Study of Wardha Scheme of Education by Gandhi Ji
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THE WARDHA SCHEME OF EDUCATION

The Wardha Scheme of Education derives its name from the education conference of National Workers held at Wardha under the president ship of Mahatma Gandhi. The scheme is also known as Nai Talim/Basic Education/Buniyadi Talim (Shiksha)/Basic Shiksha. The scheme is the outcome of the philosophy of Gandhiji. It was given definite shape by the Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Zakir Hussain who later on become the President of India.

ORIGIN OF THE SCHEME

Gandhiji found the main defects of the system of education as, “I am fully convinced that present system of education is not only wasteful but positively harmful. They would pickup evil habits. English has created a permanent bar between the highly educated few and the uneducated many.” He further said, “let us now cry a halt and concentrate on educating the child properly through manual work not as a side activity but as a prime means of intellectual activity.”

The scheme was the outcome of sound thinking of Gandhiji. Perhaps Gandhiji is the only freedom fighter in the world who initiated and strengthened several constructive programmes for the economic, educational and social development of the people. He considered education as an effective instrument of national reconstruction.

Gandhiji emphasized self-sufficient aspect of education along with other aspects. In fact he wanted India to be self-sufficient in every walk of national life.

In July 1937, Gandhiji wrote in the Harijan, “By education, I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit… Literacy itself is not education, I would, therefore, begin the child’s education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. Thus every school can be made self-supporting, the condition begin that the state takes over the manufacture of these schools.”

WARDHA SCHEME OF EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

The fundamental features of the scheme which was evolved in due course are as follows:

1) A school of say 5 ½ hours could roughly be divided on the following basis:
   - Physical activities… 20 minutes
   - Mother Tongue… 20 minutes
   - Social Studies & General Science 60 minutes
   - Art 40 minutes
   - Arithmetic 20 minutes
   - Craft work including study of correlated subjects… 2 ½ hours

Thus the craft work will have 2 ½ hours instead of 3 hrs & 20 min.
2) Free and compulsory education to be given for 8 years (from 6 to 14 years) in two stages, instead of 7 to 14, the junior stage covering 5 years and the senior 3 years.
3) The medium of instructions is to be the mother tongue.
4) Education is to centre round some form of productive work. The social and physical environment to be used for correlation in addition to craft.
5) The self-supporting aspect is not to be over-emphasized. The sale-proceeds of he finished goods should be able to help the school to cover some part of its expenditure.
6) External examinations are to be abolished. The day-to-day work of the student is to be the determining factor.
7) Text books to be avoided as far as possible.
8) Cleanliness and health, citizenship, play and recreation are to be given sufficient importance.

EVALUATION OF THE WARDHA SCHEME OF EDUCATION

Merits of Wardha Scheme

I. Craft Work in School: 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. It is useful on account of the following:

1) 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 coordination.

2) 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 dignity of labor and of human solidarity – an ethical and moral gain of incalculable significance.

3) Economically considered, carried out intelligently and efficiently, the scheme will increase the productive capacity of our workers and will also enable them to utilize their leisure advantageously.

4) 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.

II. Activity Curriculum: In order to work out an effective and natural coordination of the various subjects and to make the syllabus a means of adjusting the child intelligently and actively to his environment, the Wardha Scheme laid stress on three centres, intrinsically inter-connected, as the foci for the curriculum, i.e. the Physical Environment, the Social Environment, and Craft Work, which is their natural meeting point since it utilizes the resources of the former for the purpose of the latter.

The Wardha Scheme of Education attempted to draft an ‘activity curriculum’, which implies that our school must be places of work, experimentation and discovery, not of passive absorption of information imparted at second hand. It 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 a child learns becomes assimilated into his growing activities.
III. Learning by Doing: Learning by doing sums up the educational methods of basic education. It is absolutely wrong to think that true education is acquired from books alone. There are other methods and sources which are more helpful in acquiring true knowledge. ‘Chalk’ and ‘Talk’ lessons are also not very useful. All educationists have condemned bookish knowledge. Gandhiji believed that school must be a ‘doing things’. In basic system of education children acquire the knowledge of the formal school subjects as a bye-product of purposeful activities.

IV. Social Activities and Community Life: the corner-stone of Basic education lies in the activities and the community life of school. Apart from craft, productive activities and occupations find an important place in the curriculum of a basic school. Living together and doing together is the soul of any progressive system of education and basic system fully incorporates this in its curriculum and methods of teaching.

V. Self-Sufficiency: Gandhiji felt that the educational system as introduced by the foreigners in India was expensive and it was very difficult for a poor country like India to spread education if it follows that system. So Gandhiji went a step further and declared that New Education must not only be worked centered but must also be self-supporting.

“...You have to start with the conviction that looking to the need of the villages of India our rural education ought to be made self-supporting if it is to be compulsory. This education ought to be for the kind of insurance against unemployment.

Not only from economic point of view, must this education be self-sufficient, but also from social and moral point of view. This means that at the end of the period of basic education the individual should become self-reliant and self-supporting.”

VI. Modification of the Views of Mahatma Gandhi on Self-sufficiency: Dr. Zakir Hussain Committee pointed out the danger of overdoing of craft work and warned that oral work, drawing and expression work should not be lost sight of. The educative aspect is more important than the economic aspect. It thus shifted the emphasis from complete support to partial self-support. It was felt that with the earnings through sale of craft products, uniform for the students or mid-day meal or purchase of some necessary equipment may be made.

Free and Compulsory Education: Seven years free and compulsory education is one of the fundamentals of his scheme and this cardinal principle has been emphasized due to two reasons:

(i) India is a democratic country and success of democracy depends upon the enlightened citizens. Our great leaders like Gokhale worked for the introduction of compulsory education for long time. In his historic speech, Gokhale said that if elementary education was to spread in India, it must be made compulsory and if it was to be compulsory it must be free.

(ii) Gandhiji dream of classless society, free of exploitation -- economic and social—can be realized only if everyone is educated.

VII. Mother Tongue as a Medium of Instruction: It is now universally recognized that the young child can learn with great facility if the medium of instruction is its mother tongue. Gandhiji asserted that no education is possible through foreign medium and all elementary education must be imparted through the medium of mother tongue.
VIII. Education through Correlation: Correlation is one of the important feature and crux of basic education. In this scheme of education, Gandhiji wished to give knowledge as a compact whole. The modern educationist also advocated this. The basic education is therefore, an effort to correlate the life of the child with his immediate physical and social environment. It is an effort to make knowledge easier and at the same time more meaningful.

IX. Integrated knowledge: Basic education treats knowledge as an integrated whole. Curriculum is build around three integrally related centers: (i) Physical environment, (ii) Social environment, and (iii) Craft work.

X. Relationship with Life: A basic school must become an active environment where teaching is not cut off from the life of the miniature community of the school and community itself. Education is to be directed to the need of life. It is not to pursue an idea which has no relation with or is totally isolated from the real situations of life.

XI. Training in Citizenship: Basic education aims at developing ideas of mutual understanding and habits of cooperative and mutually helpful living among the students through its various practical and constructive programs the new education aims at giving the citizens of future a keen sense of personal warmth, dignity and efficiency. It is likely to strengthen in them the desire of self-improvement and social service in a cooperative community.

XII. Greater freedom for the teacher and the taught: In basic education, discipline does not mean order and external restraint but an intelligent use of freedom. The teacher gets many opportunity to make experiments, think for himself and put his idea and plan to practice.

XIII. Basic education is not a class education: the ultimate objective of basic education is to create a social order in which there is no unnatural divisions between ‘have’ and ‘have-nots’ and every one is assure of a living wage and the right to freedom.

1) Unsound Psychological Foundations of Wardha Scheme of Education: “The delicate but inexorable laws governing the development of the tender mind of the child have been completely ignored. The child is treated just as a policeman or a soldier, merely as a unit in a homogeneous mass. His individuality is ignored. He is viewed merely as a means to an end—the end being earning capacity and citizenship of sorts.” P.S. Naidu

“play is the only means by which creative energy can be released. Enlightened and informed educational opinion all over the civilized world is dedicatedly against forcing the child to learn a craft before he is twelve plus. It is nothing short of cruelty to make the child earn an anna or half an anna per hour during the stage when he ought to be playing and enjoying himself.” P.S. Naidu

“There are three aspect of human nature—cognitive, affective and co-native. The Wardha Scheme emphasizes the last aspect piously hoping that the student will wily-nilly get trained in the first through his training in the last. The middle aspect is completely ignored.” P.S. Naidu

2) Undue Emphasis on Craft as the Only Basis of Correlation: “It is impossible to establish any natural association between craft and all the subjects of cultural value which any sane system of education should cover through its curriculum. Teaching should be concrete and should be based on the child’s active
experience in his environment. But it is absurd to hang all knowledge from the peg of single craft.” P.S. Naidu

3) No Place for Religious Education: “Education suited to our national genius should have definite religious basis, with contempt of worldly pursuits in its core. Craft-centered education is decidedly alien to our ancient ideals.” P.S. Naidu

4) Basic Education not Suited in an Age of Industrialization: As ours is a system of education which claims to produce an integrated individual, the emphasis is out of place in a community which has its face turned towards developing its economy to the full. So far Basic education fails to relate to the economic policy of state. But if this point is ignored, we shall find ourselves burdened with an educational system which turns out misfits even more rapidly than the one with which we are so dissatisfied.” S. Natarajan

“With rapid industrialization of India, knowledge of science and mathematics may become more desirable than skill in handicrafts.”

Editorial, Educational Review

5) Ruinous Competition: “This scheme will hit the professional artisans hard by creating ruinous competitions.” P.S. Naidu

6) Deficient Working of Basic Schools: “There is some loss in mechanical arithmetic and spelling; lack of sufficient intensive and respective drill.” J. Lahri

7) Neglect of the child: “In a hurry to pay more attention to craft, it has neglected the child.” Anath Nath Basu

“Basic education is looked upon more as a social and economic duty than as a joyful adventure.” Anath Nath Basu

“Craft is only a slogan, a fiction, which is practiced on commercial occasions for the benefits of visitors.” R.K. Singh

8) Faulty Time-Table: “In a basic school only two-third or half the normal time is given to academic education, the rest being taken up by crafts. And further, since on the time-table academic subjects generally come after the craft work, mostly agriculture, students are sometime too tired to take to academic work kindly.”

R.K. Singh

9) No Dexterity in Any Craft: “Students spend one-third or half the time for craft work without acquiring any dexterity worth speaking of in any craft.” R.K. Singh