrial education at his Institute at Yverdon. Referring to the advantages of manual work at the Institute, Marc-Antoine Jullien writes :

> " From the physical point of view, the industrial education received at the Institute develops the energy of the body, hardens it and fits it to endure fatigue ; it gives the pupils the general habits of strength and skill, which find particular application in the various arts and trades to which social life may call them.
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> " From the *intellectual* point of view, the instruction at the Institute, as it has been developed, furnishes the pupils all the fundamental knowledge necessary in appropriating various natural objects to the needs and uses of man. The three elementary branches of *language*, the *science of numbers* or *calculation*,

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1 *Harijan*, 18-9-'37.

2 *Ibid.*

and the *science of forms*, or *geometry*, together with the teaching of *drawing*, exercise and perfect at once common sense and the faculty of observation, quickness and sureness of eye and of mind; they provide the pupils with a sure and delicate touch, a certain dexterity in bending nature in some degree to their purposes, making her serve their needs, using all her products usefully and ingeniously; they give a particular capacity for seeking out, bringing together, and combining the different ways of using, to their own profit or the advantage of society, either external objects or their own knowledge. As the Method prepares the body and the hands for making use of various mechanical instruments used in the various trades, and enable the mind to evaluate the use made of them, it disposes the intelligence of the pupil to the ready invention of such apparatus as the practice of any art whatever may suggest to him.

"As for the *development of the heart* the Method does not fail, even from the *moral point of view*, to have a salutary influence on the purely industrial objective. It makes the pupil feel how the division of labour, the union and the employment of men, or the joining of individual forces, the interchange and mutual assistance which takes place amongst various individuals, all contribute to produce important results; and how, in the social mechanism, considered from this point of view, it is necessary for every cog to be subordinate to every other cog, and for them to sustain each other and help each other, instead of clashing and hindering each other's action." [3]

We have quoted the above passage *in extenso* to show the advantages of manual labour from the psychological point of view. Gandhiji was intuitively aware of all these advantages flowing from manual work. The manual activity, which he prescribes as the medium of education, not only makes the child self-supporting, but has also the following advantages accruing from it :

(a) **Physical Development**

While engaged in some form of handicraft, the child moves his muscles, uses them and thus makes them stronger and more supple. His muscular strength is developed by the opposition between the individual energy flowing from within and the resistance which comes from outside. One of the important functions of the muscles is to adapt the individual to the environment and the environment to the

[3] Adolph Ferriere : *The Activity School* (edited by K. G. Saiyidain), pp. 96, 97.

individual. The manual work satisfies this need and makes the child's muscular energy serve its natural purpose.

(b) **Psychological Development**

Manual work brings the child in contact with matter, and its different properties are brought to his mind, thus giving him knowledge of the physical order. In working with matter, the child realizes the utility of the various raw materials and tools, which he handles, cleans and sharpens. Such knowledge opens his mind to science and economics. The words of Gandhiji in this connection bear quotation :

> " In my scheme of things, the hand will handle tools before it draws or traces the writing, the eyes will read the pictures of letters and words as they will know other things in life, the ears will catch the names and meanings of things and sentences." [4]

Here we have Gandhiji's conception of literary training through manual work. He thinks that the whole training will be natural, responsive, and, therefore, the quickest and the cheapest. This is made possible by the fact that manual work accustoms the child to look closely, to attend to details and to measure correctly, thus developing his observation. Manual work also encourages his intellectual development by associating muscular action with cerebral effort and by leading him to comparisons of concrete relations between various physical forces and the means at his disposal. It develops his imagination, for he must visualize in advance what he expects to make. It develops his reflection and encourages the co-ordination of the powers by putting to work all the senses and organs. It also stimulates the child's inventiveness. We know how he delights in inventing and creating something tangible which represents concretely his ingenuity and perseverance. Again whatever is produced by the child's own labour contributes to awaken, form and develop in him the aesthetic sense.

In the article entitled " Manual Work and the Cerebral Mechanism," Mr J. Saunders, a leading English physiologist, explains the repercussions of manual activity on the brain as follows :

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[4] *Harijan*, 20-8-'37.

"1. There is a definite relation between manual work and the cerebral mechanism.

"2. There are in the brain certain centres which govern the various movements of co-ordination. As new movements are attempted, new centres become active, certain nervous impulses become more or less habitual, so that new nerve paths are started and established and the connections between the various centres of the brain become clearer and stronger.

"3. The progressively higher development of the brain depends upon establishing connections between the motor and sensory centres, the practice of manual work aiding so effectively in developing these highly specialized complex centres that it leads finally to brilliant intelligence and a well-balanced mind.

"4. Progressive manual work for children from four to fifteen is thus not time lost, but constitutes, on the contrary, the true and only procedure for normal development, since it opens up indeed the only road along which Nature herself attempts to lead the child." [5]

It will be realized how Gandhiji's educational philosophy is deeply rooted in human physiology and psychology. Gandhiji is of the view that "every handicraft has 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." [6] Dr. Adolph Ferriere had also similar views on this subject and did not like to start the child mechanically.

"He who has grasped the basic idea and the spirit of the Activity School — the cultivation of spontaneity by the awakening of interests, the free play of the law of progress which demands that the child, by means of trial and error and the natural sanctions, develops from his original, undifferentiated state toward skill and sureness — that person will not start out with a grammar of movements, a dry exposition of the properties of raw materials and of the handling of tools. He will not try to start the child mechanically and by infinitesimal stages upon processes which will allow of no useful work until much later. In other words, his method will not be logical, but psychological; it will not be formalistic, working from without inward, but will let the child's need manifest itself from within outward; it will confine itself to creating the environment, the technical surroundings which encourage imitation, and will watch out for accidents: too serious

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[5] Quoted by Dr. Adolph Ferriere in his *The Activity School*, pp. 102, 103.

[6] *Harijan*, 31-7-'37.

> natural sanctions, false leads. Until the child comprehends the chain of cause and effect which makes the excellence of the end dependent upon the excellence of the means used in attaining it, he is not ready to grasp the significance of apprenticement." [7]

The child begins by playing and imitating, and reaches a stage when he likes to create something useful. Gandhiji aims at exploiting this innate disposition of child nature. When the child enters a basic school at the age of 7, he begins to learn a basic craft chosen with due regard to his environment. Gandhiji does not deny the utility of play in child life, but he holds that when the child enters a basic school, his tendency to play is to assume a definite form. In other words, the basic craft is to be pursued in a play-way. Play in its well-defined forms is not to be a mere frivolous activity, but it is to be identical with the practice of a craft which would thus become the medium of education as well as a source of earning, enabling the child to earn while he learns. It is possible to show that all the psychological theories of play find their meeting point in Gandhiji's conception of spinning with the *takli*.

According to Herbert Spencer, play is the expression of the child's surplus energy. This may be true up to a point. Psychologists agree that the surplus energy should be taken in the sense of psychic energy of which our instincts are fountainheads. Spinning is to be taken as a sort of play with the *takli* as its implement, through which the superfluous energy of the child's instincts can be discharged. His instincts of pugnacity and self-assertion find an outlet while he competes with his co-students in spinning and producing better yarn than the others. His instinct of curiosity is canalized while he gathers knowledge about the *takli*, cotton, yarn, cloth and the processes connected with them. When he has the feeling of ownership of the articles he produces, his instinct of acquisitiveness finds a channel of expression. The feeling that he has created or produced something new satisfies his instinct of construction. It is possible to show that the energy flowing from other instincts like repulsion, submission and food-seeking finds an

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[7] *The Activity School*, pp. 103, 104.

outlet through spinning, if proper care is taken to see to it that it does not degenerate into mere forced labour. The importance of the food-seeking instinct in the life of a living organism cannot be overemphasized. Gandhiji had his finger on the pulse of the nation. He knew that our starving millions require their food-seeking instinct to be satisfied before they can undertake any activity material or spiritual. They, therefore, want something that stimulates their productive activity. Thus spinning is an activity that appeals to the basic impulses of human nature and provides full scope for the discharge of superfluous psychic energy.

Malebranche and Karl Groos hold that play anticipates the serious activities of adult life. They conclude that the essence of play is its biological utility. They see in it the exercise of instincts before they are needed for serious use. To them play is teleological, always anticipating the future needs of the child. The basic craft as envisaged by Gandhiji also prepares the child for the battle of life. As the handicraft is to be practised in a playway, it becomes Nature's mode of education. When the child spins, he enters into possession of his body, exercises his intellectual powers and discovers the interests that are to fill the central place in his adult life. The craft prepares him for the serious business of manhood.

Professor Stanley Hall believes that the child is not so much rehearsing the serious activities of his own adult life as recapitulating those of his remote ancestors. For him play is reminiscent rather than anticipatory.

Modern psychologists are of the view that play is cathartic in action; that is to say, it provides an outlet for certain pent-up instincts and emotions, which cannot find sufficient direct expression in childhood. In the words of Professor J. S. Ross: "In civilized life the instinct of pugnacity, for example, finds insufficient scope for exercise. By nature we are fighters, and fight we must, so the civilized man fights in play." [8] Gandhiji provides for the release of the bottled-up psychic energy through handicrafts, which

[8] *Groundwork of Educational Psychology*, p. 105.

are the most refined and desirable form of play for him. "The *takli* is a good enough toy to play with. It is no less a toy, because it is a productive one." [9]

We thus see that Gandhiji's handicraft is a meeting place of all the theories of play. The surplus-energy theory can be reconciled with the cathartic theory, if by surplus energy we mean the energy of our instincts and emotions. But instincts are dispositions to certain activities we have inherited from our pre-historic ancestors. This leads us to the reminiscent theory of play, which is a means of discharging the energy of these instincts in a harmless manner. The purging of emotions that would otherwise tend to be repressed is of biological utility preparing the child for a civilized form of adult life. Hence it is appropriate to conclude that handicrafts as practised in a playway are at once the recapitulation of ancestral activities and the anticipation of the adult activities of the child. They are also the means of discharging the surplus energy of his instincts, which, if pent up, would lead to disastrous consequences for the child as well as for society. Our thesis that the handicraft which is raised to the status of play by Gandhiji is Nature's mode of education is confirmed by other theories. One of the main tasks of education is the sublimation and redirection of instinctive energy. This is eminently done by the handicrafts, provided, however, that they are practised in the spirit of play. There is nothing in the activity itself which would entitle it to be called play or work. The distinction between work and play lies not in the activities themselves, but in the attitude of the doer towards them. Spinning which is work in a factory is play in the basic school. If we perform any activity joyfully and spontaneously, and if our instincts find their satisfaction in such an activity, then that activity is play to us, whatever it may be to others. Spinning or for that matter any other basic handicraft is to be such a joyful, spontaneous and creative activity, providing scope for the fullest self-expression of the child.

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[9] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 63.

While the child is engaged in a craft, which is play to him, he will seek, grope, work, think out and be at grips with the difficulties. He will learn by experience what can and what cannot be done, and he will acquire skill in the handling of the material. Skill and sureness of hand will be complementary to each other, each contributing to the growth of the other as the work proceeds.

Psychologists are of opinion that the first few years of life are more important than the remaining period. The foundation of the child's personality is laid during the first few weeks and years of life by the parental handling, the environmental condition in the home and the neighbourhood, and by his social experiences and relationships. He is like a moving stream of energy, evolving and adjusting himself to the wishes and handling of those who are about him. School, society and State have, therefore, to co-operate with the home in its effort to look after the growth of the child in his early years, for one neglected or mishandled child like Hitler is enough to wipe out the whole human race with all its priceless treasures of culture and values accumulated through the ages. It is due to his intuitive realization of this fact that Gandhiji emphasizes the need for the proper upbringing of children. To quote his own words :

> "We labour under a sort of superstition that the child has nothing to learn during the first five years of its life. On the contrary the fact is that the child never learns in after life what it does in its first five years. The education of the child begins with conception. The physical and mental states of the parents at the moment of conception are reproduced in the baby. Then during the period of pregnancy it continues to be affected by the mother's moods, desires and temperament, as also by her ways of life. After birth the child imitates the parents, and for a considerable number of years entirely depends on them for its growth." [10]

The Wardha Scheme takes education to the age of 14 and thus solves the problem of education during the important stages of child development, viz., late childhood and adolescence. Attempts to solve this problem are the most

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[10] Gandhiji : *Autobiography*, p. 251.

dominant feature of the twentieth century psychological tendency in education, and it is a happy feature of the Gandhian plan that it aims at solving it. Instead of artificial methods to effect correlation of studies, the Wardha Scheme bases such correlation on the results of modern psychological researches. Discussing the psychological and economic aspects of the Gandhian scheme of education, Rev. T. N. Siqueira observes :

> " That this is psychologically a sound method, no one will deny. The further step, of learning by doing, and doing not useless things (in the fashionable " play-way " of rich countries) but useful things which fetch a small price and give the child the thrill of earning while learning, is natural and characteristic of a man who was so deeply moved by India's poverty that from his South African days he never consciously took for himself anything rich in food or dress or furniture. It recalled to all Indians the utter poverty of their country and forced educationists to build their system upon this real and concrete foundation." [11]

The Zakir Husain Committee critically examined the psychological aspects of the Wardha Scheme and made the following observation :

> " Psychologically, it is desirable, because it relieves the child from the tyranny of a purely academic and theoretical instruction against which its active nature is always making a healthy protest. It balances the intellectual and practical elements of experience, and may be made an instrument of educating the body and the mind in co-ordination. The child acquires not the superficial literacy which implies, often without warrant, a capacity to read the printed page, but the far more important capacity of using hand and intelligence for some constructive purpose. This, if we may be permitted to use the expression, is ' the literacy of the whole personality '." [12]

The Wardha Scheme is based on certain fundamental psychological needs of children. Their prime need is affection and self-respect. Gandhiji does not treat the child as a young savage or an undeveloped man, but loves him as the spark of divinity. He expects the teacher to understand the child and love him. On the Tolstoy Farm Gandhiji " made it a rule that the youngsters should not be asked to do what the teachers did not do, and therefore, when

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11 *Journal of Education and Psychology*, April, 1948.

12 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 121.

they were asked to do any work, there was always a teacher co-operating and actually working with them. Hence whatever the youngsters learnt, they learnt cheerfully." [13] When the child produces something useful he feels the joy that always accompanies the execution of a piece of art, and thus he is on his way to being self-reliant and self-confident. As Professor K. T. Shah points out, "Manual training not only develops the intellect and trains the nervous system of the body but also creates self-confidence." [14] Self-confidence created in the child by manual work develops in him a sense of self-respect and security against future hardships. He has also the need for activity, for participating in the group, and desire for order and beauty in his surroundings. An important feature of the Wardha Scheme is that it seeks to satisfy all these basic needs of child nature through a well-balanced stress on craft and his physical and social environments which are intrinsically interconnected as foci for the curriculum.[15]

(B) Sociological Aspects

The biological and psychological qualities of man, which make his education possible, also produce the social group, which in turn makes education necessary. The intermingling of individuals, the interplay of their influence and the inter-locking of their activities require social adaptation. In view of this, the aim of education is stated to be social efficiency or an adequate adjustment to the social environment in which one is born.

Man is essentially a social animal. Gregariousness is a universal ethnic characteristic of mankind. Group life is favourable to security and it provides a medium for co-operative activity and cumulative experience. Again, it provides a medium in which the individual is produced, nourished and developed into a normal human personality. It stimulates him to competitive and co-operative activity.

Educational objectives are parallel to the social activities and concepts of the age and the place in which they

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[13] Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, p. 409.

[14] *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 83.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

prevail. Gandhiji, therefore, conceives of education as a process that would fit a man for playing a useful role in the non-violent social order in which he will be called upon to live. Such a social order is to be democratic, and, therefore, he wants a minimum universal education to be imparted freely and compulsorily to every member of society. The democratic State cannot survive, unless its masters have received a minimum amount of education, essential to the efficient discharge of their duties as citizens. Liberty can be safe only in the hands of the people with a certain degree of education.

If true discipline is to be inculcated in the minds of the children, there should be self-government in schools, which should be some kind of genuine and organized society, and the children should be engaged in some fruitful creative activity. This can be achieved by the provision of a craft in the school. Discussing the social aspects of the craft, the Zakir Husain Committee observes:

> "Socially considered, the introduction of such practical productive work in education, to be participated in by all the children of the nation, will tend to break down the existing barriers of prejudice between manual and intellectual workers, harmful alike for both. It will also cultivate in the only possible way a true sense of the dignity of labour and of human solidarity — an ethical and moral gain of incalculable significance." [16]

For Gandhiji no education would be sound that does not make useful citizens of boys and girls. The ideal of citizenship is implicit in the Wardha Scheme. The pupils are expected to be acquainted with the public utility services, the working of the *panchayat* and the co-operative society, the duties of public servants, the constitution of the District Board or Municipality, the use and significance of the vote and with the growth and significance of representative institutions. Particular emphasis is laid on the ideals of love, truth, justice, co-operative endeavour, national solidarity and the equality and brotherhood of men. Gandhiji's philosophy is essentially altruistic and he would have nothing to do with any philosophy of life that seeks

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16 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 121.

to promote the well-being of the self regardless of the group. Such education must be given through vocational and manual training. Having a firm belief in the dignity of labour, he maintains that handicrafts should be an integral part of education and school life.

Professor T. K. N. Menon holds that Gandhiji has given a new meaning to the term *citizenship*. Explaining this new significance of citizenship, he says :

> "More important than all these, Gandhiji's scheme aims at the education for a new kind of citizenship. An education which produces drags and parasites — whether rich or poor — stands condemned. His Scheme is designed to produce workers who will look upon all kinds of useful work as honourable and who will be able and willing to stand on their own feet.....Thus it will be the spearhead of a silent social revolution." [17]

Gandhiji holds that, if children are going to learn a number of academic subjects in the school in such a manner that they cannot throw any light on life, or if they are to do manual work mechanically without understanding its "why and wherefore", they had better leave school and learn the lessons of social service, labour and social co-operation by participating actively in the work of their family and their neighbours — in agriculture, crafts, sanitation and other things. Children who engage themselves in some kind of craftwork learn the lessons of social equality and social service not only to their own country, but to the whole world, for Gandhiji regards the world as one homogeneous family. All his activities and movements are inspired by this high ideal. Thus Gandhiji aims at educating the individual to lead a natural life of love and social service as opposed to that of selfishness and possessiveness.

Setting as an ultimate ideal "a Government that governs the least", about 200 *Sarvodaya* workers who assembled in New Delhi on January 30, 1950, declared their faith in the progressive realization of a non-violent society which would not be based on caste and class, and would end exploitation, crime and war. They outlined their *Sarvodaya* plan for an order of society that would ultimately

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[17] *Journal of Education and Psychology*, April, 1948.

replace military by non-violent defence, and conduce to the ideal of " one world ".

Such a society, now known as the Sarvodaya Samaj, was the long-cherished dream of Gandhiji. In such a society, education for career must give place to education for service. It must aim at a new humanism based on non-acquisitiveness, non-violence and truth. Discipline and training for the regulation of mass activities shall be an integral part of Basic Education, but military training will not be allowed to invade the field of education. The noble qualities of courage, hardihood and self-sacrifice will be recognized and harnessed in the cause of non-violent defence. The society is to be reared on the power of the common man who learns to build up the new structure by means of his bodily labour duly performed and of Satyagraha undertaken to defend it from the forces of darkness which tend to disrupt human solidarity.

Thus we see that Gandhiji's educational philosophy is based upon India's cultural heritage as well as her social conditions and future needs. One of its aims is to reconstruct society in accordance with Gandhiji's conception of the Sarvodaya Samaj. Such a society will be founded on truth, justice and non-violence. The main function of education in such a society will be to fit the individual to play his role in it in a worthy manner. It should, however, be kept in view that the creation of such a social order is not to be an end in itself, but a means to the attainment of the ultimate goal of life, which is self-realization.

(C) Economic Aspects

As Shri J. C. Kumarappa points out, " Anything Gandhian must necessarily be a derivative from Truth and Non-violence. Therefore, Gandhian economics must be economics purged of untruth and violence." [18] Although a non-violent and non-exploiting society will not be based upon economic classes, it cannot divest itself of certain basic economic activities, for every member of the social group will have to go about doing some activity to satisfy

[18] *Social and Political Ideas of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 36.

his economic needs. This will bring him into frequent touch — co-operation or conflict — with his fellows. Gandhian economics allows man to satisfy his needs not merely without injuring his neighbours, but by helping them actively. Man has to act so as to obtain the greatest benefit to himself with the least harm to others. The ideal position for man would be to work in complete alignment with Nature. "The bird eats a fruit and flies away. In the normal course it passes out the seeds, perhaps miles away from the place where it found the fruit. Thus while it was only satisfying its primary need of hunger, it also helped vegetable kingdom to broadcast the seeds — it provided the transport. In this manner the bird and the tree are co-operating to mutual benefit in fulfilling the ways of Nature." [19] Through this beautiful illustration Shri Kumarappa wants to point out how the system of Nature eschews violence. In like manner, the economic activity of man also should ensure smooth working and make for harmony, "if it is to bring about goodwill and peace among men and lead to the real progress of mankind".[20] "Its goal is not pure material benefit but the advancement of humanity on its road to progress by strengthening the character and the individual development of personality of every single person engaged in such activity. No one's gain should be anybody's loss — financial, physical, moral or spiritual." [21]

The purpose of work does not end with its attaining the immediate objective. While doing some useful work, the worker's imagination is exercised along with his power of thinking, his muscles attain greater accuracy in handling his tools and his aesthetic sense is developed simultaneously. Thus he would be a superior personality after finishing his work according to a pre-conceived design.

Gandhiji is in favour of decentralized industries for several reasons. When a person is engaged in a small-scale

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19 *Social and Political Ideas of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 37.
20 *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 38.
21 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

industry, he has to study the sources of raw materials and the demand of the public. He has to devise ways and means of meeting the needs of the situation. " This struggle develops the personality of the worker, while the centralized methods present the labourer with single cut-and-dried operations which call for no initiative on his part — his but to pull levers and join the broken threads. This is a pure form of drudgery which strains his nervous system. Man is not a mechanical device designed to carry out an isolated operation. He has to exercise all the faculties Nature has generally endowed him with. If he fails to use them he is doomed to destruction. Hence decentralized industries afford facilities for the full development of the human being." [22]

According to Gandhiji, the creative element in work can be properly utilized to educate man to grow to the full stature he is capable of. Here we have the roots of Gandhiji's craft-centred education, which " aims at harnessing the educative possibilities of man's normal activities to satisfy his everyday needs to the chariot of progress from the cradle to the grave." [23]

The difference between Gandhiji and his precursers in the realm of education is that, whereas the latter recognized the need of an activity or manual work as an indispensable accompaniment of the educational process Gandhiji laid down that " the whole of general education should come through the craft ". This is perhaps Gandhiji's most notable contribution to the philosophy of education. He believes that " the craft chosen should be so learnt that its produce may have economic value sufficient to defray the tuition expense of the pupil." [24] This is a sound educational principle, because, if the work done has no economic value, it would be cut off from reality and life. " For Gandhiji, craft-work is not merely a means of literary education ; it is also an end in itself. Unless craft-work is treated as an

22 *Social and Political Ideas of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 48.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

24 Acharya J. B. Kripalani : *The Latest Fad*, p. 63.

end in itself, it will lose progressively its economic value, efficiency and significance." [25] It should be noted that the crafts should be our village industries like spinning, weaving, carpentry, etc., because India is primarily an agricultural country. There is no room for centralized industries in Gandhian economics and hence in his educational philosophy.

Even if it is recognized that handicrafts are a suitable means of intellectual training, the question arises : " Why does Gandhiji want to make them economically remunerative ? " Gandhiji uses the term *self-supporting* in two senses. Firstly, by self-supporting education he means that the learning of the craft should enable the pupil to be self-supporting after he has finished his course.

The second meaning of the term *self-supporting* is that the new scheme should meet the expense of the teachers' salaries through the manual and productive work of the children.

Gandhiji insists on the self-supporting aspect of education, because that is the only practical solution of the problem of our education. " I am very keen," he says, " on finding the expenses of a teacher through the product of the manual work of his pupils, because I am convinced that there is no other way to carry education to crores of our children." [26] It, however, does not mean that the income accruing from the manual labour is to cover the expenses of the whole education. On the eve of the Wardha Scheme, Gandhiji made this point clear in the following words :

> " For the all-round development of boys and girls all training should, so far as possible, be given through a profit-yielding vocation. In other words, vocations should serve a double purpose — to enable the pupil to pay for his tuition through the products of his labour and at the same time to develop the whole man or woman in him or her, through the vocation learnt at school. Land, building and equipment are not intended to be covered by the proceeds of the pupil's labour." [27]

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25 Acharya J. B. Kripalani : *The Latest Fad*, p. 65.
26 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 63.
27 *Harijan*, 2-10-'37.

"Such education, taken as a whole, can, must be self-supporting;" Gandhiji maintains, "in fact, self-supporting is the acid test of its reality".[28]

The self-supporting aspect of Basic Education has raised a great controversy in the world of education. Even the staunchest supporters of Gandhiji look askance at it and their best efforts to be convinced of its soundness prove abortive. Gandhiji anticipated a storm over this issue and tried to disarm his critics by explaining fully all its implications before the scheme was placed before the Wardha Conference. In making the handicraft economically remunerative, Gandhiji was actuated by one or two important considerations. He was perturbed by the appalling poverty of the country. The average annual income of an Indian of Rs 62 in 1931 was, "just enough either to feed two men in every three of the population, (or give them all two in place of every three meals they need), on condition that they all consent to go naked, live out of doors all the year round, have no amusement or recreation, and want nothing else but food, and that the lowest, the coarsest, the least nutritious."[29]

In view of such a horrible condition of our people, it is idle to expect them to spend even a few coppers on the education of their children. The Government on whom devolves the duty of providing free and compulsory education to all the children of the State was neither willing nor able to spend the requisite amount of money on their education. Gandhiji, therefore, came to the conclusion that the only way to carry education to the teeming millions of India was to make it self-sufficient, as the problem of funds was almost insoluble. He was certain that, if he had to wait till sufficient funds were made available by the State, he would as well wait till doomsday. Gandhiji, therefore, aimed at solving the vast problem of Indian education by a method which is as practicable as it is novel. As Rev. T. N. Siqueira observes :

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[28] *Harijan*, 2-10-'37.

[29] Shah and Kambatta : *The Wealth and Taxable Capacity of India*, p. 201.

> "I think — and a conversation I once had with him (i.e. Gandhiji) only confirmed this impression — the element of 'self-sufficiency' was the most vulnerable point of his Scheme and therefore the one most eagerly pounced upon by its critics, was not intended to be essential but rather to console and disarm those who oppose every change on the eternal plea of India's poverty. To conservatives who asked: 'Where is the money to come from?' Gandhiji's answer was: 'The Scheme costs you nothing; it will pay its way'." [30]

The wisdom of Gandhiji's solution will be realized when it is compared with the Sargent Scheme which for this item alone would cost 200 crores of rupees and take forty long years to mature. By making the craft economically worthwhile, Gandhiji appeals to the inner springs of human interest — an indispensable condition for the success of any scheme.

Dr. John Sargent agreed with the view that the sale of school products would be found, to some extent at any rate, to cover part of the expenditure that its carrying on might require. He, however, did not acquiesce in the view that the schools should or could be made entirely self-supporting. In his address to the Basic National Education Conference held at Poona in 1939, he said:

> "The only thing that caused me some concern when I first came across the Wardha Scheme was the suggestion that the schools should or could be entirely self-supporting. I have had some experience of trying to do that on a limited scale in another country, and my experience makes me think that the attempt to do so is not only uneducational but can never be thoroughly successful. That does not mean that we should not aim at getting as much out of the products of the school as we can. I have heard with relief from the President, and from another friend who has had a great part in the formulation of the scheme, that this is no longer regarded as one of its essential principles."

Thus opinion as to whether the product of the craft should meet the whole expenditure incurred on education or a part of it is sharply divided among the educationists. It seems to us after an examination of the problem from all its aspects that earnest efforts should be made by the teachers to see to it that the craft becomes as remunerative economically as possible without prejudice to its educative

[30] *Journal of Education and Psychology*, April, 1948.

possibilities. This will make education partially self-supporting as well as realistic. In spite of this, the teachers are apt to lose sight of the educative aspects of the scheme and exact work from their pupils without due regard to its educative possibilities. Even the Zakir Husain Committee was alive to this danger and, therefore, deemed it necessary to sound a note of warning against such a tendency on the part of the teachers.[31] They pointed out, without subscribing to the dualism between practical and academic work, that the time allotted to the basic craft was not meant to be spent only on the mechanical practice of the craft but oral work, drawing and expression-work, naturally connected with it as well as instruction in the why and wherefore of the processes involved, i.e., their scientific and intelligent understanding, which was an important educative aspect of craft-work, would also be given during this time. This was clearly implied in the scheme of the three-centred co-ordination.[32]

The doubts of the critics about the success of the Wardha Scheme so far as its self-supporting character was concerned were dispelled by the first annual report published by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, which observed :

> "Without any detriment to the objectives of academic education, the produce of the children's craft-work at the Segaon School and the Vidya Mandir Practising School has been actually in excess of the expectations formed at the outset."

Referring to the same point, Shri Mahadev Desai said :

> "The experience of the past nine months shows that the standard of production laid down in the Report of the Zakir Husain Committee has been exceeded by actual experience of work with the children." [33]

This conclusion is corroborated by other educationists who tried the experiment in other parts of the country. It should, however, be borne in mind that the success of an experiment under ideal conditions and at the hands of teachers who are animated by the ideals of selfless service cannot be a safe guide for its application on a nation-wide

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31 *Educational Reconstruction*, pp. 125, 126.

32 *Ibid.*, pp. 162, 163.

33 *The Year Book of Education* (1940), p. 447.

scale under varying conditions. It was due to the growing realization of this fact that the Zakir Husain Committee shifted its emphasis from complete self-support as envisaged by Gandhiji in the beginning to a partial self-support. In the course of his speech at the Poona Conference, Shri B. G. Kher made the following significant observation :

> "The Committee (under the Chairmanship of Dr. Zakir Husain) shifted their emphasis from the self-supporting idea and enunciated the principle of education through a creative activity which may be a craft. The self-supporting idea was pushed to the background." [34]

It is contended by some educationists that the economic aspect of Basic Education is not pushed to the background as mentioned by Shri B. G. Kher ; but those who are closely devoted to the ideals of Gandhiji have shown a greater sense of realism by shifting the emphasis from economic self-sufficiency to self-reliance and a spirit of cheerfulness and independence through manual work. The development of qualities like self-confidence, independence and self-help are the natural corollary to the practice of craft, but they are not supposed to replace the remunerative aspect of Basic Education. Such an interpretation was not anticipated by Gandhiji and his staunch followers who took part in the formulation of the Wardha Scheme. The fine distinction between the proceeds of the craft and its by-products cannot be overlooked without sacrificing the essential elements that go to constitute the Wardha Scheme. In his message to the Basic National Education Conference held at Segaon in January, 1945, Gandhiji trenchantly said : "Whatever the critics may say, the *Nai Talim* must meet its own expenditure. I know that true education is self-supporting." [35]

The only province in which Basic Education has been carried on uninterruptedly is Bihar. The report for the period ending March 31, 1948, makes interesting reading According to the report, a basic school could be self-supporting to the extent of 40 per cent of the total expense.

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[34] *One Step Forward*, p. 3.

[35] *Samagra Nai Talim*, Gandhiji's Message.

The revised syllabus of Basic Education recommended that the school community be organized as a family for teachers and pupils trying to be self-sufficient in the requirements of balanced food and clothing. This recommendation encourages the making of a self-sufficient and self-supporting education the foundation of a self-sufficient and self-reliant community and country.

Some people hold the view that the term *self-reliant* seems to be more significant and meaningful to convey the fundamental aim of Basic Education than 'self-supporting'. In whatever sense it may be used, it is indubitable that the principle "earn while you learn" has come to stay, as it satisfies the crying need of the hour and is based on sound psychological data.

We have considered the divergent views on the economic aspects of the Gandhian philosophy of education. On the one hand, we have the extreme view of Gandhiji and his staunch followers who believe that Basic Education should be entirely self-supporting; on the other, there is the view of persons who, having faced the hard realities of *Nai Talim*, hold that the scheme should make the children self-reliant, self-confident and resourceful, so that when they grow up they may be able to play a useful role in the civic life of the country. It is possible to steer clear of both the extremes and pursue a line of action that would be in the best interests of the country. There can be no two opinions about the wisdom and soundness of Gandhiji's views, but when we take into consideration the magnitude of the problem of universal compulsory education in India, we cannot help thinking that the State should not divest itself of its primary responsibility for educating its masters, if our infant democracy is to meet with success. Our conclusion is that the basic craft should be economically remunerative as far as possible, provided that it is not stressed at the sacrifice of the cultural and educational objectives. It should also incidentally develop in the child qualities of self-reliance, cheerfulness and initiative which enable him to stand on his own legs in later life. This will make education realistic, appeal to the interests of the

children and insure them against unemployment after leaving school. Such a view, we believe, would not be unacceptable to Gandhiji who was not at all dogmatic about his scheme. He never claimed that the scheme as announced by him was the last word on the vexed problem of education in India. It has passed the experimental stage, and now we are in a position to see its strength and weakness so as to modify and adjust it in the light of our experience, bearing in mind, however, that its essential character is not lost in the process.

We have critically considered the psychological, sociological and economic aspects of Gandhiji's educational philosophy. We have seen that manual work is the core of his educational philosophy. From the psychological point of view, it balances the intellectual and practical elements of experience and may be made an instrument of educating body and mind in co-ordination. From the sociological point of view, it will conduce to a true sense of the dignity of labour and of human solidarity, which would be an ethical and moral gain of incalculable significance. It will develop in the children the qualities of co-operation, brotherhood and service, which would make for a peaceful life in society, minimizing all possible causes of friction. From the economic point of view, the Gandhian scheme of education gives greater reality to the educational process by making it economically remunerative and developing in the children qualities of self-reliance and independence.

CHAPTER XI

GANDHIJI ON RELIGION IN EDUCATION

Before we can take up a critical consideration of Gandhiji's views on religion and its place in education, it would be desirable for us to understand the significance of the term *religion* in the context of modern life. The fact that the Indian Republic is a secular State does not mean that all our activities are profane and devoted to the sordid ideals of material advancement. India has not accepted a purely scientific materialism as the philosophy of the State. "Though we have no State religion, we cannot forget that a deeply religious strain has run throughout our history like a golden thread." [1] In the preamble to our Constitution, we have the seeds of a national faith, a national way of life which is essentially democratic and religious. "Whenever a human being strives upward toward enlightenment, goodness and concern for others, the spirit of religion is active. If we bear in mind that the whole future of our infant democracy depends on freedom of conscience, freedom of inquiry and moral solidarity, our secularism is an act of supreme courage and sublime loyalty to our national faith." [2]

We have seen that the Gandhian philosophy is essentially idealistic. The chief aim of life, according to Gandhiji, is self-realization. It was believed by our ancient sages that the best way to realize God was to retire from the world and attain salvation through penance and meditation. This method does not appeal to Gandhiji, for whom individual well-being has no meaning. He thinks that we can realize God not by withdrawing ourselves from society, but by living a life of service and sacrifice in it. "If I could persuade myself," he says, "that I should find Him in a Himalayan cave, I would proceed there immediately. But

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1 *The Report of the University Education Commsission*, p. 295.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 295.

I know that I cannot find Him apart from humanity." [3] He lays down that to realize God one must live in society and serve humanity, for "man becomes great exactly in the degree in which he works for the welfare of his fellowmen." [4] The social order of Gandhiji's conception to be known as the *Sarvodaya Samaj* will be based upon Truth which includes purity, *ahimsa*, and justice. Every member of this order will be animated by the ideals of service and sacrifice.

Every aspect of human life in the *Sarvodaya Samaj* must be imbued with religion, for "Life without religion, I hold, is life without principle, and life without principle is like a ship without a rudder; and just as a ship without a rudder will be tossed about from place to place, and never reach its destination, so will a man without this religious backing, without that hard grasp of religion, be also tossed about on this stormy ocean of the world, without ever reaching his destined goal."

Gandhiji finds it difficult to agree with the common belief that religion is always opposed to material good. We hear it said that one cannot act religiously in trade and such other occupations, as there is no place for religion in such pursuits. "In my opinion," Gandhiji says, "the author of the *Gita* has dispelled this delusion. He has drawn no line of demarcation between religious life and worldly pursuits. On the contrary he has shown that religion must rule even our worldly pursuits." [5]

Gandhiji's spiritual society will be classless and casteless. It will be based on co-operative human labour, which would evolve ideas of truth, love, justice, peace and discipline, for "no co-operative enterprise can work without those virtues among the co-operating units." [6] Again, "a society of workers will not be interested in the exploitation of each other. All this will lead to an enlightened rational morality free from the superstition of rigid custom and

[3] *Harijan*, 29-8-'36.

[4] Mahatma Gandhi: *Ethical Religion*, p. 56.

[5] Mahadev Desai: *The Gita According to Gandhi*, p. 126.

[6] Acharya J. B. Kripalani: *The Latest Fad*, pp. 61, 62.

religious dogma." [7] Education in such a society of workers should, therefore, centre round a craft like every other activity. It must set the feet of youth on the road to the things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report. Craft alone will not enable one to cultivate these qualities. Gandhiji, therefore, provides for religious education of his own conception to help the young minds to grow fully and to acquire " an inner relation to infinity ".

The educational world is torn by endless controversy over the subject of religious education today. There are some people who believe that every school-going child must receive regular instruction in his own religion. On the other hand, it is held by others that religion is the last resort of an idle thinker, and, therefore it should find no place in education. There is a school of thought that avoids both these extremes and seeks to provide for the teaching of the universal essentials of ethics in all schools. Gandhiji's genius manifests itself in providing an original and sound solution to this vexed problem. Before we discuss his views on religious education, it would be worthwhile to have a clear idea of its historical background.

Ancient India was a home for every mode of tradition and did not exclude even those who had no faith in any religion. Its outlook was oecumenical rather than parochial. It always insisted that we could not grow in spirit by following any person or institution blindly. It encouraged the habit of free critical inquiry and the application of the method of objective criticism to the beliefs and attitudes of people. It harmonized all faiths in one universal synthesis. The Indian view is expressed in these words: " There is but one salvation for all mankind and that is the Life of God in soul.... That is God's gift to all — Christians, Jews and Heathens. There is not one for the Jew and another for the Christian and a third for the Heathen. No, God is one. Human nature is one and salvation is one — and that is the desire of the soul turned to God." [8]

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[7] Acharya J. B. Kripalani: *The Latest Fad*, pp. 61, 62.

[8] *The Report of the University Education Commisssion*, p. 298.

In ancient India religious education occupied a central place in the life of the student. Spiritual training or character-building was considered to be more important than physical or intellectual training. The goal of life and of education was self-realization. The spirit of religion permeated every aspect of life.

In the Hindu and the Muslim Periods religious education was an essential part of education. It was assumed that education must provide the student a code of behaviour based on fundamental principles of ethics and religion. The emotional and ethical development of the young people was not left to chance, as the aim of education was the development of the whole man.

The British followed the policy of religious neutrality. The Christian missionaries were opposed to such neutrality, for they wanted to carry the message of Christ to the remotest corner of the country. In 1813, they succeeded in getting a resolution passed by the Committee of the House of Commons to the effect that such measures ought to be adopted as might tend to the introduction among the native inhabitants of the British dominions in India of useful knowledge and of religious and moral improvement. The resolution, however, provided that "the principles of the British Government on which the natives of India have hitherto relied for the free exercise of their religion be inviolably maintained". It need not be pointed out that the policy of religious neutrality was adhered to by the Government not as a matter of principle, but as a matter of expediency. Nevertheless it was not the intention of the Government to discourage religious instruction altogether, but it could be given only out of school hours and the inspectors were not expected to take notice of it in their periodical visits. The Despatch of 1854 expressed the hope that "institutions conducted by all denominations of Christianity, Hindus, Mohammedans, Parsis, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains or any other religious persuasions may be affiliated to the universities, if they are found to afford the requisite course of study, and can be depended upon for the certificates of conduct which will be required."

The managements of these schools were at liberty to provide for religious instruction as they chose, but the Government inspection and grants were to be confined to secular instruction only.

It was against such a non-religious background that Gandhiji's concept of religion evolved. By religion Gandhiji does not mean subscription to dogmas or conformity to ritual. To him religion is an abiding faith in the absolute values of truth, love and justice, and a persistent endeavour to realize them on earth. "There is no religion higher than Truth and Righteousness," he said.[9] In the *Upanishads*, the Supreme is said to be Truth, Knowledge, Eternity (*Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam Brahma*). God is the Lord of Truth (*Satyanarayana*). Gandhiji feels that all religions at their best prescribe the same discipline for man's fulfilment. The *Vedas*, the Bible and the Quran speak to us of the need for self-discipline as the means of self-realization. All religions aim at the same goal. The inner life, the life of the spirit in God is the great reality. Emphasizing the universal character of all great religions, Gandhiji observes :

> "Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the Hindu religion which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the *religion* which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and which ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul restless until it has found itself, known its Maker and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself." [10]

Gandhiji's emphasis on the moral basis of religion is indicative of his original approach to the subject. Instead of reproducing old and outworn theories of religion, he boldly asserts that we cannot conceive of religion apart from morality. For him, "true religion and true morality are inseparably bound up with each other. Religion is to morality what water is to the seed that is sown in the

9 *Ethical Religion*, p. 49.
10 *Young India*, 12-5-'20.

soil." [11] Gandhiji rejects any religious doctrine that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality.

In the society of Gandhiji's dream, every activity, political, economical, educational or social would be governed by strict religious considerations. As he puts it :

> " I still hold the view that I cannot conceive politics as divorced from religion. Indeed religion should pervade every one of our actions. Here religion does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in ordered moral government of the universe..... This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc. It does not supersede them. It harmonizes them and gives them reality ".[12]

It is Gandhiji's view that religions are different roads converging to the same point. He thinks that there are as many religions as there are individuals. " Even as a tree has a single trunk, but many branches and leaves, so there is one true and perfect Religion, but it becomes many, as it passes through the human medium." [13]

Gandhiji wants his readers to bear in mind that, while studying all great religions, they should study them only through the writings of known votaries of the respective religions. " This study of other religions besides one's own," he says, " will give one a grasp of the rock-bottom unity of all religions and afford a glimpse also of the universal and absolute truth which lies beyond the dust of creeds and faiths." [14] One need not fear, Gandhiji says, that a reverent study of other religions is likely to weaken or shake one's own faith. " The Hindu system of philosophy regards all religions as containing the elements of truth in them and enjoins an attitude of respect and reverence towards them all. This of course presupposes regard for one's own religion. Study and appreciation of other religions need not cause a weakening of that regard ; it should mean extension of that regard to other religions." [15] People cannot be forced to follow a particular religion, for

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11 *Ethical Religion,* p. 49.

12 *Harijan,* 10-2-'40.

13 Mahatma Gandhi : *From Yeravda Mandir,* p. 55.

14 *Young India,* 6-12-'28.

15 *Ibid.*

" Religion is a very personal matter. We should by living the life according to our lights share the best with one another, thus adding to the sum-total of human effort to reach God." [16]

This brings us to the vital question of the place of religion in Gandhiji's philosophy of education. Gandhiji holds the view that self-realization is the highest end of education. He is alive to the difficulties of religious education in India. He knows that in a country like India, where most religions of the world are represented, and where there are so many denominations in the same religion, there must be difficulties about making provision for religious education. At the same time, he is convinced that the neglect of religious education would undermine the moral fibre of society. " But if India is not to declare spiritual bankruptcy," he maintains, " religious instruction of its youth must be held to be as necessary as secular instruction." [17] He is of the view " that knowledge of religious books is no equivalent for that religion." [18] But if we cannot have religion, Gandhiji wishes that we must be satisfied with providing our boys and girls with what is the next best. He, therefore, suggests that " whether there is such instruction given in the schools or not, grown-up students must cultivate the art of self-help about matters religious as about others. They may start their own class just as they have their debating and now spinners' clubs." [19] Gandhiji would not dispense with religious education in any circumstances. " India will never be godless," he affirms. " Rank atheism cannot flourish in this land. The task is indeed difficult. My head begins to turn as I think of religious education." [20]

It has been often argued that religion and religious teaching have been the main cause of all the troubles in our country in recent times, and that religious instruction

16 *Harijan*, 28-11-'36.
17 *Young India*, 25-8-'27.
18 *Ibid.*
19 *Ibid.*
20 *Hind Swaraj*, p. 67.

is attended with so many evils that it is advisable to eschew it altogether. Gandhiji concedes that there are difficulties in the path of religious education in our country, but he is certain that they are not insuperable. Difficulties real and imaginary do not make Gandhiji turn his face against religious education. He has the knack to steer clear of difficulties and find a practical way out of them. He suggests that "the evils of religious instruction will vanish with the evolution of the true religious spirit. To give up religious instruction is like letting a field lie fallow and grow weeds for want of the tiller's knowledge of the proper use of the field." [21]

We have referred to the fact that Gandhiji regards morality as the basis of things. He has "the conviction that morality is the basis of things, and that truth is the substance of all morality." [22] For him religion divorced from morality is like "sounding brass, good only for making a noise and breaking heads". The goal of all religious instruction should be the cultivation of "the true religious spirit" — the spirit of universal love and brotherhood. Religious education should be not only a constant search after Truth but also a firm and steadfast observance of Truth. As Dr. E. A. Pires points out, "It should aid the human soul in its craving to know and love God, who is the Living Truth, for soul force comes only through God's grace and the fullest life is impossible without an immovable belief in a living Law." [23] Religious education should seek to cultivate the spirit of manliness which consists not in bluff, bravado or lordliness, but "in daring to do the right and facing consequences". Gandhiji wants us to be imbued with the consciousness that there is Divinity, which not only witnesses everything we think or do, but also protects and guides us along the true path. It should be the primary task of our schools and colleges to quicken such a religious consciousness in the souls of our students,

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21 *Young India*, 14-10-'26.

22 Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, pp. 50, 51.

23 *Psycho*, October, 1949.

and the present atmosphere of fear, distrust and hatred will soon give way to peace, trust and love.

"The fundamental basis of religious education should be," Gandhiji maintains, "instruction in the universal essentials of religion and a training in the fundamental virtues of Truth and *ahimsa*, which make for purity of heart and purity of living. All the great religions of the world, however much they may differ, are absolutely one on this fundamental that no man or woman with an impure heart can possibly appear before the great White Throne. A rigorous practice of the fundamental virtues, therefore, must be the solid foundation of spirituality." [24]

In spite of his strong views on the need for religious education in schools, Gandhiji deliberately omitted it from the Wardha Scheme. It is not correct to say that he eschewed religious education altogether from it. What he dropped is not religious education in the sense of spiritual training, but denominational religion in the accepted sense of the term. He had sound reasons for keeping sectarian instruction at an arm's length from his educational philosophy. How can he advocate sectarian instruction, which tends to develop a parochial outlook in the pliable minds of the children? If we only consider the miseries to which mankind has been subjected in all ages and in all countries by sectarianism, we should not call in question the wisdom of Gandhiji's policy. Again, India is not a theocratic State, imposing the State religion on all its subjects. Religious instruction cannot be provided by the State in the schools under its control without undermining its secular character. "Unless there is a State religion," Gandhiji affirms, "it is very difficult, if not impossible, to provide religious instruction as it would mean providing for every denomination. Such instruction is best given at home. The State should allow enough time for every child to receive such instruction at home or otherwise. It is also conceivable that the State should provide facilities for private tuition by these denominations which may wish to instruct their

24 Dr. E. A. Pires in *Psycho*, October, 1949.

children at school provided that such instruction is paid for by such denominations." [25]

Gandhiji holds strong views as to the necessity of teaching equal regard for all religions. Without it he sees no prospect of real unity among all the different communities. He regards it as fatal to the growth of a friendly spirit among the children belonging to the different faiths, if they are taught either that their religion is superior to every other or that it is the only true religion. If that exclusive spirit is to pervade the nation, the necessary corollary would be that there should be separate schools for every denomination with freedom to each to decry every other, or that the mention of religion must be entirely prohibited. In view of such difficulties, Gandhiji comes to the conclusion that "fundamental principles of ethics are common to all religions. These should certainly be taught to the children and that should be regarded as adequate religious instruction so far as the schools under the Wardha Scheme are concerned." [26]

Following the lead given by Gandhiji, the Zakir Husain Committee laid down that one of the objectives of Social Studies under the Wardha Scheme should be "to develop mutual respect for the world religions".[27] A course in history, in geography, in civics and in current events, combined with a reverential study of the different religions of the world showing how in essentials they meet in perfect harmony, will help to achieve this objective. "Emphasis is to be laid on the ideals of love, truth and justice, of co-operative endeavour, national solidarity and the equality and brotherhood of man. Emphasis should also be laid on lessons drawn from life showing the superiority of truth and non-violence in all its phases and its concomitant virtues, over violence and deceit." [28]

Gandhiji demolishes bit by bit the web of sophistry raised about the subject of religious education by its

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25 *Harijan*, 16-7-'38.

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 129.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

dogmatic upholders. Brushing aside all their arguments, he goes straight to the heart of the problem and suggests an original and basically sound form of religious education. The finest and the most efficacious form of religious education is, he declares, the example of teachers. Identifying spiritual training with character-building, he affirms that the teacher's life must be worthy of emulation by his pupils. He has profound faith in the power of example in character-building. Long before he undertook the education of the youngsters of the Tolstoy Farm, he had realized that the training of the spirit was a thing by itself. He relied little on religious books for this training. He believed that every student should be acquainted with the elements of his own religion and have a general knowledge of his own scriptures. He, therefore, provided for such knowledge as far as he could. In the opinion of Gandhiji, "to develop the spirit is to build character and enable one to work towards a knowledge of God and self-realization." [29] Character to the Mahatma is more important than anything else and the development of the child's character should take precedence over his acquiring of knowledge and storing of facts. Even to the boys at the Eton Public School he gave the advice that, when they became administrators, and sang "Rule Britannia", they should rule by moral force and not naval force. If character-building is to be a positive factor in educational method, Gandhiji asks that he should first have teachers of character, because character is an essential part of the training of the young and all training without culture of the spirit is of no use, and may be even harmful.

How is this training to be given? Gandhiji made the children of the Tolstoy Farm memorize and recite hymns, and read to them from books on moral training. But that was far from satisfying him. As he came into closer contact with them, he saw that it was not through books that one could impart spiritual training, for character-building comes from their very lives. "I have experimented," he

[29] Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, p. 413.

says, " with quite a number of boys in order to understand how best to impart religious instruction and whilst I found that book instruction was somewhat of an aid, by itself it was useless. Religious instruction, I discovered, was imparted by teachers living the religion themselves. I have found that boys imbibe more from the teachers' own lives than they do from the books that they read to them, or the lectures that 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." [30]

Gandhiji wishes that teachers should establish with their students a real " heart-contact " and should give all their time outside the class-room to their students, " fashioning their hearts rather than their brains, and encouraging them in their efforts to lead good lives and build up strong, dependable characters." [31]

As to the question whether religious education should form a part of the school curriculum as approved by the State, Gandhiji said that he did not believe in State religion even though the whole community had one religion. The State interference would probably always be unwelcome. Religion was purely a personal matter and there were in reality as many religions as minds. Each mind had a different conception of God from that of the other. He was also opposed to State aid, partly or wholly, to religious bodies, for he believed that an institution or group which did not manage to finance its own religious teaching was a stranger to true religion. This did not mean that the State schools would not give ethical teaching. The fundamental ethics is common to all religions, and its teaching was, according to him, undoubtedly a function of the State.[32]

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30 Mahadev Desai: *With Gandhiji In Ceylon,* p. 108.

31 Dr. E. A. Pires in *Psycho,* October, 1949.

32 *Harijan,* 23-3-'47.

Thus it will be realized that Gandhiji's approach to the problem of religion and its place in education is both original and convincing. His incisive mind backed by an unusual degree of common sense has found a solution to this controversial question, which accords with our culture and traditions. The essence of a course in religious education would be, in Gandhiji's opinion, the reverential study of the religions of the world, showing how in essentials they meet in perfect harmony. Such a course would be conducive to spiritual training or character-building, which is one of the major aims of education. To know that the great truths enshrined in one's own sacred book are also to be found in the sacred books of others; to be able to find parallel texts from different scriptures; to know that the message and spirit of one's own great leader and teacher are echoed and reflected in the message and spirit of other great souls throughout the ages — how can such knowledge ever do anything but deepen and confirm one's faith in these things? [33]

It was the dream of Gandhiji that the narrowness and bigotry which have for long poisoned the relationship between the people of different faiths should end. He, therefore, embodied in his philosophy of education the kind of religious education which is best suited to the people of different denominations. It is to be correlated with the teaching of history and literature in such a way as to ensure that every child is given a working knowledge of the life and teachings of the founders of all the major religions, an introduction to the world's great religious books, a sympathetic appreciation of religious traditions and practices other than their own and a sense of common citizenship with all other Indians through common worship of one God though by various names and through various rites.

It is possible that a generation brought up free from the virus of fanaticism and bigotry might be in a better position to rediscover religion for itself and on a higher

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[33] Miss Margaret Barr in *Journal of Education and Psychology*, April, 1949.

level than its fathers ever achieved. Such was Gandhiji's faith and it is worth trying.

It will be interesting to compare the views of Gandhiji on religious education with those of the University Education Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. Adverting to the abuse of religion, the Commission makes the following observation :

> " The difficulties through which India passed in recent years led to the formulation of these principles. The intention is not to ban all religious education but to ban dogmatic or sectarian religious instruction in State schools. If we teach sectarian creeds to our children in public schools, instead of developing in them the spirit of peace and brotherly love we encourage the spirit of strife, as the children become conscious of their divisive creeds and group loyalties." [34]

The Commission agrees with Gandhiji that there is need for religious education as conceived by him.

Gandhiji's views on religious education have been criticized from different angles of vision. His critics mainly fall into two broad categories. There is a school of thought to which any type of religious education is an enigma. They would accept everything that Gandhiji said so long as the term *religion* is not mentioned. They hold that religion is the root cause of all the troubles we have witnessed in recent times, and, therefore, they are keen on banning religious instruction in State schools. On the other hand, there are critics who hold that, inspite of his tall talk of religion and spiritual values, Gandhiji has disappointed his admirers by deliberately omitting religious instruction in Basic schools. Rev. T. N. Siqueira criticizing the Gandhian Plan for its neglect of religious education writes in an article entitled, " Light From Wardha " :

> " But in this laudable enthusiasm for laying the axe at the root of the unhappy divisions which have so long delayed India's national manhood, Mr Gandhi seems to forget another danger which is even more serious to India's real well-being. He has himself repeatedly deplored the irreligiousness and indifferentism of many educated Indians today. And yet he makes no provision in his Scheme for religious education which is as much more important than physical or intellectual education as the immortal

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[34] *The Report of the University Education Commission*, p. 294.

soul is more important than the mortal body. He even disappoints his admirers thus answering the very question we are here asking, Why did he not lay any stress on religious education? he was asked. — Because he was teaching them practical religion, the religion of self-help.

"We cannot believe that the Mahatma considers self-help as enough religion for India's children. Shall we, after all that tourists have said of the spiritual East and sacred India, be content with the meagre religion of self-help? Self-help is a necessary but elementary virtue which will not take us very far on the road to God. Primary education, especially when it lasts seven years and is the only education most children are to have in life, cannot do without a serious and systematic course of religious training. We are fully aware of the difficulty of providing for such training in a country of so many religions; but no difficulty can extinguish a sacred and primary duty.

"How, then, Mr Gandhi may ask, can Hindus and Mohammadans and Christians be provided with instruction in several religions? Will not this perpetuate communal divisions? The answer is that religion and communalism are not the same thing; to destroy communalism it is not necessary to destroy religion. Indeed, even educated Indians need to be taught that religion ought not to affect purely political, social and economic life, and that if a religion has been revealed by God to men, it must make them better men, more patriotic, more freedom-loving, more self-sacrificing, less separatist and exclusive, far from what is connoted by the ugly word *communalistic*. If it is impossible for the State to provide each child with education in its own religion, let the State leave that work to private agencies. But religious education — not mere moral principles based on reason, but also the fruits of Divine revelation and the practical principles which follow from them — must be provided. Every parent and child has a right to it and a duty to assert that right.... Let private bodies be invited and encouraged to undertake the running of rural schools, on condition that they follow that syllabus, with full freedom to teach children their religion within or outside of school hours.... This will mean that for convenience's sake those of the same religion will attend the same school. But it will not foster communalism and separatism if the children are taught by the right kind of teachers and the schools are supervised by the right kind of inspectors." [35]

It is an exaggeration to say that Gandhiji has made no provision for religious education in his Scheme as Rev. Siqueira says. We have already indicated that

35 *The New Review*, December, 1937.

Gandhiji laid greater emphasis on spiritual training than physical or intellectual education. The fact that Gandhiji made provision for religious education of a different type from the one demanded by the learned critic need not be taken to mean that Gandhiji neglected religious education altogether. On the contrary, inspite of his high regard for Hinduism, he boldly suggested that sectarian education should be left in the hands of denominations. The fact that the University Education Commission with Dr. S. Radhakrishnan as its Chairman found itself in general agreement with Gandhiji's views on religious education demonstrates the wisdom of the stand consistently taken by him with regard to this puzzling problem.

Gandhiji had no hesitation in endorsing the suggestion of Rev. T. N. Siqueira that the State should leave religious education to private agencies, as can be seen from an extract already quoted from his (Gandhiji's) writings. What Gandhiji does not like is State interference in one's religious liberty, as he regards religion as one's personal matter. He wants the State to confine itself only to the "teaching of fundamental ethics".

The critic, however, wants "religious education — not mere moral principles based on reason, but also the fruits of Divine revelation and the practical principles which follow from them". It should be pointed out in this connection that such a procedure is not in tune with the best traditions of India, which "has insisted that we cannot grow in spirit by following any person or institution blindly.....We have always insisted on logical reflection (*manana*), questioning (*pariprashna*), inquiry (*jijnasa*)." [36] It is not wise to stamp the dogmas of religious sects on the plastic minds of the children. It would be as good as injecting the virus of communalism into their veins, thus blinding them to the light of reason. Neither the parents nor the educational authorities have the right to impose their religious beliefs on the children under them. Children are a sacred trust and to impose their

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36 *The Report of the University Education Commission*, p. 295.

beliefs on them would be a gross betrayal of this trust. Their sacred duty is to lead them to the discovery of fundamental moral principles through personal endeavour and to form their own religious beliefs in the light of their personal experience, when they reach the age of discretion. "If religion is a matter of realization it cannot be reached through a mere knowledge of the dogmas. It is attained through discipline, training, *sadhana*. What we need is not formal religious education, but spiritual training." [37] Did not Gandhiji in his wisdom emphasize spiritual training ever since he had been in South Africa ?

The suggestion that private bodies be invited and encouraged to undertake the running of rural schools with full freedom to teach children their religion within or outside of school hours carries no conviction. In fact, private agencies are at perfect liberty to start schools in countless Indian villages which have no schools. The State would be only too glad to receive such co-operation from them. With regard to the availability of the right kind of teachers and the supervision of schools by the right kind of inspectors, the less said, the better ; for that is the crux of the whole problem. Again, are there enough private agencies coming forward to undertake the running of all our rural schools with the object of facilitating the imparting of religious education as conceived by Rev. Siqueira ? Even if some Christian missionaries are willing to undertake such a responsibility, a secular State like India cannot allow them to use these schools as platforms for the propagation of their religious sects. The belief that such a step will not foster communalism and separatism is without foundation, if we look closely into the activities of these private agencies in India and other backward countries during the last 250 years. Gandhiji who had seen in his school days Christian missionaries stand in a corner near the school, "pouring abuse on Hindus and their gods ",[38] would naturally view with concern the suggestion

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[37] *The Report of the University Education Commission*, p. 295.

[38] Gandhiji : *Autobiography*, p. 49.

that sectarian tendencies will not be encouraged by private agencies running rural schools.

The corporate life of the school is an important means of fostering the growth of religiousness in the pupils. In the relationships between master and pupil, between pupil and pupil, we have a golden opportunity for practising the essentials of a universal religion. Such a school will be a light on a hill that cannot be hidden, and its influence on the larger community will be far-reaching. In realizing such an ideal, boarding schools have a clear advantage over day-schools, for they absorb the whole life of their pupils.

Gandhiji's thesis that the most important means of engendering a religious attitude towards life is the teacher's personal influence has been upheld by the Spens Report also, which says: "It can hardly be disputed that the best teacher is one whose interest in the subject and desire to teach it proceed from religious faith." [39] Gandhiji goes a step further and maintains that the teacher is bound to fail in his mission, if he does not have such an attitude, for the child's attitudes are shaped in the main "by sympathetic contagion and by suggestion from admired personalities".[40]

We thus come to the conclusion that Gandhiji's views on religion and its place in education are in line with the modern trends in educational thought. His approach to the vexed question of religious education is remarkable for freshness and vitality and quite in accord with our cultural heritage.

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39 *Spens Report*, p. 209.

40 W. McDougall: *An Outline of Psychology*, p. 436.

CHAPTER XII

GANDHIJI ON OUR LINGUISTIC PROBLEM

As the Radhakrishnan Commission pointed out, no other problem has caused greater controversy among the educationists of India than our linguistic problem. It is so wrapped up in sentiment that it is difficult to consider it in a calm and detached manner.

The difficulty of the problem is inherent in the size of India and the varied character of her population. The diversity of languages in India is greater than in any other country. Here we have according to the Linguistic Survey of India 179 languages and 544 dialects. Most of these languages are small tribal speeches. There are about a dozen languages which have their own literatures and are useful for educational, cultural and administrative purposes. It is, therefore, a very difficult task to reconcile the claims of diversity with those of unity. In the beginning of the twentieth century, it was taken for granted by educated Indians that English had come to stay not only as the official language of India, but also as the medium of instruction at all stages of education. It was considered fashionable to imitate the dress and speech of the alien masters, and one who did not acquire thorough proficiency in the art of speaking English perfectly was looked down upon by one's own fellowmen. Not only the individual but the elite of the nation as a class developed a split consciousness, the " Babu Mind ". Gandhiji was one of the first few Indians who could foresee the disastrous consequences of a foreign tongue acquiring a predominant position in the life of the people. He, therefore, raised a protest as early as 1909 against the neglect of Indian languages and against the over-importance attached to English. The ball which Gandhiji and a few others had set rolling in the first decade of this century continued to be in full play for about forty years till it was set at rest by the Constituent Assembly in

1 *The Report of the University Education Commission*, p. 317.

1949. The intervening period witnessed a fierce battle between the linguistic pandits. The intensity of the controversy was aggravated by the communal fanaticism fanned by the foreign rulers.

Our linguistic problem has two distinct aspects. We have to decide what language is to be the national language of India, and through what language the child is to receive instruction at different stages of education. The position of English in India is to be determined before the problems of the national language and the medium of instruction can be satisfactorily solved.

Since the dawn of independence on the Indian horizon, the problem of the position of English has been engaging the attention of the Government as well as the pandits of pedagogy. It is a pity that, while we are discussing such an important problem, we are led away by political considerations, and some of our politicians go to the length of saying that English should quit India with the English. It is contended that the immediate purpose of introducing English in India was to raise a race of quill-drivers to serve as mere cogs in the administrative machinery, and that, as the Britishers have quitted India, no useful purpose could be served by the retention of English either in the administration or in education. Such an argument is the result of our deep-seated prejudice against everything English. In fact, Macaulay's Minute has proved a blessing in disguise, for Indian nationalism drew its inspiration from the liberal writings of English men of letters. It is now becoming increasingly clear that English is not an unfortunate imposition in India. A youth well-equipped with a knowledge of English has had a distinct advantage. We cannot fail to appreciate the contribution which English has made to modern Indian thought by opening up new fields of intellectual and cultural activity. The modern ideas of liberty and self-determination were first implanted in Indian soil through the English language. It is an international language and is one of the few media by which India can retain and cultivate her increasingly important relations with other countries. No nation under modern conditions

can hope to participate in world affairs, unless a proportion of her citizens command the knowledge of a language like English. It is one of the richest languages in respect of literature and culture.

The Radhakrishnan Commission while accepting such importance of English, is not blind to the harm done by the predominant position assigned to English in the country. It is of the view that "English cannot continue to occupy the place of State language as in the past. The use of English as such divides the people into two nations, the few who govern and the many who are governed, the one unable to talk the language of the other, and mutually uncomprehending. This is a negation of democracy." [2] The Commission is not, however, in favour of abolishing English altogether from India for the following weighty reasons :

> "English, however, must continue to be studied. It is a language which is rich in literature — humanistic, scientific and technical. If under sentimental urges we should give up English we would cut ourselves off from the living stream of ever growing knowledge. Unable to have access to this knowledge, our standards of scholarship would fast deteriorate and our participation in the world movements of thought would become negligible. Its effects would be disastrous for our practical life, for living nations must move with the times and must respond quickly to the challenge of their surroundings. English is the only means of preventing our isolation from the world, and we will act unwisely if we allow ourselves to be enveloped in the folds of a dark curtain of ignorance. Our students who are undergoing training at schools which will admit them either to a university or to a vocation must acquire sufficient mastery of English to give them access to the treasures of knowledge, and in the universities no student should be allowed to take a degree who does not acquire the ability to read with facility and understanding works of English authors. We must take into account our *yugadharma.* A sense of the oneness of the world is in the making and control over a medium of expression which is more widespread and has a larger reach than any of our languages today will be of immense benefit to us." [3]

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2 *The Report of the University Education Commission,* p. 316.
3 *Ibid.,* p. 325.

It will thus be apparent that, if Free India is to get her rightful place in the commonwealth of the nations of the world and make her distinct contribution to the new world order, she cannot avoid English altogether. It should not, however, enjoy the same position as it did in the past. A foreign language like a foreign plant can grow only with great difficulty on another soil. "It is psychologically barbarous," writes D. H. Lawrence, "to force English classics down the throats of millions who have nothing in common with English."

For India the problem raises serious issues because of a diversity of languages with no single one functioning at present as a *lingua franca* throughout the whole country. Shorn of unprofitable sentiment, the question is how to purvey knowledge over the widest field and promote an all-India language appropriate to the country's own basic culture and natural idiom. It is now recognized that we should develop our regional languages and try to make Hindi the *lingua franca* of the country. It is a language that will serve all purposes, secular, religious, philosophic, commercial, and above all that of science and manufacture. It is beyond dispute that the position that English is occupying today in our educational and official life cannot be sustained in future. "But you will create chaos and confusion in all your affairs," said Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Union Education Minister, in his convocation address at the Patna University, "if you suddenly displace a language which is holding its own for the last 150 years." After reviewing all aspects of the question, he advised us to proceed gradually measuring our way and considering the pros and cons of our steps. It will require some time for an Indian language to develop so as to become a vehicle of thought among all the people of India and serve as the official language of the country.

Let us now consider the views of Gandhiji on our linguistic problem. His views are not of recent origin. They were already formed while he was in South Africa; and even after the lapse of forty years, there was no material alteration in them. On the contrary, time strengthened

them and enabled him to state them more clearly and systematically. To quote his own words :

> " I still adhere to the views I expressed in 1917 and thereafter. Today they have become my settled beliefs and have taken a more definite shape. Hindi and Urdu are identical for me. I have made a free use of the word *Hindustani* also. I am practising what I preached at the Indore session of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan in 1918." [4]

Gandhiji had experienced the difficulty of English as a medium of instruction in his school days. As soon as he was promoted to the fourth standard in the high school, he realized that English became the medium of instruction in most subjects. He found himself completely at sea. Geometry was a new subject in which he was not particularly strong, and the English medium made it still more difficult for him.[5] Sanskrit proved a harder task for him, but he could acquire a little of it which enabled him to take interest in our sacred books. He deeply regretted that he was not able to acquire a more thorough knowledge of Sanskrit, because he had since realized that every Hindu boy and girl should possess a sound knowledge of Sanskrit. Referring to the question of languages, he says :

> " It is now my opinion that in all Indian curricula of higher education there should be a place for Hindi, Sanskrit, Persian Arabic and English, besides of course the vernacular. This big list need not frighten any one. If our education were more systematic, and the boys free from the burden of having to learn their subjects through a foreign medium, I am sure learning all these languages would not be an irksome task, but a perfect pleasure. A scientific knowledge of one language makes a knowledge of other languages comparatively easy." [6]

While Gandhiji was in South Africa, it had been his conviction that Indian parents who trained their children to think and talk in English from their infancy betrayed their children and their country. " They deprive them," he writes, " of the spiritual and social heritage of the nation, and render them to that extent unfit for the service of the

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4 Preface to *Rashtrabhasha Vishe Vichar* (Gujarati).

5 Gandhiji : *Autobiography*, p. 29.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

country. Having these convictions, I made a point of always talking to my children in Gujarati." [7]

It was in 1908 that Gandhiji first gave a formal expression to his views on the place of English in our life and education. He said :

> "To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them. The foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us. I do not suggest that he had any such intention, but that has been the result. Is it not a sad commentary that we should have to speak of Home Rule in a foreign tongue ?
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> "We write to each other in faulty English, and from this even our M.A.s are not free ; our best thoughts are expressed in English ; the proceedings of our Congress are conducted in English; our best newspapers are printed in English. If this state of things continues for a long time, posterity will — it is my firm opinion — condemn and curse us." [8]

Before we consider Gandhiji's views on the medium of instruction, it would be in the fitness of things to examine his views on the national language for India. In his presidential address at the Second Gujarat Educational Conference, held at Broach on October 20, 1917, Gandhiji declared that to be a national language, a language must satisfy the following five conditions :

1. It must be easy for the official.
2. It must be the vehicle of religious, social and political intercourse of the people.
3. It must be spoken by a large number.
4. It must be easy of acquisition by the masses.
5. It must not be considered a temporary make-shift arrangement.

Gandhiji then showed that English does not satisfy any of these conditions. In his opinion, Hindi is the only language that satisfies all these conditions. Hindi was our national language even under the Mohammedan rulers, who did not think it proper to substitute it with Persian or Arabic.

Gandhiji holds that every Indian should learn Hindustani, which is a happy amalgam of both Hindi and Urdu,

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[7] Gandhiji : *Autobiography*, p. 381.

[8] *Hind Swaraj*, pp. 65, 66.

for about twenty crores of Indians speak or understand it. He is convinced that English cannot become our national language. The confusion created by the linguistic battle in India is worse confounded by the rival claims of Hindi and Urdu to be the national language of India. Hindi is the name of the language spoken by the vast majority of Hindus and Muslims. When written in the Devanagari script, it is called Hindi ; when written in the Arabic script, it is called Urdu. Gandhiji, therefore, prefers to use the word *Hindustani* to convey the sense of Hindi and Urdu. He believes that a writer who used the high words of Sanskrit or Persian merely for show rendered a great disservice to the country. The national language must contain such words and phrases as are used and understood by the large masses of common people. If the Hindus insist upon using Sanskrit words and the Muslims use Persian or Arabic words, the distance between the two communities will be widened. Gandhiji who was a great protagonist of Hindu-Muslim unity readily agreed with the view of a friend who suggested that the word *Hindustani* be used in the place of 'Hindi' or 'Urdu'.

By advocating the adoption of Hindustani as the national language of India, Gandhiji does not wish that it should replace all the regional languages of India in course of time. He is not blind to the need for developing our regional languages. He says :

> "Neither I nor the protagonists of an all-India language hold this view. Their desire is to replace English by Hindustani. Today English has become the means of intercourse among the educated classes, with the result that the distance between them and the masses has considerably widened. The only way to avoid this tragic development is to adopt the language of the large sections of the people for inter-provincial communications. There is no conflict between Hindi and Urdu, but there is one between these two languages on the one hand and English on the other." [9]

The question of the script has also given rise to a hot controversy among the linguists. The same language when written in the Arabic script becomes Urdu, and when

[9] *Harijanbandhu* (Gujarati), 8-3-'42.

written in the Devanagari script it becomes Hindi. Gandhiji firmly believes that in ideal circumstances there should be only one script for all Indian languages and that script should be Devanagari. In insisting that the Arabic script should also be learnt by every Indian, he was actuated by a desire to unite the two styles, viz., Hindi and Urdu by promoting the knowledge of both and incidentally to promote Hindu-Muslim unity.[10] Referring to the suggestion of some people that the adoption of the Roman script would be the most satisfactory solution, he says :

> "Sentiment and science alike are against the Roman script. Its sole merit is its convenience for printing and typing purposes. But that is nothing compared to the strain its learning would put upon millions. It can be no help to the millions who have to read their own literature either in their own provincial script, or in Devanagari." [11]

It may be noted here in passing that the views of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on the question of the Roman script are also in complete accord with those of Gandhiji. He is also of the view that the regional languages should be used in their respective regional administrations as well as in education. He subscribes to the view that Hindustani written in both the scripts should be the national language of India.

It is the view of the Radhakrishnan Commission that neither high Hindi nor high Urdu has an adequate technical vocabulary or scientific literature to strengthen its claim to be the federal language of the Indian Federation. Even Hindustani which is still passing through the initial stages by which a spoken dialect becomes a literary language has not had enough time and opportunity to grow a literature comparable with that of Hindi or Urdu, although it is the common denominator of Hindi and Urdu so far as speech is concerned. The Commission, therefore, recommends that the federal language be developed through the assimilation of words from various sources and the retention of words which have already entered into

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10 *Harijanbandhu* (Gujarati), 26-4-'42.

11 *Ibid.*, 12-2-'39.

Indian languages from different sources and that international technical and scientific terminology be adopted. "It should be the official language of the Indian legislature, of the Federal judiciary, and of the Indian diplomacy. It will be an advantage if this language is used in the Provincial High Courts along with the Regional or Provincial language or languages. We hope that it will be the language of inter-provincial intercourse, of all societies and institutions of an all-India character and of business and commerce." [12] The Commission is also of opinion that this language should be written in the Devanagari script and that, as the Urdu script has been widely used, it will be advantageous to use it as a second script.

The Constituent Assembly of India has resolved that Hindi will be the federal language of India. It will grow richer and fuller than it is today and will not be distinguishable from Hindustani.[13]

It will be seen that the fundamental views of Gandhiji are acceptable to the Constituent Assembly as well as to the Radhakrishnan Commission which had on it some of the ablest educationists of India, England and America, though the Urdu script is not put on a footing of equality with the Devanagari script by the Commission, as also by the Constitution of India.

The question of the medium of instruction is closely linked with that of the national language. Gandhiji regarded the question of the medium of instruction as of the highest importance and as one on which the whole edifice of education rested. In his presidential address at the

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12 *The Report of the University Commission*, p. 315.

13 Sec. 351 of the Constitution of India says:

"It shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, wherever necessary or desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages."

Second Gujarat Educational Conference, held at Broach on October 20, 1917, he observed :

> "There is one party that wants the mother-tongue Gujarati to be the medium. The other party supports English. Both are prompted by pure motives. Both have the good of the country at heart. But purity of motives alone is not sufficient for the achievement of the desired end. Experience of the world shows that often a pure motive lands us on impure ground. Let us, therefore, examine the merits or otherwise of the two views and see if we can arrive at unanimity on this point. This difficult question concerns the whole of India. But that does not mean that each province cannot solve it for itself, but must wait for general unanimity.
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> "Of course, it would help us to some degree in the solution of this problem, if we review the agitation and efforts of other provinces. Bengal during the excitement of 'partition' days tried to impart instruction in Bengali. Schools were established, funds poured in but the experiment failed. In my humble opinion, it failed because the organizers and teachers had no sufficient faith in their own experiment. The educated Bengali could not get out of the fascination of the English language. It was suggested that Bengali literature owes its development to the command the Bengalis have over the English language. In answer we can instance the wonderful Bengali of Sir Rabindranath Tagore, which is in no way indebted to his knowledge of English. He owes his inspiration to the very atmosphere of India. He has imbibed it from the *Upanishads*..... When we consider how languages grow, we come to the conclusion that a language is but the reflection of the character of the people that speak it. Language depends upon the peculiar genius and occupation of a people. The inordinate use of polished and courtly forms of spelling indicates that we have been under subjection for generations together. The English language abounds in nautical terms. We cannot import them into the Gujarati language, but if we take to navigation nautical phraseology will frame itself."

The excessive burden of having to learn through a foreign medium, Gandhiji pointed out, has sapped the strength, enthusiasm, freshness, and vitality of the minds of our young men. All power of initiative, originality and enterprise; courage, discrimination and fearlessness dwindle away as years pass by. The few that show some spirit die young. The Negroes of South Africa are a stalwart and sober race. They too have suffered like us, because they accepted Dutch as the medium of education.

Leaving aside the question whether Japan's activities were in the right direction or not, Gandhiji maintained that the extraordinary enterprise and progressive life of the Japanese were due to their education being given in Japanese.

There must be a correspondence, Gandhiji asserts, between the impressions and expressions we receive with our mother's milk and the education we receive at school. A foreign medium destroys the correspondence and whoever helps this destruction, however pure his motives, is an enemy of his country. The foreign medium has created an unnatural gulf between the English educated classes and the masses at large. The educated do not understand the masses and the masses do not understand them. They regard the educated as almost alien and fear and distrust them.

Gandhiji's uncompromising opposition to the foreign medium resulted in an unwarranted charge being levelled against him of being hostile to foreign culture or to the learning of the English language. Replying to this charge, he observed :

> " I regard English as the language of international commerce and diplomacy, and therefore consider its knowledge on the part of some of us as essential. As it contains some of the richest treasures of thought and literature, I would certainly encourage its careful study among those who have linguistic talents and expect them to translate those treasures for the nation in its vernaculars." [14]

When Gandhiji formulated the Wardha Scheme in 1937, he again took up the question of the medium of instruction and got a resolution passed by the Wardha National Education Conference to the effect that the medium of instruction should be the mother-tongue. Writing in the *Harijan* on the eve of the Conference, he observed :

> " English, having been made the medium of instruction in all the higher branches of learning has created a permanent bar between the highly educated few and the uneducated many. It has prevented knowledge from percolating to the masses. The

[14] *Young India*, 1-9-'21.

> excessive importance given to English has cast upon the educated class a burden which has maimed them mentally for life and made them strangers in their own land." [15]

Gandhiji thus wants that the medium of instruction should be altered at once and at any cost, the regional languages being given their rightful place. He would prefer temporary chaos in higher education to the criminal waste that is daily accumulating. He is convinced that the mother-tongue of the child should be the medium of instruction at all stages of education. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru holds similar views.[16] Both of them do not agree to allow even Hindi to take the place of English as the medium of higher education all over India.

Hindi is strange, if not foreign, to non-Hindi-speaking areas, and it is unpsychological and hence educationally unsound to make it a medium of instruction there. The child can express himself and comprehend others with ease and facility only in his mother-tongue.

To conclude, Gandhiji believes that English cannot be either our *lingua franca* or the medium of instruction. He believes in the greatness of English and its literature, but he would encourage its study among those who have linguistic talent. He recognizes its utility as the world language for international commerce. Hindustani written in either Devanagari or Urdu script, Gandhiji affirms, must be the national language of India. It will be a compulsory subject in the school curriculum. It will not, however, be the medium of instruction in the non-Hindi-speaking areas, where respective regional languages will be the media of instruction at all stages of education.

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15 *Harijan*, 2-10-'37.

16 *The Question of Language*, p. 33.

CHAPTER XIII

GANDHIJI ON WOMEN AND THEIR EDUCATION

In spite of the unique culture and high social ideals we have inherited from ancient India, it cannot be gainsaid that we have fallen far from that happy state and have been unfair and cruel to the fair sex. It is sad to think that our *Smritis* contain texts which can command no respect from men who cherish the liberty of woman as their own and who regard her as the mother of the race. It should, however, be admitted that there are in the *Smritis* texts which give woman her due place and regard her with deep veneration. No man has evoked such whole-hearted devotion from women as Gandhiji, whose blood was stirred by the pitiable condition to which our women have been reduced. As he put it in his address to the students of Karachi, " Instead of making your wives the queens of your homes and of your hearts, you have converted them into chattels to be bought and sold. Woman has been described as the *ardhangana* or the better half of man. But you have reduced her to the position of a slave and the result is the paralysis in which we find our country. Swaraj is not meant for cowards, but for those who would mount smilingly to the gallows and refuse even to allow their eyes to be bandaged. Promise that you will wipe off the stain of *deti-leti*, that you will die to restore your sisters and wives to their full dignity and freedom." [1] Gandhiji was a great lover of humanity and an implacable foe of injustice in any form or sphere and it is no wonder that he espoused the cause of women. To the women of India, as indeed, in some measure to the women of the world, Gandhiji's appraisal of Indian womanhood and its manifold needs and problems will serve as a guiding light in these years of trial. To Gandhiji woman was 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.

[1] *Young India*, 14-2-'29.

Gandhiji desired the utmost freedom for our women. He detested child marriages. He was deadly opposed to the system of dowry. Though not favouring divorce, he did not hesitate to advocate it, if it was the only alternative, e.g., in cases of extreme cruelty perpetrated by the husband on the wife. Another social evil he wanted to eradicate was the purdah system. He was keenly alive to the wrong done to the Hindu girl-widows. He was deadly against enforced widowhood. He fought valiantly against many other social evils like the dedication of girls to temples, prostitution, the economic bondage and marital slavery of women. He strongly advocated the repeal of all legal disqualifications imposed on women by custom or usage. He thought that "woman is the embodiment of sacrifice and suffering, and her advent to public life should, therefore, result in purifying it, in restraining unbridled ambition and accumulation of property."[2] The real property, he believed, that a parent could transmit to all equally was his or her character and educational facilities. Parents should seek to make their sons and daughters self-reliant, well able to earn an honest livelihood by the sweat of the brow. Gandhiji did not want the enlightened daughters of Bharata Mata to ape the manners of the West, which might be suited to its environment. "They must apply methods suited to the Indian genius and Indian environment. Theirs must be the strong, controlling, purifying, steadying hand, conserving what is best in our culture and unhesitatingly rejecting what is base and degrading. This is the work of Sitas, Draupadis, Savitris and Damayantis, not of amazons and prudes."[3]

In spite of his championship of women's cause and his appreciation of their difficulties, Gandhiji does not hesitate to criticize many of their defects. In the matter of birth-control his writings have found a good deal of opposition from many of the leaders of the movement for women's emancipation. Gandhiji puts the question on a high moral

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[2] *Young India*, 17-10-'29.

[3] *Ibid.*

plane and appeals to women not to sell their birthright for a mess of pottage.

Gandhiji is confident that, if women realized their inner strength, there need not be any subservience to man or any other power on earth. They have consented to be called the weaker sex, they have considered themselves unable to stand without man's protection, they have acknowledged that they cannot compete with man intellectually, they have been flattered by man's tributes to their physical beauty and power of attraction and have thereby lowered their own status and standard. Gandhiji naturally points to the way of *ahimsa* as the way of freedom from their shackles, as for the permanent removal of the world's ills.

Gandhiji's utterances and writings on behalf of the woman's cause touch upon every department of her life and can serve as an unerring guide to her in times of distress. They call to her for service to her own kind, to the country and to humanity at large. He hopes that "women pure, firm and self-controlled as Sita, Damayanti and Draupadi" will rise up from among our womanhood, who would command the homage of society as those immortal heroines of yore had done through the ages. It is no exaggeration to say that the women of India were enslaved within bonds that society had created and it was Gandhiji who freed them and taught them the vitalizing lesson of national service.

Gandhiji's veneration for his mother coloured his whole life and was the starting point of a gigantic struggle he launched later on for the emancipation of women. In his early life, he took it for granted that his young wife was his possession for enjoyment. His *Autobiography* tells us that even after the young husband phase was over, he expected her to obey him ; he considered it his right to control her, to be served by her and to use her. Only as experience taught him, did he find his place side by side with women, walking the same road with them, recognizing them as comrades, free as himself. When he settled down in India,

he expected women to take a share in public work and men to take a share in domestic work.

Gandhiji 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 believes that in the ordinary course of our lives neither our men nor our women need necessarily have any knowledge of English. The few women who may require English education for living or undertaking commercial enterprises can very easily have their way by joining the schools for men. He thinks that when courses of instruction have to be framed with the needs of a particular society in view, we cannot supply the requirements of the few. In asking our men and women to spend less time in the study of English, his object is not to deprive them of the pleasure which they are likely to derive from the rich treasures of English literature. He holds that the same pleasure can be obtained at less cost and trouble, if our scholars undertake to translate them for us in our own languages.

Gandhiji is of the view that the enlightened among women owe it to their sex and also to men whose mothers they are to take up the burden of reform. He expects them to be the torch-bearers of social reform. "What is all the education worth that they are receiving," he asks, "if on marriage they are to become mere dolls for their husbands and prematurely engaged in the task of rearing would-be manikins? They may fight, if they like, for votes for women. It costs neither time nor trouble. It provides them with innocent recreation. But where are the brave women who would work among the girl wives and girl widows and who would take no rest and leave none for men, till girl marriages become an impossibility and till every girl feels in herself strength enough to refuse to be married

except when she is of full age and to the person about whom she is given the final choice ?" [4]

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 mothers than by maidens. He feels that they are in a better position than men to answer Professor K. T. Shah's conscription scheme. " Here is undoubtedly an opportunity," he says, " for patriotic women with leisure to offer their services to a cause which ranks amongst the noblest of all causes. But if they come forward, they will have to go through a sound preliminary training. Needy women in search of a living will serve no useful purpose by thinking of joining the movement as a career. If they approach the scheme, they should do so in a spirit of pure service and make it a life mission. They will fail and be severely disappointed if they approach it in a selfish spirit. If the cultured women of India will make common cause with the villagers, and that too through their children, they will produce a silent and grand revolution in the village life of India. Will they respond ? " [5]

In the scheme of Basic Education no differentiation has been made between boys and girls. It is equally possible for a girl to grow to her full stature, if she receives her education through a basic craft such as spinning. The need for including homecraft as a definite subject in village schools has also been recognized by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh.

Gandhiji's approach to the vexed question of co-education is characteristically Gandhian in the sense that it is original and unorthodox. He is not certain whether or not co-education would be successful in India. He tried it himself years ago when he even made boys and girls sleep in the same verandah with no partition between them, Mrs. Gandhi and himself sharing the verandah with them. The experiment, however, brought undesirable results and had to be abandoned. To a questioner who asked him

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4 *Young India*, 7-10-'26.

5 *Harijan*, 30-2-'37.

whether worse things did not happen in purdah-ridden communities, Gandhiji replied: "Yes, of course, but co-education is still in an experimental stage and we cannot definitely say one way or the other as to its results. I think we should begin with the family first. There boys and girls should grow together freely and naturally. Then co-education will come of itself." [6]

In the absence of conclusive evidence based on personal experience and experiment, Gandhiji approached the problem of co-education with an open mind, even though he laid it down provisionally that there should be co-education up to the age of eight, that as far as possible boys and girls should be educated together up to the age of sixteen and that young men and women should decide for themselves after they have reached the sixteenth year whether they would study together or in separate institutions.[7] To a Muslim correspondent who objected to the boys and girls being taught together under the Wardha Scheme, Gandhiji replied:

> "As for co-education, the Zakir Husain Committee has not made it compulsory. Where there is a demand for a separate school for girls, the State will have to make provision. The question of co-education has been left open. It will regulate itself according to the time-spirit. So far as I am aware the members of the Committee were not all of one mind. Personally I have an open mind. I think that there are just as valid reasons for as against co-education. And I would not oppose the experiment wherever it is made." [8]

It is no wonder that Gandhiji did not give us his ultimate views on co-education, when it is remembered that he would not hurriedly arrive at a conclusion without a thorough examination of all the aspects of a question. It was not his tendency to borrow ready-made conclusions from the authoritative works of great authors. He would not accept anything which was not based on personal experience. To suspend judgment till more conclusive evidence is forthcoming is the characteristic of all great

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[6] N. K. Bose: *Selections from Gandhi*, p. 248.

[7] Mahatma Gandhi: *Satyagrahashramno Itihas* (Guj.), pp. 81, 82, 83.

[8] *Harijan*, 16-7-'38.

men who are seekers after truth. Gandhiji was justified in keeping the question of co-education open, as can be seen from the fact that even eminent psychologists and educationists of the West have failed to reach unanimous decision on this momentous issue. There is a general tendency among them to encourage co-education at the primary and higher stages of education, but most of them are not in favour of it during the period of adolescence. Unless a thorough study is made of how far co-education is suitable to our conditions and unless its social, moral and psychological aspects are examined experimentally, it is difficult to give a final verdict as to its desirability or otherwise. Gandhiji was, therefore, perfectly right in leaving the question open and allowing the experiment to be conducted in educational institutions with a view to reaching final decision in course of time.

While considering the question of co-education, we have to bear in mind the broadest and most pronounced differences that we find among our pupils due to sex. There is hardly any difference in average intelligence between the two sexes, and, therefore, mental measurement affords no adequate reason for segregating the sexes in education. But Gandhiji thinks that, since the interests of the two sexes diverge considerably, different lines of appeal may have to be frequently adopted. This fact, however, does not in itself justify segregation, for such a difficulty in instruction can be met by the adoption of individual methods. Whether or not co-education is a good thing must be decided not merely by psychology, but by a consideration of the social and economic aspects of education.

When Gandhiji returned from South Africa, the condition of women in India was very pitiable. Few women got sufficient opportunities for education and for full development of body, mind and spirit. Their individuality was crushed under the burden of customs and conventions. The custom of early marriage struck at the root of all development — physical, intellectual and even spiritual. The agonies of child wives and child mothers, and the unmitigated sorrows of our widows and deserted wives demanded

an immediate remedy. The Hindu society tolerated and connived at the system of *devadasi*, which in the name of religion condemned innocent young girls to a life of degradation and vice. As a result of the social tyranny, Indian women with a few exceptions lost strength and courage, the power of independent thinking and initiative, which had actuated the women of ancient India, such as Maitreyi, Gargi and Savitri. It is sad to think that the wife was expected to treat the husband as God, though he might be characterless, sensual and devoid of good qualities. She could not own any personal property, for she herself was the property of her husband. Enforced widowhood, purdah, prostitution, the dowry system, the economic bondage and marital slavery were some of the disabilities imposed upon Indian women by customs deriving their strength from the teachings of the ancient *Smritis*. These social evils were the source of our national weakness and the cause of our present degradation. Thus our society was out of joint and Gandhiji was born to set it right. He saw that there were insuperable difficulties in his way. The way in which he set himself to overcome them earned him praise even from his fiercest critics. It was no small task to storm the citadel of orthodox customs and usages, some of which had been current for over two thousand years. Gandhiji took upon himself the uphill task of liberating our women from these customs and conventions which restricted their all-round healthy growth. He overpowered the forces of evil and freed women from the servile bondage to which they were subject, so that they might develop to their full physical, mental, moral and spiritual height and might set an example of courage and wisdom, and above all, might as wives and mothers, rightly and truly fulfil the sacred task of training, guiding and forming the daily habits and character of the future citizens and administrators of India. In response to the clarion call of Gandhiji, Indian women cast off their purdah and marched shoulder to shoulder with men in the non-violent struggle for independence. They received the blows of the *lathi* with a smile on their faces, courted imprisonment and considered no sacrifice too

great for the liberation of India from foreign yoke. Indian women were called *abalas*. Gandhiji made them *sabalas* and inspired them with a zeal for achieving heroic deeds, not with the help of sword, but through soul force and character.

While talking to some friends about the constructive programme which he had put before the nation as a concrete plan for the attainment of Swaraj, Gandhiji referred to the women's part in it in these words :

> "But my greatest hope is in the women. They want a helping hand to lift them out of the well in which they have been kept. The slightest thing will work wonders. They made a record contribution during the Satyagraha of 1931-32, and even now they are playing their part nobly but not to the utmost advantage. So little work has been done among them. They are waiting to be organized. They have the capacity for suffering evoked by non-violent effort, and they will suffer silently." [9]

It will thus be manifest that Gandhiji fought valiantly for the rights of women and met with considerable success in his noble mission. Whatever he taught and preached with regard to the rights and claims of women, has been incorporated into the Hindu Code Bill which, when passed into an Act by the Republican Parliament, bids fair to be the charter of women's rights. One may find it difficult to agree entirely with all the provisions of the Bill, but there is no doubt that its basic principles are not unacceptable to the vast majority of people whose vision is not blurred by prejudice. Even a confirmed misogynist will not fail to agree that without social and economic justice Indian womanhood cannot make a useful contribution to the regeneration of the country, now that freedom is an accomplished fact. Gandhiji rose to the height of his greatness when he boldly suggested that all that was printed in the name of scriptures need not be taken as the word of God or the inspired word. How great was his wisdom when he asserted that "girls forcibly abducted have committed no crime, nor incurred any odium"? [10] "They deserve the

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[9] Foreword to *Women and Social Injustice*, p. VI.
[10] *Harijan*, 3-11-'46.

pity and active help of every right-minded man. Such girls should be received back in their homes with open arms and affection and should have no difficulty in being suitably matched." [11]

If we consider that Gandhiji emancipated Indian women from century-old bondage, restored them to their rightful place in society, brought them out from the four walls of the kitchen, taught them self-respect, made them brave and courageous, advocated suitable education for them, recognized their claim to property, put them on an equal footing with men and removed the dead weight of custom and usage which curbed their free growth, is it not legitimate to conclude that he ranks among the greatest feminists of the world ?

CHAPTER XIV

GANDHIJI AS A SOCIAL EDUCATIONIST

The common phrase *adult education* admits of different interpretations. It does not, for instance, convey the same sense in India which it does in a European country or America. Even in the Western countries it does not connote today what it did a hundred years ago, when it was largely concerned with teaching adults who received no schooling in childhood in reading and writing. There were agencies which also appealed to the vocational motive, and desired to make the application of science to occupation understandable by mechanics engaged by them. With the introduction of compulsory elementary education in England, the need to teach the elements of reading and writing to adults gradually decreased and has almost disappeared. All adult education in England during the last fifty years has owed a great deal to the political motive. In the beginning of the present century, the desire to study and understand matters of a socio-economic nature in the hope of obtaining light on the difficulties that beset them

[11] *Harijan*, 3-11-'46.

was strong. Classes on such subjects were the most numerous and the most attended.

Nowadays the phrase *adult education* does not connote in England vocational education or reading and writing. Today it means "general cultural education for the individual's own personal sake, and not for the sake of his job or his specialized function in the community."[1] The emphasis has thus shifted from literacy and specialization in a vocation to the enrichment of personality in all its aspects. The Unesco Seminar on Adult Education held at Mysore in November, 1949, discussed the definition of adult education. After a thorough study of various social conditions obtaining in Asian countries, the following conclusions were arrived at:

> "Adult education stands for basic minimum education of every adult above 18 years of age, but benefit of this type of education might be modified and extended to adolescents below that age. It was agreed that the aim of adult education was to prepare the individual to live a sane healthy life in a decent home, to work profitably, and to raise his economic level through literacy by the provision of extension of education and by recreational facilities. Literacy was defined as ability to read and write."[2]

In India we are confronted with a situation which vitally differs from that in England. Adult education in India assumes immense proportion. As more than 80 per cent of the people of India are illiterate, the need for educating them becomes all the more urgent. Now that the Indian adult has been given the unrestricted right to vote, he must be educated. The roots of democracy lie in the correct use of the right to vote, which in its turn is conditioned by the amount and type of education the voter has received. It is essential that men and women should be systematically trained and made better citizens all round, if democracy is at all to be successful.

It is true that the problem of adult education in India is essentially the problem of the spreading of literacy amongst adults most of whom never went to school during

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1 G. H. Thomson: *A Modern Philosophy of Education*, p. 243.
2 *The Times of India*, 8-11-'49.

their childhood ; but it need not confine itself to educating the masses in the three R's only. It should also aim at providing them with general education that would enable them to acquire a realistic appreciation of their social environment and consciousness of their role in the dynamic society.

In few countries is the need for adult education more urgent than in India. Illiteracy constitutes a heavy drag on human progress, and the mental and physical inertia which affects vast masses of the population in the East cannot be ascribed entirely to climatic vagaries. Such sluggishness is the outcome of the limited mental horizon which ignorance imposes on its victim. With the broadening of the intellectual horizon comes a rise in the standard of national wealth and of economic and social welfare. In that sense, education is a means to an end, and the end is the betterment of individual and national life. Through education the farmer is stimulated to more intelligent labour in the field and the worker to more organized effort in the factory. Enlightened parents generally make for healthy homes. It was for that reason that Gandhiji 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." [3]

The Manshardt Committee set up some years ago in Bombay pointed out that the first step in adult education is to enable the people to overcome their dejection and apathy and to find an interest in life. The next step is to guide them to utilize and enjoy the resources available in their environment so that they may, on the one hand, provide for themselves the basic amenities of life and become capable ; and on the other, of safeguarding themselves against various forms of social ills.

It was Gandhiji who first realized clearly that it was by an awakening and re-orientation of the adult mind that society could be organized on a new and healthy basis. It was, therefore, quite apposite that the phrase *social*

[3] *The Teacher's World*, 4-2-'48.

education was substituted by the Government of India for adult education. Social education not only includes all that is conveyed by the phrase adult education in England today, but also implies what the Report of the Basic National Education Committee calls "the literacy of the whole personality". India has now become a free and independent republic. She has to cross many hurdles before she can stabilize her position. If she is to emerge as an enlightened democracy fit to play the role expected of her in the arena of world politics as a peace-maker and champion of the cause of the suppressed people, it is necessary that her teeming millions should not only be educated, but the bulk of the electorate who have had no opportunity for education should be trained, so that they can pull their weight in solving the problems facing the country and the world.

The problem of social education is urgent, challenging and basic to the wider issues of good citizenship and national efficiency. We have seen that the scope and content of adult education can be re-defined in terms of social education. There is a definite shifting of emphasis from mere literacy or even acquisition of knowledge to health and civic education, to the promotion of communal harmony, to the teaching of simple crafts and the provision of suitable cultural and recreational activities. The underlying idea is that social education should aim at the raising of the general level of people's life — material, moral, cultural and spiritual, — and contribute purposefully to the eradication of some of the deprivations from which our masses have been suffering. The most urgent task of social education today, therefore, is not teaching people to read and write or even to improve their general efficiency, but to concentrate on their social and moral re-education and to re-assert the primacy of those moral and spiritual values which ultimately give meaning to life. No nation can survive for long, if its conscience, its sense of right or wrong, its capacity for impartial judgment becomes atrophied. Social education should train people to think for themselves, to sift truth from falsehood and to withstand

the pressure of propaganda whether communal or political. It should enrich the life of the people and improve their artistic, intellectual, social and moral standards.

Now we have a clear conception of what social education stands for and it should be possible for us to appraise Gandhiji's contribution to social education. We shall demonstrate that measured by any standard Gandhiji was one of the greatest social educationists in the world. Wherever he was, he spread the light of knowledge miles and miles around him and lighted up the dark cavities of the minds of countless men and women. His life was a sermon in selfless service and his silence was more eloquent than speech. Like every other great teacher, he was primarily concerned with the training of men's minds and character, with the awakening of their dormant powers and with restoring to them their power of thinking independently without being swayed by passions and prejudices. He stimulated and guided the spiritual impulse which is present deep down in every human being and raised it above his lower self so that he could realize dormant possibilities. In this sense, Gandhiji was undoubtedly a great and true teacher. But the word *teacher* has also a more specific connotation. He is the person who imparts education in a school and works out better methods and systems of education, so that he might train his pupils to face the difficulties and responsibilities of life creditably. In this sense too, Gandhiji was a teacher of outstanding merit.

In the whole history of India, we do not find a single noteworthy figure, barring Gautama Buddha, with whom he can be compared. He defies all accepted standards of comparison and stands so magnificently alone overreaching all the limits of the age in which he lived and shaped the course of events. So complex was his character and so simple was his mode of life that his very simplicity always proved baffling to his followers, friends and foes.

What was Gandhiji ? Was he a saint or a statesman, a revolutionary or a reformer, a philosopher or a religious mystic, the practical man of the world or a visionary ? No

single category could contain him. He overreached the limits of every classification and refused to be bound by the trammels of time and space and yet he was none at the same time. There is only one word that can properly describe him, viz., the *prophet*. He was the prophet of a new age. As a prophet or inspired teacher he did what all great teachers of mankind like Christ, Mohammed and Buddha had done — the work of lifting the vast multitudes of men and women from the quagmire of ignorance and superstition that always tend to eclipse the pristine purity of the human soul. The age in which he lived and worked bears the indelible stamp of his great personality and has become the living epoch of great movements of thoughts and actions.

In the year 1915, Gandhiji returned to India from South Africa — a great leader of coloured Asiatic races. He had waged a successful crusade against the white man's doctrine of racial superiority in that far-off land. He found the people in India bogged in the deep mire of mental and moral inertia and the entire nation in a state of frustration. Even leaders of the various parties looked more to the imperial power for deliverance than to the people. Gandhiji came, he saw and he made up his mind to devote his life to the service of the common people. He turned his face towards the down-trodden masses, and charged them with new energy, new vision and hope, and they became a powerful instrument in his hand. He struggled hard to create a consciousness of unity among the Indian people. He was faced with the difficult task of history and yet this master craftsman succeeded in overhauling the entire structure of society and creating national consciousness in a large measure, but when the last dome was to be completed he met with the fiercest opposition.

It was indeed a conflict between broad vision and a narrow creed. In history the prophet and the politician play two different roles. The prophet always affirms broader unity, tolerance, brotherhood and goodwill. The politician has a parochial outlook and lays great stress on narrow sectional interests and religious creeds. One spreads the

light of human understanding; the other spreads the darkness of prejudice. One appeals to the higher side of human nature; the other excites the baser emotions and impulses.

It is difficult to find in history a parallel to what Gandhiji achieved through his writings, preachings and personal example. He carried the torch of knowledge to the remotest corner of the country, roused forty crores of his countrymen from their age-old slumber, awakened them to their rights and responsibilities and liberated them from bonds, social, political and religious. Has the world ever seen a greater teacher than this humble servant of mankind who educated one-fifth of humanity through love and sympathy? Even an unsophisticated shepherd who was unnerved at the sight of a white man learnt to summon up courage and withstand the might of the British Imperialism with all its tanks and torpedoes, thanks to the magic of Gandhiji's teachings. He could achieve in a short time what an army of adult educationists cannot do in a thousand years. He fought the battle for peace in the heart of the individual and showed mankind the way to lasting peace. He was convinced that "it is the freed men, who have liberated themselves from submission to the blind, selfish will of *avidya*, that can work for and establish peace."[4] As Dr. S. Radhakrishnan points out, peace is a positive demonstration in life and behaviour of certain universal principles and standards. Gandhiji taught us to fight for them by weapons which did not involve the debasement of moral values or the destruction of human life.

There is no denying the fact that, as a prophet of mankind, Gandhiji was perhaps the greatest social educationist the world has ever seen. He taught his wife, the inmates of his *ashramas* in India or in South Africa and the large masses of villagers in India. His historic march to Dandi was one of his most important experiments in mass education. It awakened the whole country to its sense of duty and brought it near the threshold of independence. He advised the students to devote the whole of their

[4] S. Radhakrishnan: *Great Indians*, p. 49.

vacations to village service. He expected them to stay in the villages during their vacations, to conduct classes for adults and to teach the rules of sanitation to the villagers. In his view, the real source of energy and vitality lies in the peasants all over the world — the tillers of the soil who produce food for us all. He, therefore, concentrated his attention on bringing about the material and intellectual well-being of our rural populace. He realized that "our industrial cities have lost all proportion to the landscape out of which they have grown, have swollen to meaningless dimensions, and their people, caught in the entangling apparatus of money and machines, have become violent, restless, thoughtless, undisciplined and unscrupulous." [5] We are being snared and enslaved, he thinks, and our souls are purchased for a mess of pottage. We have taken a wrong twist which has dispossessed, impoverished and embittered our agricultural population, corrupted, coarsened and blinded our workers, and given us millions of children with blank faces, dead eyes and drooping mouths.[6] The main task of Gandhiji's life was to rescue this suffering humanity from the labyrinth to which it was condemned and to revive its hunger for the realization of the old dream of genuine liberty and real self-respect, of a life where none is rich and none is poor, where the extremes of luxury and leisure are abolished and where industry and commerce exist in a simple form. He did not live long enough to see the fulfilment of his noble mission, but it is up to us, the inheritors of his rich legacy, to pass on the living torch that he lighted from generation to generation till a non-violent socio-economic order of his vision is brought into being in this misery-stricken world of ours, which stands in perpetual danger of being destroyed by hydrogen bombs and other terrific engines of mass destruction scientists promise to produce.

Gandhiji could foresee this with the vision of a seer, and, therefore, espoused the cause of peace based on love and brotherhood. His life was his message. Each one of

[5] S. Radhakrishnan: *Great Indians*, p. 32.
[6] *Ibid.*

us could read the open book of his life and get inspiration and hope from it. He taught through personal example the lesson of plain living and high thinking, which was so noble and so pure that it did not fail to inspire every one who came even in casual touch with him, or read or heard about him even in far-off lands.

Paying a tribute to Gandhiji as a great adult educationist, Professor T. K. N. Menon says :

> " Gandhiji's teachings of Truth and Non-violence with all the corollaries attached to these two fundamentals and his own practice of the same form the most spectacular adult-education experiment the world has ever witnessed. The Ashrams at Sabarmati and Sevagram that he established, his life in these historic places, the training that he imparted to hundreds and thousands there, the inspiration and learning that visitors to the places from all over the country and also abroad received are all brilliant achievements in the field of adult education." [7]

Mr K. G. Saiyidain, speaking at the All-India Education Conference held in December, 1947, said that Gandhiji was the greatest worker in the cause of adult education in this country, and for that matter in the world today. Paying a glowing tribute to his noblest and last attempt at adult education, Mr Saiyidain observed :

> " With a magnificent courage and singleness of purpose, undaunted by the storm of fanaticism and hatred which whirls around him furiously, his voice has been calling the straying multitude back to the path of honour and rectitude and love. Where men of lesser calibre have been swept away by mass hysteria, he has stood firm and courted abuse and unpopularity and misunderstanding by speaking the truth, when it was easy to win applause by swimming with the popular current of violence and hate. Gandhiji's recent post-prayer talks, couched in language which disdains the aid of rhetoric — and even of meticulous grammar — will go down in history like the Sermon on the Mount, both because of their high moral grandeur and uncompromising integrity and because in spite of their high moral level, they show a profound grasp of psychology in applying great ethical principles to practical everyday matters. From the educational point of view, what Gandhiji had done during the last few months outweighs all the manifold achievements of his entire life unique as it has been in its fulfilment."

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[7] *Journal of Education and Psychology*, April, 1948.

Mr Saiyidain when he spoke never dreamt that in this supreme effort at adult education, in keeping a whole nation of hundreds of millions of human beings from sliding back into a moral trap, this man of God would have to sacrifice himself only a month later. In his crusade to save India and Pakistan from the orgy of blood and destruction, he staked his all, including his life. Mr Saiyidain, in his broadcast talk from the All-India Radio, Bombay, referred to the outstanding contribution of Gandhiji to the cause of adult education during the last days of his life in the words that bear quotation *in extenso* :

"His post-*prarthana* speeches will ever remain fresh in the memory of history and the echo of his deeply human voice which used to call "Brothers and Sisters" to the path of God would resound for ages to come. All round him there was a crazy tempest of loot and murder and inhuman destruction in which even some of the best people in the country had lost their bearings and the foundations of their faith had been shaken. But this man of God, indifferent to and unafraid of, these Satanic powers, was lighting his lamp without fear and without hesitation in order to light the path of the passers-by. A few weeks ago at an Educational Conference I had referred to Gandhiji's work and ventured to express the opinion that he was the greatest adult educational worker today not only in India but the whole world and I had quoted in his honour the following couplet from Iqbal:

Fast and furious blows the storm
Yet calmly lights his lamp,
The Man of God whom He has given
The attributes of a king!

"How could I know, how could any one know, that this light which had weathered so many storms would be extinguished so quickly? Yes, it is true the lamp has been extinguished, but the curious paradox is that no one can put out its light! The forces of unrighteousness are always struggling to put out the light of God with their feeble breath, but it is the law of God to guard this light. When some good man is inspired by a real devotion to God and his heart is warmed by a true love of his fellowmen, the light of his personality continues to illumine their hearts and their path for ages to come. Through his teaching Gandhiji has blazed this lighted trail not only for India but for the whole world. It will be treasured in our hearts as an invaluable heritage and our teachers and children in schools will try to spread his message in the whole world."

CHAPTER XV

CONCLUSION

It may sound platitudinous, but it is none the less true that some men are made by the accident of history, while others make history. To the former category belong men upon whom greatness is thrust by luck. Gandhiji belonged to the latter category who make their way to greatness by dint of their sterling qualities of head and heart. Both as a national leader who fashioned and created India and as a thinker of international repute, his was a personality that has left its indelible impress on the tablets of eternity.

After all, what does Gandhiji's greatness consist in? The world has produced many men with keener intellect, but few with a kinder heart. Herein lies the secret of Gandhiji's greatness. He was born in strange times when moral values and the dignity of the human person were at a discount. It was at the time of such a moral crisis that Gandhiji set to himself the arduous task of reawakening the world to the need for a set of new values, which alone would save it from the impending disaster. He battled almost single-handed against the massed forces of evil, reaction and fanaticism, and pulled the tempest-tossed bark of Indian nationalism to peace and safety. Undeterred by threats and opposition, by misrepresentation and slander, he stuck fast to the anchor of truth and non-violence and beckoned his erring brethren back to sanity and love. He courted martyrdom with the name of God on his lips and the smile of love on his face. The day of his martyrdom with all its pathos and pain comes as a grim reminder of that great tragedy of human history to the people of the world. So poignantly distressing is that great sacrifice and so painfully sad is the remembrance of that remarkable man that memories foregather to torment the soul and sorrows collect to shed tears.

"Beauty," sang a poet, "is in the beholder's eye." Likewise the message of a great teacher reaches only the

hearts which are prepared to receive it. So it was with Gandhiji's teachings in his lifetime. So it is with it now after his death. It is rightly said that it takes a hundred years to discover a great man, another hundred to understand him and still another hundred to put his teachings into practice.

What place will the world ultimately assign to Gandhiji ? It is impossible for us to pry into the future, for that is the privilege of the prophet ; but it can be safely predicted that the centuries will hold an imperishable record of Gandhiji as one of the greatest guides, teachers and benefactors of mankind. Kings and captains come and go, governors and patriarchs are forgotten, empires rise and fall, but the message of the *mahatmas* lives for ever, enshrined in the hearts of men, revered generation after generation through all time.

It is an accident of history that Gandhiji identified himself with the freedom of India. His ultimate object was freedom of the world — freedom from war and violence, from greed and aggressiveness, from passions and prejudices that have destroyed nations. It sounds paradoxical that a lawyer by profession, he glorified in being a lawbreaker ; a caste Hindu by birth, he identified himself with the cause of the untouchables ; a Bania by caste, he fought with the valour of a Kshatriya and taught with the skill of a Brahmin. His whole life was an unbroken record of a search for Truth. He was the last in the line of those great Indian philosophers who taught the world to withdraw its attention from the flux of the everchanging world and think only of the ultimate Truth. He vanquished death even in his lifetime and rubbed off the fine line of distinction between life and death. As a world teacher, world citizen and prophet of spiritual regeneration of mankind, Gandhiji ranks high among the saviours of the human race. Imagine for a moment a world in which Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, Zoroaster and Gandhiji were not born ! What would have been our civilization like in the absence of these great souls ? But for the civilizing and humanizing influence of these great teachers of mankind our civilization

would have slid back to its primitive state. The world would grow dark and fearful, if the lights of such redeemers could be extinguished. The ashes of empires are scattered to the winds in the remorseless march of time, but the great guides and teachers shine as beacon-lights through eternity. They have loved what is right without expectation of reward and have hated what is wrong without fear of consequences.

We are witnessing the beginning of a new era, the gradual realization of the mythical Golden Age which may become a reality, if we follow the teachings of Gandhiji. In a message to the people of India on the occasion of Gandhiji's birthday celebrations, President Rajendraprasad said: "It is our supreme duty to keep alive the flame that had been kindled by Bapu in our lives. His great service, supreme sacrifice and ultimate martyrdom have enabled us not only to free ourselves from foreign rule but also paved the path for our moving towards the establishment of the society which used to be our dream in the days of our struggle for freedom. Relying upon truth, service and love as the inexhaustible sustenance of our life, we must march on towards the glorious goal of the establishment of social justice and human equality in our country and the maintenance of peace in the world. It is my earnest appeal to all my countrymen that they should remain firm in the path shown by Bapu, for in that alone lies their salvation, peace and happiness."

We have considered what Gandhiji stands for and what contribution he has made to world civilization. We shall now outline in brief the constituent features of his philosophy, which, as we have already observed, is derived from the principle of spiritual unity.

The ultimate object of man's life, according to Gandhiji, is self-realization, which means seeing God face to face, realizing the Absolute Truth, attaining *moksha*. The fundamental features of the Gandhian philosophy are his discussion of the goal of human life and his showing the way to reach this goal. If the realization of God is the ultimate object of human life, we should have a clear idea

of what Gandhiji means by God. Gandhiji is indifferent to how one defines God, for he knows that "there are innumerable definitions of God because His manifestations are innumerable." [1] He identifies God with Truth. Instead of saying that God is Truth, he prefers to say that Truth is God, for even the atheist who denies the very existence of God cannot deny the power of Truth. He is of the view that God or Truth is not only the immanent reality, but is also transcendent; He is not only the life of the Universe, but is also beyond it as its Creator, Sustainer and Judge.[2] Thus, according to Gandhiji, God is the Creator, the Ruler and the Lord of the Universe and not a blade of grass moves but by His will.[3]

Gandhiji holds that there is no antithesis between God and man. "I believe," he says, "in absolute oneness of God and therefore of humanity." [4] He further says: "I believe in *advaita*, I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives." [5] In asserting the fundamental unity between God and man, Gandhiji follows the aphorism, "*Tat twamasi*" (Thou art that). Jesus taught the same truth when he said, "I and My Father are one." This unity of soul leads Gandhiji to the belief that, if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him, and if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent.

Though God transcends the intellect, Gandhiji is of the view that "it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent." [6] He, therefore, says: ".....there is orderliness in the Universe, there is an unalterable Law governing every thing and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law; for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings and thanks to the marvellous researches of Sir J. C. Bose, it can now be proved that even

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1 Gandhiji: *Autobiography*, p. 7.
2 *Harijan*, 14-11-'36.
3 *Ibid.*, 14-11-'36.
4 *Young India*, II, p. 79.
5 *Ibid.*, p. 421.
6 *Young India*, III, p. 870.

matter is life. That law then which governs all life is God. Law and the Law-giver are one." [7]

If the realization of God is the ultimate goal of life, the next question would naturally be: "How to realize God or Truth?" Gandhiji's answer is that non-violence is the only means of self-realization. Spiritual unity cannot be realized by divisive means. Gandhiji insists that the means should approximate to the end and that the immediate service of human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour, because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and to be one with it. Thus it is through service to society that man can realize God. Self-realization, therefore, consists in the realization of "the greatest good of all". [8]

We have seen that Truth is the end and non-violence is the means to realize it. The greatest good of all can be realized when individual and social life expresses *satya*. Every human being must try to discern *satya* — he should be a *satyagrahi*. Gandhiji's ambition was to evolve a new social order based on non-violence and having constantly before itself the goal of self-realization. The new social order to be known as the *Sarvodaya Samaj* would be imbued with a deep spiritual impulse that would help it in its onward march to self-realization. It would be a Stateless society, for a State depends on coercion, which is the negation of non-violence.

The compulsive nature of the State authority takes away the moral value of the individual's action, for "no action which is not voluntary can be called moral..... So long as we act like machines, there can be no question of morality. If we want to call an action moral, it should have been done consciously, and as a matter of duty." [9] "The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence." Hence a non-violent

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[7] *Young India*, III, p. 871.

[8] *Ibid.*, II, p. 956.

[9] *Ethical Religion*, p. 40.

State is a contradiction in terms. Gandhiji views an increase in the power even of a democratic State with the greatest concern, because, while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress.

Gandhiji is a philosophical anarchist. The ideal social order, according to him, is, a Stateless democracy, the State of enlightened anarchy where social life has become so perfect that it is self-regulated. "In such a State, every one is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal State, therefore, there is no political power because there is no State." [10]

Such an ideal democracy will be a federation of *satyagrahi* village communities. Gandhiji maintains that "society based on non-violence can only consist of groups settled in villages in which voluntary co-operation is the condition of dignified and peaceful existence." (The nearest approach to these were the erstwhile village republics of India. He admits that they were very crude and there was in them no non-violence of his definition and conception. But the germ was there.) [11] In such a society, the individual will be constantly aware of the spiritual reality and will live a life of simplicity and renunciation, of service and sacrifice. Equality will pervade every sphere of life in such a decentralized society. Dr. G. N. Dhawan rightly observes: "The need for decentralization arises from the fact that centralization means concentration of power in the hands of a few people with the possibility of abuse of such power. Centralization adds to the complexity of life which is a distraction in all creative moral endeavour. It also discourages initiative, resourcefulness, courage and creativeness and diminishes opportunities of self-government and of resisting injustice." [12]

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10 *Young India*, 2-7-'31.

11 *Harijan*, 13-1-'40.

12 *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 267.

Gandhiji believes in the law of *Varna*, which, as conceived by him, establishes certain spheres of action for certain people with certain tendencies and thus tends to avoid all unworthy competition. He also believes that individuals belonging to every *Varna* must do bread-labour, i.e., physical labour enough for their daily bread.

The ideal of bread-labour leads to non-possession and equality. "Love and exclusive possession can never go together. Theoretically when there is perfect love, there must be perfect non-possession. Thus the law of *Varna* and the ideals of bread-labour and non-possession ensure complete economic and social equality.

The ideals of non-possession and bread-labour also imply an agricultural, rural civilization based on handicrafts. Hence in the new social order, there will be no exploitation, no zamindari system and no capitalism. Every member of the social order will be his own master and no one will be a hired labourer of another person. A non-violent society is incompatible with centralized mass production and the profit motive. Gandhiji is not opposed to "simple tools and instruments and such machinery as saves individual labour and lightens the burden of millions of cottages".[13] Again, the machinery should be such as the villages can themselves make and can afford to use.[14] In such a society of self-contained villages, there will be little scope for international or interprovincial trade and commerce. As there will be no centralized production, there will be no need for a system of heavy transport. As differences will be composed by discussion, persuasion, arbitration and sometimes by self-imposed suffering, no courts or lawyers will be required. As most of the diseases will disappear in consequence of self-control, manual labour and absence of worries resulting from our modern civilization, there will be no mass production of drugs and medical instruments.[15] Gandhiji has the highest regard for nature cure and Yogic exercises.

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13 Young India, II, p. 713.

14 *Harijan*, 29-8-'36.

15 *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 770.

The whole society will be a big family and the relation between the individual and society will be one of inter-dependence. In his own words : "I value individual freedom, but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to the present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. We have learnt to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint. Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society, enriches both the individual and the society of which one is a member." [16] Such a Stateless, non-violent democracy must provide opportunities for the maximum growth of the individual, which consists in selfless, social service and willing fulfilment of his social obligations. The individual will use his opportunity to advance the greatest good of all, while society will give to the individual maximum opportunity.

It need not be inferred from the above picture of a Stateless non-violent society, that Gandhiji aims at the destruction of hospitals, courts, railways, mills and factories. As such a social order is unattainable owing to human imperfections, Gandhiji thinks that, if the country sticks to *satyagraha*, it would have a middle way, the first step towards the ideal. In actual practice, we may achieve a predominantly non-violent State advancing towards the goal of Stateless democracy. Thus, "..... real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused".[17] Gandhiji, therefore, holds that "real home rule is possible only where passive resistance (*satyagraha*) is the guiding force of the people. Any other rule is foreign rule." [18] Gandhiji believes in the "sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority". [19]

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16 *Harijan*, 27-5-'39.
17 *Young India*, II, p. 491.
18 *Hind Swaraj*, p. 74.
19 *Harijan*, 2-1-'37.

Before the new world order comes into being, there may be cases of international injustice and aggression. Aggression against a non-violent State will be unlikely, but if it comes it will be met non-violently. The non-violent Indian State will endeavour " to live on the friendliest terms with its neighbours, whether they be great powers or small nations, and shall covet no foreign territory ".[20]

Thus Gandhiji set out to mould India and Indian society in the light of truth and non-violence. Dr. G. N. Dhawan admirably sums up Gandhiji's conception of the new social order in the following words :-

> " Gandhiji's social ideal is the classless and Stateless society, a state of self-regulated enlightened " anarchy ", in which social cohesion will be maintained by internal and non-coercive external sanctions. But as this ideal is not realizable, he has an attainable middle ideal also — the predominantly non-violent State. Retaining the State in this second best society is a concession to human imperfection. Gandhiji distrusts the State because it is steeped in violence. He believes that for the State to be democratic citizens must acquire the capacity to resist non-violently any misuse of authority. The non-violent State will not be an end in itself but one of the means for the achievement of the greatest good of all. The State will be a federation of decentralized democratic rural satyagrahi communities. These communities will be based on ' voluntary simplicity, poverty and slowness ', i.e., on a consciously slowed tempo of life in which emphasis will be on self-expression through the larger rhythms of life rather than quicker beats of the quest of power and pelf." [21]

As a first step towards the realization of this order, Gandhiji lays down his constructive programme as the best and the only non-violent means of achieving the goal. He established a number of organizations devoted to the implementation of its various items. All these bodies worked under his guidance and direction. The Gandhi Seva Sangh, a body of experts, is a research organization for exploring the possibilities of *ahimsa* in all spheres of life, particularly for " the observation, study and research in the subject of relation of constructive work to *ahimsa* and of reaction of

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20. *Harijan*, 20-4-'40.

21 *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 323.

such work on the individual and society ".[22] Other organizations devoted to constructive work are the All-India Spinners' Association, the Harijan Sewak Sangh, the All-India Village Industries Association, the Gosewa Sangh, and the Hindustani Talimi Sangh. Of these Hindustani Talimi Sangh is the most important, because like all great philosopher Gandhiji looked to education as the most powerful means for creating the new social order of his conception. Education is, therefore, the active aspect of philosophical belief, the practical means of realizing the ideals of life.

As Acharya J. B. Kripalani observes,

> "Basic Education stands or falls by its philosophy of life, individual and social..... Gandhiji looked to education as the means for establishing the social order of his conception. You may accept the education without the social programme, because, like all other means which he had used, it is good in itself. But, if you isolate it from its social philosophy, it cannot prosper long; it is cut off from its roots ".[23]

By education Gandhiji means an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man — body, mind and spirit. In his view, literacy is not the end of education, nor even the beginning. He firmly believes that an unsophisticated shepherd who is possessed of character is a much better citizen of the world than one who is a finished product of mere literary training in a school. In his philosophy of education, the personality of the educand is of primary importance and not the tools and subjects.

Gandhiji condemns the existing system of education in which most of the boys are lost to the parents and to the occupation to which they are born. As the new social order would emphasize manual labour and an essential part of the activity of a human being will be to earn his bread by manual labour, Gandhiji seeks to make it the centre of the educational process. He is of the view that, if the handicraft is taught scientifically and not mechanically, it would develop the child's mind and soul. The whole person in the boy or the girl has to be harmoniously developed principally

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[22] *Harijan*, 2-3-'40.

[23] *The Report of the Fifth All-India Basic Education Conference* — 1949, p. 18.

through the medium of and in correlation with a productive activity. Besides, the handicraft is expected to make education self-supporting. By self-supporting education Gandhiji means that it will return the child to society as an earning unit and the produce of the craft will meet the salaries of the teachers. Thus Gandhiji proposes to accord dignity to labour, ensure modest and honest livelihood and alter the character of and medium through which education is imparted. All teaching is to be carried on through concrete life situations, relating to the craft chosen or to social and physical environments, so that whatever the child learns becomes assimilated into his growing self. As the child acquires his knowledge actively and utilizes it for the understanding and the better control of his social environment, he will be conscious of the rights and duties of citizenship.

According to Gandhiji, education begins with conception and ends with death. A programme of work should, therefore, take full account of this fact and cover the whole of man's life. This *Samagra Nai Talim* cannot, however, be introduced on a nationwide scale all at once in view of certain inherent difficulties. As a first step towards its introduction, Gandhiji evolved a scheme of education known as the Wardha Scheme or Basic Education for the children between seven to fourteen years of age. The first principle of Basic Education, according to Gandhiji, is that education up to a particular minimum standard should be universal for all citizens, male and female. It may not be compulsory to begin with, but as facilities become available, it is to be compulsory. In this scheme of education, the mother-tongue of the child would not only become the medium of instruction, but it is also to occupy the first place among languages. Another important principle of it is that it must be woven round some art or handicraft. Intellectual instruction has to be imparted through the instrumentality of the craft chosen. Basic education includes what we now understand by primary and secondary education, which is to be equal to the present matriculation less English.

Gandhiji puts forth two sets of educational aims, viz., *immediate* and *ultimate*. The immediate aims of education are manifold, because they touch life at different points. The ultimate and by far the most important aim of education is, according to Gandhiji, the knowledge of God, leading to self-realization, the merger of the finite being into the Infinite. This ultimate aim includes and embraces all his immediate and subordinate aims like preparation for complete living, adjustment to environment, perfection of one's nature, character-building, harmonious development of one's personality, etc.

Is Gandhiji's aim in education individual or social? He strikes a balance between the individual and social aims in education. He synthesizes the ideals of social service and individual development. In his view, individual development and social progress are interdependent, for individuality develops only in a social atmosphere where it can feed on common interests and common activities. Gandhiji showed by precept and practice that there was no conflict between self-realization and social service.

Gandhiji's educational theory is the outcome of his experiments with education at the Phoenix Settlement, Tolstoy Farm, the Sabarmati Ashram and Sevagram. His theory is *objective* rather than *subjective*, *experimental* rather than *speculative*. It is dominated by a scientific attitude and aim. Gandhiji's philosophy of life and education was influenced by the writings and teachings of three great teachers, viz., Raychandbhai, Tolstoy and Ruskin. He began to feel that education to be real and effective cannot be divorced from work. He tried his new ideas on education at the Phoenix Settlement and gave the children their knowledge side by side with manual labour. He put his views on education in black and white for the first time in his book, *Hind Swaraj*, in 1908. He started the Tolstoy Farm in 1911. The Farm was a family in which Gandhiji, as its patriarchal head, assumed the responsibility for the education of its young folk. He gave the first place to the culture of the heart or character-building. The children's work included digging pits, felling timber, lifting loads,

cooking, scavenging, sandal-making, carpentry and messenger work. Gandhiji's main aim was to bring about the all-round development of the boys and girls. After his return to India, he founded the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati in 1915. Here the seeds of Basic Education were sown. His views were consolidated and put on paper during the period of his detention in the Yeravda prison in 1932. After his retirement from active participation in politics in 1934, he began to lay greater emphasis on non-violence expressing itself in constructive activities. In 1937, he evolved the Wardha Scheme, embodying the essence of his educational philosophy. He came to the conclusion that the *whole* education should be imparted through some handicraft or industry.

The scheme of Basic National Education was accepted by the Indian National Congress in 1938, which also authorized the formation of an All-India Education Board to work it. The *Report on Vocational Education* by Abbott and Wood lent unexpected support to the Scheme. The Kher Committee appointed by the Central Advisory Board accepted the central principles of the Scheme. The Hindustani Talimi Sangh, brought into being at Sevagram in April, 1939, undertook extensive research work in the field of Basic Education and co-operated with both Government and non-Government institutions that had started experiments with Basic Education. And the Governments of Bombay, Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh started training centres and basic schools.

A careful study of Gandhiji's philosophy of education will demonstrate that it is permeated by the philosophical tendencies of naturalism, idealism and pragmatism, which are not separate and independent but fuse into a unity, idealism being *fundamental*, and naturalism and pragmatism, *contributory*.

Coming to some important aspects of his educational philosophy, we find that manual work occupies a central place in it. From the psychological point of view, it balances the intellectual and practical elements of experience, and may be made an instrument of educating body

and mind in co-ordination. From the sociological point of view, it will conduce to a true sense of the dignity of labour and human solidarity, which would be an ethical and moral gain of immense significance. It will develop in the children the qualities of co-operation, brotherhood and service, which would make for a peaceful social life minimizing all possible causes of friction. From the economic point of view, it gives greater reality to the educational process by making it economically remunerative and developing in the children qualities of self-reliance and independence. It will satisfy all their material needs in perfect harmony with the higher values of life, facilitating the onward march of society to its ultimate goal of self-realization.

This brings us to the place of religion in the new social order and its educational system. For Gandhiji religion is not subscription to dogmas or conformity to ritual, but an abiding faith in the absolute values of truth, love and justice, and a persistent endeavour to realize them on earth. He is of the view that true religion and true morality are inseparable. Gandhiji is fully alive to the difficulties of religious education in India. At the same time, he is of opinion that the neglect of religious education would undermine the moral fibre of society. The fundamental basis of religious education should be, Gandhiji maintains, instruction in the universal essentials of religion and a training in the fundamental virtues of truth and *ahimsa*, which make for purity of heart and purity of living. He wisely dropped denominational religion or sectarianism from the Wardha Scheme. The finest and the most efficacious form of religious education is, according to Gandhiji, the example of teachers.

Gandhiji's views on our linguistic problem are in line with the modern trends in pedagogy and psychology. Gandhiji believes that English cannot be either our *lingua franca* or the medium of instruction. He would encourage its study only among those who have linguistic talent. He recognizes its utility as a world language for international commerce. In his view, Hindustani written in Devanagari or Urdu script must be the national language of India.

It should be a compulsory subject in the school curriculum. It should not, however, be the medium of instruction in the non-Hindi speaking areas. Regional languages should be the media of instruction at all stages of education.

Gandhiji's views on women and their education deserve special attention. He emancipated Indian women from age-old bondage and restored them to their rightful place in society. He brought them out from the four walls of the kitchen ; he taught them self-respect and made them brave and courageous ; he recognized their claim to property, put them on an equal footing with men and removed the dead-weight of custom and usage, which curbed their free growth. In the scheme of Basic Education no differentiation has been made between boys and girls. His views on co-education are refreshing. He is not certain whether co-education would be successful in India. In the absence of conclusive evidence based on extensive experimentation, Gandhiji approaches the problem of co-education with an open mind, even though he laid it down provisionally that there should be co-education up to the age of eight, that as far as possible boys and girls should be educated together up to the age of sixteen and that young men and women should decide for themselves after they have reached the sixteenth year whether they would study together or in separate institutions.

Gandhiji's contribution to social education ensures for him an abiding place among the leading social educationists of the world. He is looked up to by thousands as a prophet of mankind. His life was a sermon in selfless service. He lifted the vast multitudes of men and women from the quagmire of ignorance and superstition. It is difficult to find in history a parallel to what Gandhiji achieved through his writings, speeches and personal example. He carried the torch of knowledge to the remotest corners of the country, roused forty crores of his countrymen from their age-old slumber, awakened them to their rights and responsibilities, and liberated them from bonds, social, political and religious. He could achieve in a short time what an army of adult educationists would not be able to do in a thousand

years. His post-prayer talks will go down in history like the Sermon on the Mount because of their high moral grandeur and a profound grasp of psychology in applying great ethical principles to practical everyday matters. What Gandhiji has done in the field of education outweighs all the manifold achievements of his entire life. He combined the educational passion of Rousseau, the practical genius of Pestalozzi, the mystic idealism of Froebel, and above all an educational insight and depth of vision that only a Mahatma can have.

Nai Talim is designed to evolve not only a new social order, but, as Shri E. W. Aryanayakam puts it, "to create a different sort of person — one who neither has, nor wants, nor bows down before worldly wealth and power; whose joy lies in sacrifice and service instead of pomp and domination; who is content with the little that is necessary for health and happiness and never content so long as the humblest of his fellowmen lacks even that, and who is not swayed by the lesser loyalties of nation and community, but guided in all things by reason, justice and truth." [24] *Nai Talim* is based on justice, co-operative endeavour, productive work and respect for human individuality. It is essentially education for peace and international understanding. When the world is torn by conflicts and controversies, what it needs most is education for peace and international understanding. The *Purani Talim* has failed to meet this demand and our only hope for world peace lies in *Nai Talim*. It is now abundantly clear that mankind must find a way to live amicably or be annihilated by the engines of destruction devised by its own ingenuity. It has to choose between the Hydrogen bomb and *Nai Talim*. Such a dilemma has never faced the human race. There should be spiritual regeneration or mankind will perish. The existing educational system and the social order are out of joint and all the educative agencies have failed to pull together. *Nai Talim* seeks to co-ordinate them all into an educational pattern.

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[24] *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 23-2-'47.

The two World Wars in our lifetime have given a jolt to the conscience as well as the material and social life of mankind and thrown old institutions, customs, beliefs and traditions into the melting pot. This situation offers a great challenge and a great opportunity to the peoples and races of the human family to reconstruct their life and culture on a more rational and equitable basis. *Nai Talim* can accept this challenge and reshape things so as to make man worthy of his great heritage.

We shall now consider the role of *Nai Talim* in our national regeneration. *Nai Talim* is mainly concerned with the regeneration of India in the first instance. During the foreign rule in India, the organic unity of the country could not be realized, and between the organs of social direction, guidance and control, and members of society, intimate relations of mutual assistance and co-operation could not be established. In every human group, free or bound, opposing tendencies obtain, and in the nascent State of Free India, impediments exist to the development of a society which is organic through and through.

Societies like organisms grow. The individuals that compose them become better individuals in the sense that their innate tendencies blossom forth; while society becomes more coherent and better organized, and both tend to overcome and resolve their inner conflicts and attain a higher balance of life.

A democratic society is a spiritual community of individuals, enjoying equality and liberty. A system of education in such a society, therefore, must aim at unfolding these essential features. As Plato pointed out, society itself is a school. Its conscious and unconscious influences mould the mind and character of its members. In this sense, the teacher and the taught constitute a unity and society is a self-educating organism. The educational process has a dual aspect — preservation of the social heritage and its development. Youth brings with it a natural endowment and disposition, but as it has not undergone the pressure of increasing experience, which stratifies attitudes and modes of thinking and action, it is malleable and unstable in the

process of incomplete socialization. Hence all societies — primitive and civilized — make special arrangements for moulding youth into patterns approved by society, drilling it in habits considered useful. The problem of education in India has to be considered in the context of democracy. Our leaders have chosen to conduct people along paths, the goal of which is a free and secular democracy. The choice is wise, because, as we have presently seen, an organic society must move by its very logic towards this end.

In Free India, school and society must enter into an organic partnership. A society is a free community of free individuals functioning for economic and moral ends, so that our schools may be free fellowships of free pupils and teachers, in which each pupil unfolds his inborn abilities to his utmost level. A free individual is one who learns through active participation in gainful occupations not only manual and mental skills but judgment, responsibility and mutual help. He receives through social co-operation civic and moral training, and his mind is stimulated to satisfy his craving for Truth, Beauty and Goodness through literature, art and science. As *Nai Talim* is designed to fulfil these objectives, its adoption cannot be delayed without serious detriment to the organic growth of our infant democracy.

The essence of democracy is a literate and conscious people, for it is they who must rule and not merely be ruled. Democracy calls for public opinion as virile and sensitive as it is intelligent and enlightened, since without the latter ingredient 'government of the people, for the people and by the people' can mean little more than mob rule. In India, this problem of educating the largest electorate in the world is particularly urgent. Independence — and the inauguration of the Republican Constitution — has made us responsible for our own government. Adult franchise is a pillar of the democratic process, but it can have no foundation, unless each voter is sufficiently educated to understand the implications of his franchise and not be a mere puppet dancing to the strains of political design through ignorance. The genius of our people lies

in the masses of peasants and industrial workers rather than in a few elegant products of the marble halls of higher learning. The solution of the problem lies in Basic Education to start with and *Samagra Nai Talim* later on, and it is on that front that the greatest effort and investment should be concentrated. That can come about only through State effort. The old State could not have the vision and dash to translate *Nai Talim* into terms of reality. We must, therefore, have a new State in which the right men are placed in power. Our resources are limited, sometimes practically non-existent. We should, however, justify through our work Gandhiji's challenge that the work of *Nai Talim* does not depend upon money and that it must be self-sufficient. We must also fulfil Gandhiji's dream of the happy, healthy, peaceful and prosperous village, which has the real wealth of co-operative effort as a result of *Nai Talim.*

The implementation of the programme of *Nai Talim* will not be without difficulties and impediments. It should, however, be borne in mind that education is the most important nation-building activity and it should be given the highest priority in the programme of national planning. The question of finances may cause worry and anxiety, but it should not be allowed to arrest or torpedo the scheme of educational reconstruction. If the U.S.A. could increase the percentage of literacy in the Philippines from 2 to 55 within a period of 40 years, if the U.S.S.R. could reduce illiteracy of its backward and widely-scattered population from 78 to 8 per cent, if China and Turkey could tackle this vexed problem in a short time, there is no reason why India should not be able to educate her masters in a reasonably short time. The Central Advisory Board of Education hit the nail on the head when it observed : " The expenditure is admittedly heavy but the experience of the war suggests that, when paramount necessity can be established, the money required to meet it can and will be found."

The greatest obstacle to the education and literacy drive is perhaps not so much stringent finances as the dearth of properly trained teachers. The pitiably meagre

scales of remuneration and the low status accorded to teachers is largely responsible for this state of affairs. Young men and women of ability have little incentive, if any, to join this noble profession, while many who ultimately do become teachers come to their job with the wrong attitude of mind, because they have become teachers not out of choice but through harsh necessity. It is, therefore, necessary that the teaching profession is made attractive, for then alone can one expect any real response to appeals for more and better teachers. Education is one of the most vital tasks facing the nation today. Much else will right itself, if only the millions can be provided with the minimum education necessary for understanding the day-to-day problems in our complex civilization. An educated man can give far more to the community than can his illiterate brother and he can get far more out of it to lead a fuller and richer life.

It is true that we shall never be able to pay the teachers as liberally as we pay lawyers, doctors or engineers. But we can at least compensate, as Professor A. N. Basu says, for the inadequacy of pay by giving them the social status which is rightfully theirs and which teachers in this country had enjoyed from time immemorial till about a century ago when a new set of values based on economic standards replaced the old ones. The future of our primary education will depend upon how we solve this problem of giving a new social status and prestige to those who will voluntarily embrace a life of poverty in the service of the coming generation.[25]

These and many more difficulties there are in the path of our national regeneration, but they are not insuperable. The country has a great future and, thanks to the inspiring guidance of seers like Gandhiji, it will realize its divine destiny and be a lighthouse of hope and cheer to the distracted world.

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25 *Primary Education in India*, p. 64.

It was perhaps such a vision that inspired our great poet, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, to write these immortal lines :

"Where the mind is without fear and
the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken
up into fragmants by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving reaches its
arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way into the
dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by
Thee into ever-widening thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my
Father, let my country awake."

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