

Gandhian Education and Its Relevance for Sustainable Rural Development in India

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Abstract

After attaining independence, India has attempted for the proper development of all classes by attaining itself from the chains of slavery that the country faced for years and has achieved a remarkable socio-economic development. Unfortunately, the benefits of this development could not reach all sections of society equally. Some sections of society have been left behind by this social and economic development stream. In this concept of development, some areas like rural, tribal and remote areas couldn't keep pace with urban areas. If these large sections of society are left off the mainstream of development, it would create unrest and it may not be conducive to a sustainable development of the country. This paper describes the role of Gandhian education in the context of human life and also expresses its grievances on local problems. It attempts to explore the Gandhian model of development and examines the relevance or irrelevance in the new world order. **Keywords:** Sustainable Development, Basic Education Plan, Rural Development, Ramrajya, Localization, Globalization.

Introduction

Today the entire world is in the race for modernity and every nation of the world wants to see itself at the forefront of this race. Presently, globalization is the most prevalent term, it exposes a situation in which the entire world society is seen as one family. In this, the emphasis is on license-free economic system. In Indian evolutionary society, Gandhism is an ideology that is hardly untouched by any area of life. The relevance of his views is proved by the fact that Barack Obama, the first black president of America, the world's most powerful nation, said during his visit to India that if Gandhiji had not been there, I would not have been the President of America. Regarding Gandhiji, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan has said, "In a world of hatred, Gandhi is an immortal symbol of love and goodwill. He has been associated with the ages in history." According to Gandhiji himself "Whenever I feel frustrated, Geeta becomes my support."

India is a country of villages and agricultural, so Gandhiji talked about village Swaraj and Ramraj. About 70 percent of the total population of India resides in villages and the population of these villages is engaged in agricultural operations. His personality and thoughts have been influenced by the fact that the Panchayatiraj system was inaugurated in Nagaur district of Rajasthan on October 2, 1959, on Gandhiji's birthday. The essential requirements of rural development have given strength to the Panchayati Raj institutions in the present form. It should be aimed at local governance, local people. Rural people should not only participate in the implementation of the programs, but also become active and strong participants in the activities. Establishment of small cottage industries, democracy can be true only if it has the physical economic and spiritual support of every section of the country. 'Whatever work is done for rural development, it is necessary that every citizen be fully involved in it, only then its real purpose can be achieved. At present, various projects of rural development are being developed and implemented only as a center of rural development so that more and more people's participation is strengthened.

Hypothesis-

1. **Primary Hypothesis):** "Gandhian education, with its emphasis on self-reliance, value-based learning, and integration of manual work, remains a viable and effective model for promoting sustainable rural development in contemporary India."

2. Secondary Hypotheses :

- a) Educational systems inspired by Gandhian philosophy contribute more effectively to local livelihood generation and rural self-sufficiency than conventional models.
- b) The inclusion of craft-based and community-centric education improves student engagement and reduces dropout rates in rural schools.
- c) Gandhian educational principles align with India's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the areas of quality education, gender equality, decent work, and responsible consumption.
- d) Implementation of Gandhian education in rural areas fosters stronger community participation and moral development among students.

Research Methodology-

1. **Research Design-** This research adopts a **qualitative and analytical** design, supplemented by empirical case studies and secondary data analysis. It investigates the theoretical foundation of Gandhian education and its practical implications for sustainable rural development in 2022.

2. Research Type-

- **Descriptive** – To explain the principles of Gandhian education.
- **Analytical** – To assess its relevance in contemporary rural development.
- **Comparative** – To compare conventional education models with Gandhian models.
- **Empirical** – Through selected case studies and field reports.

3. Sources of Data-

• Primary Sources:

- Field observations of selected Nai Talim-inspired schools and rural institutions
- Interviews with educators, rural development workers, and community members
- Questionnaires (if applicable)

• Secondary Sources:

- Books and writings of Mahatma Gandhi
- Government reports on rural development and education (e.g., MHRD, NITI Aayog, NEP 2020)
- Reports from NGOs and educational institutions
- Academic journals, research papers, and policy documents
- Census data and SDG indicators for rural India

4. **Sampling Method-** **Purposive sampling** method has been used to select rural regions and institutions that follow Gandhian educational methods for in-depth analysis. Particular focus is given to institutions like **Sevagram Ashram (Wardha)** and **Gandhi Vidya Mandir (Rajasthan)**.

5. Tools and Techniques-

- Content analysis of textual sources
- SWOT analysis of Nai Talim schools
- Comparative matrix of educational outcomes
- Thematic coding of interview responses
- Policy mapping to relate Gandhian ideas with SDG goals

6. Delimitation-

- The study is limited to selected rural areas and institutions using or influenced by Gandhian educational practices.
- The focus is primarily on developments and relevance as of the year **2022**.

7. Objective Alignment:

This methodology helps evaluate:

- The philosophical depth of Gandhian education
- Its adaptation in modern rural education contexts
- Its measurable impact on rural livelihood and sustainability

Gandhian Educational Thoughts: - The personality and character of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, has been idealistic. His conduct was a purpose-related ideology. Most people in the world know him as a great politician and social reformer. But he believed that education is a very important contribution to social advancement. So, Gandhiji has also contributed to the education sector. His mantra was 'to establish a society without exploitation'. For that, everybody should be educated. Because in the absence of education, it is impossible to build a healthy society. So Gandhiji explained the objectives and principles of education and the elementary education scheme is the embodiment of his philosophy. So, his philosophy presents him to the society as an educationist also. His contribution to education was unique. He believed that in my beloved India, children were taught 3H education, that is, head hand heart. Education makes them self-reliant and they can contribute significantly to making the country a vote.

Basic Principles of Gandhian Education System:

- Free and compulsory education should be given to boys and girls aged 7 to 14 years.
- The medium of instruction is mother tongue.
- Study of Hindi language is compulsory for boys and girls.
- All education is related to basic craft.
- Make a good craftsman by teaching selected crafts and make them self-reliant.
- Education of the craft should be given in such a way that the child can understand its social and scientific Importance.
- Physical labor was given importance so that they could earn a living by learning the craft.
- Education should be closely related to children's life, home, village and rural industries, handicrafts and business crafts.
- The items made by the children, which they can use and sell them, they can spend some money on the school.

Underlying factors of Gandhian education towards rural development:

Mahatma Gandhi has considered village development as the centerpiece of his entire educational concept. In the Indian context, rural development can be considered to achieve maximum production from agriculture and allied activities and for the proper development of industry skills in a rural environment. In his Basic Education Plan, Gandhiji has included the aspects of fulfilling the concept of Gram Vikash, which is not only fulfilling the concept of Gram Vikash but also emphasizes on the proper development of all sections of the society. The basic points related to village development in his educational ideas are as follows:

- Self dependability (Swarojgar)
- Village's Self rule (Gram Swaraj)

- Decentralization (Vekendreykaran)
- Good Governance (Ram Rajya)
- Dignity of labour (Sakata)
- Use of indigenous (Swadeshi)

The Gandhian thought for Sustainable Rural Development:

The Gandhian plan for rural reconstruction served as the Indian development meta-model. It focused on three areas: localized socioeconomic growth, village involvement in self-development and self-reliance, and rural industrialization.

As India develops into one of the world's most powerful economy, millions of people remain deprived illiterate, and live in deplorable conditions. Thus, removal of poverty is therefore a prerequisite for the protection of the environment and no doubt a great road map for achieving sustainable development. Poverty and environmental degradation are inextricably linked, especially where people rely on the natural resource base of their immediate surroundings for their livelihoods.

About 700 million people in India's rural areas depend on climate-sensitive industries and natural resources. Since the bulk of the population in rural areas is poor and lives in deplorable conditions. It is clear that rural areas are the source of the majority of environmental and other natural resource violations. Since independence, however, strategies, programmes, and aim schemes have been implemented to reduce poverty by focusing directly on job creation, which is one of the most significant barriers to long-term sustainability. Asset building for the vulnerable, environmental conservation, and rural India re-invention are all priorities. Since the majority of India's population lives in rural areas, most of the country's sustainable development issues, such as environmental degradation deforestation, poverty, and other social impediments to achieving sustainability, are caused by weak rural areas.

The Gandhian Education for Sustainable Rural Development:

Gandhiji was fully aware of the country's needs and saw Basic Education as the only form of education that could lead to prosperity. His main goal in planning education in India was to meet the country's needs. India is a village-based nation. The majority of Indian villagers are unable to pay for their children's schooling. They often need their children's cooperation in their occupation. As a result Gandhiji emphasized the importance of dignity of labour and manual skills in his plan for Basic Education, which would not be a financial burden on parents and would encourage children to earn enough money to pay for their own education. He was persuaded that an education that trains young men for white-collar employment could not possibly be appropriate for a farming community. Hence that he was much emphasized of learning of craft in his plan of Basic Education. In spite of all this idealism, Gandhiji's approach everywhere was pragmatic. He was an experimenter in every field of life. Before devising his plan of Basic Education, he tested everything before suggesting it for the education of the child. He suggested that the child should collect information from the world and implement it in real life. Gandhiji, like the pragmatists and instrumentalists, emphasised the importance of activity and interest, as well as the need for diversity in the subjects taught to students. Gandhi worked not only for the nation's political emancipation, but also for the liberation of all marginalized people. In this his idea of Education for all and education by craft leads rural areas towards sustainable development.

Recommendations-

1. Integration of Craft-Based Learning in School Curriculum- Educational institutions, especially in rural areas, should integrate locally relevant crafts like weaving, pottery, agriculture, carpentry, and khadi production into the school curriculum. This aligns with Gandhi's emphasis on "learning through productive work" and makes education both skill-oriented and economically relevant.
2. Promotion of Community-Linked Education Models- Schools must be encouraged to form partnerships with local communities and self-help groups to offer experiential learning opportunities. Village knowledge systems, agricultural practices, and folk traditions can be used as rich educational resources to make learning contextual and sustainable.
3. Training and Sensitization of Teachers in Gandhian Pedagogy- Teacher education programs should include modules on Gandhian educational philosophy and methods. Teachers must be trained to incorporate ethical, moral, and manual work components in classrooms, creating a balance between intellectual and practical education.
4. Revival and Modernization of Nai Talim Institutions- Government and civil society should collaborate to revive and modernize Nai Talim institutions like Wardha's Basic Education schools. These centers can serve as hubs for rural development, entrepreneurship training, and sustainable technology dissemination.
5. Establish Rural Education Innovation Hubs- Set up innovation hubs in villages that focus on practical problem-solving, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and eco-friendly technologies. These hubs can act as experimental spaces for students and villagers to jointly work on community challenges.
6. Incorporate Gandhian Ethics in Digital and Online Education- With increasing digitization, it is vital to ensure that online educational tools promote values such as simplicity, non-violence, and community welfare. E-learning platforms can include modules on sustainable living, cooperative practices, and environmental ethics inspired by Gandhian thought.
7. Strengthen Vocational and Life Skills Education- Gandhian education emphasized self-reliance. Therefore, vocational training should be made mandatory in rural schools, focusing on farming, animal husbandry, food processing, rural marketing, and sustainable crafts to promote employment and entrepreneurship.
8. Create National Policy Framework for Gandhian Rural Education- A comprehensive policy on Gandhian rural education should be drafted, recognizing its potential in achieving multiple SDGs. It must include financial provisions, curriculum reforms, teacher training guidelines, and performance metrics aligned with rural upliftment goals.
9. Encourage Youth Participation in Rural Reconstruction- National service programs like NSS and NYKS should be revitalized and redesigned on Gandhian principles to involve youth in rural sanitation, education, water conservation, and ecological restoration projects, fostering a sense of responsibility and solidarity.
10. Promote Research and Documentation of Gandhian Educational Practices- Universities and research institutions should establish dedicated centers for studying, evaluating, and documenting the outcomes of Gandhian education practices in India and abroad. Action research in rural schools implementing Nai Talim can generate models for nationwide replication.

Conclusion:

In short, Gandhi's concept of rural development refers to 'upliftment of the common man'. When A common man will develop only then the upliftment of village life can be expected. He realized the need of integrated rural development in the Indian context and believed that proper education and good health would gradually cater to gradual development as education is the knowledge of power and health is the stamina of the individual and society. He believed that adequate self-governance in rural areas regarding food, clothing, and shelter

would definitely reduce rural poverty. He focused his attention on the agricultural and non-agricultural aspects of the rural economy through all-round development of rural India and removed untouchability, caste system and social evil and made people aware of the rights that their socio-economic and political Let the partnership be more developed. Gandhi should be given credit for emphasizing the role of small scale industries and agriculture in the development of the Indian rural economy.

Almost all economists understand the importance of small scale industries, and they believe that in an underdeveloped country based in backward and rural environment, there is a need for decentralization. Gandhiji conceptualized a broader view of rural development and emphasized the need to fully utilize local resources to become self-reliant with the people.

To conclude, Gandhiji was a true educationist strategist. His educational "thoughts" served as the understanding, reduce poverty, produce employment, social movements, and to organize the country. We praised Education as an integral part of Gandhian life.

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