

Contribution of Gandhiji and Dr. Zakir Hussain to Educational Theory and Practice in terms of Basic scheme of Education

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ABSTRACT: *As Gandhiji expounded basic education Dr. Zakir Hussain gave content, meaning, practicability to the rough ideas of Gandhiji. Gandhiji conceived education as an instrument of social reconstruction in totality, politically, economically, morally and spiritually. Dr. Zakir Hussain realized that any popular system of education should be able to remove backwardness of the community. He conducted in the Jamia Millai Islamia a new practical experiment in education which was later attempted in basic education and in Adult Education movements (Taneja, 1989).*

Key Words: *: Gandhiji, Zakir Hussain, Educational Theory, Basic Scheme of Education*

INTRODUCTION

The Philosophy of basic education was grown out of the atmosphere pervading the country in its villages, because Gandhiji felt that the prevalent education system at that time did not cater to the needs of the Indian society. It was designed in response to the needs and aspiration of the inhabitants in Indians villages. The immediate aims of basic education included the following:-

- To restore and enhance the quality of life in the villages of India
- To provide rural people with low cost technologies which would make them economically self-sufficient and ensure even the poorest family a meal
- To improve health through dietary reform, sanitation, etc.
- To eliminate the evils of unsociability, casteism, communalism and to restore purity of spirit to character building.

Basic education is meant to generate in the country a right atmosphere for productive work. It is meant to transform children into model villagers. It develops both the body and the mind of the child. It is self-supporting, as the child learns a craft to a sufficient degree of skill that he can support himself by his earnings. To quote Gandhiji (1950):

"The new scheme is claimed to be based as sound economics, for all education 'will be through the medium of a craft. It is not education plus training in a craft, but it is all education by means of a craft" (Kripalani, 1961).

The first step in the evolution of the scheme of basic education was the wardha Educational conference held on 22-23. Oct. 1937. At this conference Gandhiji defined his conception of basic education and placed it before the assembled educationists and national workers for discussion, the conference was attended by Education Minister of 7 provinces (Educational Reconstruction, 1958). After a full discussion, the conference accepted the four fundamental principles of basic education and a small committee was appointed with Dr. Zakir Hussain as president to give a concrete shape to the scheme. The four fundamental principles or resolutions were passed as. The education should be free and compulsory for all children between age group 7-14, i.e., for 8 years. The medium of instruction be the mother tongue. The process of education throughout this period should centre round some form of manual work and that all 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. This system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of teachers i.e. a self sufficient scheme Gandhiji was not bothered about the school building (Educational Reconstruction, 1958).

Later when Zakir Hussain committee prepared a report along with a tentative but detailed syllabus for the said scheme and submitted it on December 2, 1937. The report indicated the aims of the curriculum, the objectives of teaching of different subjects to be taught in relation to the craft as well as in relation to the social and physical environment of the child and it recommended the process of correlation teaching. It gave a scheme a new education with its aims, contents of studies and an indication of methodology of translating the aims and objectives of the scheme into day-today practice.

Thus within a period of about six months, the nation got the syllabus of the scheme and its official acceptance as a system of national education by the Indian National congress.

So, Zakir Hussain was a staunch supporter of Basic Education. He believed in the total development of children can take place through Basic Education, which is craft centred, creative, productive and self-supporting. According to him, productive work is an instrument of education.

Gandhiji acknowledge the importance of basic education and maintained that it should be free and compulsory to all children as it improves the quality of life. The basic education (Nai Talim) is ever changing, ever new and ever fresh. While designing basic education for India Gandhi's concern was for village children who were poor and did not have access to educational facilities. He said the basic education is meant to transform village children into model villagers, it is principally designed for them. The inspiration for it has come from the villages. Gandhiji, maintained basic education links the children, whether of the cities or the villages, to all that is best and lasting in India. It develops both the body and the mind and keeps the child rooted to the soil with a glorious vision of the future in the realization of which he or she begins to take his or her share from the very commencement of his or her career in school. So basic education was meant for the entire country (Gandhi, 1929).

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Outstanding features of wardha scheme as;

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. This universal minimum education is styled Basic national education by the committee (Educational Reconstruction, 1953)⁴⁷. As in the words of Gandhiji:

"Primary education extending over a period of 7 years or longer and covering all the subjects upto 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 take of primary, middle and high school education" (Harijan, 1937).

Craft as the centre of Education: Education should be imparted through some productive work or craft, which should provide the nucleus of all the other instruction provided in the school. According to the Zakir Hussain committee. Modern educational thought is practically unanimous in commending the idea of 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.

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.

Self-Supporting, feature: 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". Gandhiji opines that the child at the age of fourteen that is after finishing a seven year's course should be discharged as an earning unit. His plan aims at imparting education and simultaneously cutting at the root of unemployment. The Zakir Hussain committee fully endorsed the self-supporting basis of the scheme, but at 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 (Educational Reconstruction, 1953).

Mother-tongue as medium of instruction: One of the resolutions that were adopted at the All India National Education conference held at Wardha, was that education must be imparted through the mother tongue. The observations of the Zakir Hussain Committee in this connection are worth remembering which are as follows:

"The proper teaching of the mother tongue is the foundation of all education. Without the capacity to speak effectively and to read and to write correctly and lucidly, no 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 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".

Ideal of citizenship: is one more feature of the Basic Scheme which is implicit in it. In these days of international tensions, created by atom and hydrogen bomb, the necessity for training children in citizenship becomes very essential. Therefore, in modern India, citizenship is definitely destined to be increasingly democratic in the social, political, economic and cultural life of the country. The Basic scheme aimed at giving the citizens of the future a keen sense of personal worth, dignity and efficiency and strengthening in them the desire for self-improvement and social services in a co-operative community. The Zakir Hussain committee envisaged that "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 for 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.

It was on the basis of the above principles that the Zakir Hussain Committee prepared the main outline of correlated programme of work for the whole period of seven years.

The following items are to be included in the syllabus:

The basic craft: "The craft chosen should be rich in educative possibilities. The object of the Wardha scheme is not primarily the production of craftsman who can practice a craft mechanically, but the exploitation for educative purposes of the resources implicit in craft work. The committee recommended three suitable basic crafts, viz., i) agriculture, ii) spinning and weaving and iii) cardboard work and metal work. It felt confident that the contents of the general curriculum could be correlated with or conveyed through any of these crafts" (Educational Reconstruction, 1958)⁵¹.

It is important to note that the Zakir Hussain 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".

The Mother Tongue: In the syllabus of the mother tongue, the Zakir Hussain 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:

- i. The capacity to converse freely,
- ii. The capacity to speak lucidly and relevantly on any given topic of everyday interest,
- iii. The capacity to read silently, intelligently and with speed written passages of average difficulty,
- iv. The capacity to read aloud-clearly, expressively and with enjoyment - both prose and poetry.
- v. 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,
- vi. The capacity to write legibly, correctly and with reasonable speed.
- vii. The capacity to describe in writing, in a simple and clear style, everyday happenings and occurrences, e.g. to make reports of meetings held on the village for some co-operative purpose.
- viii. The capacity to write personal letters and business communications of a simple kind.

- ix. An acquaintance with an interest in the writings of standard authors through a study of their writings or extracts from them (Educational Reconstruction, 1958).

Mathematics: The aim of 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 knowledge of business practice and book-keeping.

The teaching of mathematics is not to be confined merely to the facts and operation 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. By dealing with figures which will also throw light on the economic and social facts of their villages 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".

Social Studies: Social studies, history, geography, civics and current events 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.

The committees laid down the following objectives of social studies:

- i) To develop a broad human interest in the progress of mankind in general and of India in particular;
- ii) To develop in the pupil a proper understanding of his social and geographical environment and awaken the urge to improve it;
- iii) To inculcate the love of the motherland reverence its past and a belief in its future destiny as the home of a united co-operative society based on love, truth and justice;
- iv) Develop a sense of rights and responsibilities of citizenship (Educational Reconstruction, 1958).

General Science: The committee laid down that the curriculum should include nature study, Zoology, Physiology, Hygiene, Physical Culture, Chemistry and knowledge of the stars. The objectives of teaching all these sciences are:

- i) To give pupils an intelligent and appreciative outlook on nature;
- ii) To form in the pupils habits of accurate observation and of testing experience by experiment;
- iii) 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
- iv) 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 grade the syllabus in general science should be so modified as to include domestic science for girls. In the sixth and seventh grades the girls will be allowed to take an advanced course in domestic science in place of the basic craft (Patel, 1953)⁵⁴.

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, decoration and mechanical drawing.

The Objectives are;

- i) To develop the memory for forms.
- ii) To train the eye in the observation and discrimination of forms and colours,
- iii) To cultivate a knowledge and appreciation for the beauty in nature and in art.
- iv) To draw out the capacity for tasteful design and decoration,
- v) To develop the capacity to make drawings of objects to be constructed.

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. The songs are to be carefully selected and should include national song, folk song, devotional songs, seasonal songs, festive songs and a few songs in simple, quick rhythm suitable for group singing in connection with their craft-work and physical training.

Hindustani: The committee included Hindustani as 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-country men 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" (Patel, 1953).

To conclude, Gandhiji and Dr. Zakir Hussain ideas on education have a strong foundation, provided by their practical experience in the actual field.

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