

**HISTORY OF EDUCATION AND GANDHI: A CASE STUDY OF ASHRAM
SYSTEM IN GUJARAT**

A

SYNOPSIS

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SYNOPSIS

INTRODUCTION

विद्या ददाति विनयं विनयाद् याति पात्रताम्। पात्रत्वाद्धनमाप्नोति धनाद्धर्मं ततः सुखम्॥

The above Sanskrit *sloka* clearly highlights the value of education and knowledge. It says ‘from *Vidya* (education) comes *Vinaya* (humility), from *Vinaya* comes entitlement, from entitlement comes wealth, wealth brings right duty and the positiveness brings happiness.’ Hence it is apt to say that right education is the source of good life not only of an individual but also of civil society as such.

Education has deeper meaning which does not restrict itself to studying and obtaining vast knowledge, or understanding of a variety of subjects or disciplines but also it enables an individual to comprehend the issues or problems that they are facing and find solutions to it. This mostly is obtained mostly through practical experiences outside of the classroom.

Once Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam said on importance of education ‘If a country is to be corruption free and become a nation of beautiful minds, I strongly feel there are three key societal members who can make a difference. They are the father, the mother and the teachers.’¹

It is an established fact that the education is paramount for any societal growth. However, the question that the societies and governments had faced was what kind of education should be imparted to the younger generation? Should it be the responsibility of the state or the civil society? Or should both the institutions be involved and engage with the question of education and its pedagogy? Imparting instructions to the younger minds of any historical time period provides them with a weapon to improve one’s life. History has proven that training the younger generation in various crafts was a serious responsibility both in the private as well as

¹ Hanuman Prasad N. Pareek. (2017). *Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam's Vision about Education*. International Journal of Research in all Subjects in Multi Languages. Vol. 5, Issue: 4, April: 2017 (IJRSML) ISSN: 2321 – 2853.

public spaces, i.e. at home as well as at institutions which is commonly identified as school. Hence, it is only natural that the education of a child begins at home. It is a lifelong process that ends only when a person dies. Since it plays such an important role in an individual's life and determines its quality it becomes important to assess the impact of various educational mechanisms that the society has adopted and implemented. As it has already been stressed enough, education improves one's knowledge, skills and develops personalities, attitudes, and most importantly it affects the chances of employment for people.

The study of the past educational systems has many lessons that can be used to improve present educational theory and practice. The problems and challenges we face in our education today are not unique; others have faced the same problems and attempted solutions with varying degrees of success or failure. We can adopt their successes and avoid their mistakes in attempting to improve our education. History of education hence is comprehensive and provides the current issues with simple solutions.

The past illuminates the present. History not only teaches what education is, but also where it came from, why it came to be, and what it is bound to become in the future. History of education is a narrative of the origins, growth and development of educational institutions, methods, concepts, aims, curricular, theory and practice without which they would appear new, unexplored, and untried to us in the present world. History thus helps us to understand and analyse the road travelled by educational systems to reach where it is today. Recent history or modern Indian history saw a systematic attempt by the state to engage with the question of education. The questions tried to address the issues of imparting of education in the British India. It was based on a representation that was adopted under the influence of western model of education introduced by the imperialists or the challenges posed to it by the nationalists. The biggest name who rejected the western model of education in India was Mahatma Gandhi. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi or Mahatma Gandhi is a name that almost everyone in the

world is familiar with. He preached the gospel of peace and practiced it by implementing through personalized actions. With his philosophy on nonviolence and *satyagraha*, Mahatma Gandhi was able to highlight the greatness of Indian civilization. Gandhian philosophy is so relevant that he was the most searched personality on google in various years.

As with the fields, Gandhian ideas on education are the most relevant even today. According to Mahatma Gandhi, the goal of education should be moral education or character-building; and the cultivation of a conviction that one should forget everything selfish in working towards great aims. Therefore, Gandhi defines education in the following way: “By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man –body, mind, and spirit.”² The term that is assigned with this type of thought process is ‘Nai Talim’ which laid emphasis on the basic education or ‘Buniyadi Shiksha’. Buniyadi Shiksha essentially is seen as ashram based system where the students at a very early age are inducted into the education system. As Mahatma Gandhi saw it, “Craft, Art, Health and education should all be integrated into one scheme. Nai Talim is a beautiful blend of all the four and covers the whole education of the individual from the time of conception to the moment of death....Instead of regarding craft & industry as different from education, I will regard the former as the medium for the latter.”³ Hence, the Buniyadi Shiksha became an important point of focus in the Gandhian scheme of things.

The current research is an attempt to explore, analyses and describe the evolution of Gandhian way of Buniyadi Education in Gujarat with special reference to the Saurashtra region. Saurashtra region has been chosen for several reasons: First, it being the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi, hence his *janmabhoomi*; secondly the region was under the control of many princely states who had supported the nationalists in the fight for freedom. Although, Gandhi’s

² Gandhi M. K., (1950). *Payani Kelavani*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Trust.

³ The selected works of Gandhi", Vol. 6, The Voice of Truth, mkgandhi.org/ebks/the-voice-of-truth.pdf

karmabhoomi was the entire Indian Subcontinent, but it was in the region of Gujarat and more specific Saurashtra that his ideas found mettle and were implemented at a fuller scale. The study also intends to bring to light the contribution of various regional Gandhian educationalists and scholars. These intellectuals although are well known at regional level, but have remained on the margins of mainstream with regards to discussion on reforms in education.

Research Methodology

The research methodology used in the thesis derives from the ideas of postcolonialism. In the modern historical period, 'education' is seen as a strategy which furthered colonization of large parts of the Subcontinent by the British. Postcolonial school of thought, urges that the outcome, be it social or cultural of the colonial era be analyzed, and wherever there are issues they can be addressed through action. Hence, under postcolonial narrative, education was seen as structured and layered with cultural imperialism. This brought about changes in the educational system at all levels to suit the interest of the colonialists. Postcolonialism, also demands for the restoration of indigenous forms of education with a view to achieve cultural dispossession of colonial mindset. The present research focuses more on the latter aspect of postcolonial methods.

To achieve the aforesaid objectives, a comprehensive examination of both primary and secondary sources have been carried out. These have been sampled, analyzed and reviewed. Further field survey research and interview methodology is also adopted for the current research.

A large body of literature has been reviewed the focus of which was on various aspects of based on Mahatma Gandhi's idea of Buniyadi and Ashram system of education. These researches have paid attention to not only on the basic education system, but also myriad of topics related

to educational structure as evolved in Indian subcontinent and more specific in Gujarat. Some studies have looked critically at the western education system⁴, or have given detailed description on origin of ashram type of education⁵; atmosphere of the ashram⁶; student-teacher relationship⁷; the subjects taught at Buniyadi schools the *udhyog* or technical training and compare the difference between the students who study in Buniyadi schools to those who are educated through popular education system.

However, despite the multitude of studies found, they are certain lacunas that are visible. For instance, most of these studies focus on Gandhian philosophy of education especially at national level. Unfortunately, none of these studies concentrate on regional dimension which has emerged as a very important component of historical discourse. Secondly, most of these studies and literature have carried out a thorough discussion and have highlighted the philosophical way or have made a comparative analysis of the two systems; some studies although discuss the socio-economic impact of Buniyadi education but it is carried out mostly by the contemporary educationists. There is very little focus on establishing thematic historicity; Another drawback to these studies is that there is a lack of discussion on the contribution of other Gandhian stalwarts in the area coming especially from Gujarat; the most important gap that this thesis aims to bridge is that most of the studies carried out so far have concentrated on theoretical formulations and policy making, however, in the process people's perspective and responses are lacking. There is absolutely negligible discussion moreover in

⁴ Amy Damon, Paul Glewwe & Suzanne Wisniewski., *Education in developing countries – what policies and programmes affect learning and time in school?*. ISBN 978-91-88143-12-9 Printed by Elanders Sverige AB Stockholm 2016

⁵ Bokil, Vinayak Pandurang. *The history of education in India: part I,(Aryan period)*. Vol. 1. Labour Press, 1925.P.8

⁶ Altekar A.S., *Education in Ancient India*, 2nd Edition., Benares, 1944, Pp.48-69

⁷ Patel Narotambhai Shivram, *Gujaratma Nai Talim (Darshan ane Vikas)*, Gujarat Nai Talim Sangh, Gujarat Vidhyapith, Ahmedabad, 2002, Pg. 180

most of these studies that establish connect between village communities and the Buniyadi education system.

The main scope of the current research lies in addressing the aforementioned limitations and providing a systematic data analyzing for a better understanding of Buniyadi education system and their relevance in modern times.

OBJECTIVES

1. To trace the evolution of Buniyadi Education and the education based on Gandhian ideas in with special focus on the region of Saurashtra in Gujarat.
2. To assess the impact of Buniyadi education in Saurashtra, Gujarat.
3. To establish historicity and connection with the New National Education Policy-2019.

OUTLINE OF THESIS

CHAPTER:1- INTRODUCTION

It gives an introductory description of the current research containing the meaning and concept of the terms such as, History, Education, Gandhi, Ashram system of Education, Buniyadi education system, and Saurashtra (Gujarat). It further deals with major objectives of the current research, hypothesis and review of literature

CHAPTER: 2- HISTORICIZING THE ASHRAM SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

To understand the application of Buniyadi education system in Gujarat it's necessary to first understand how the Ashram system of education evolved from ancient times in India. It is believed by many that the Indian indigenous culture has the capability to guide the world not in the field of spiritual learning but also so far as material learning is concerned. The chapter emphasizes on this very aspect. The Ashram system of education was designed to inculcate a spirit of individuality, team work, loyalty apart from identifying the talent and in accordance with that design the training that the child would undergo. There is no denying the fact that this sort of facility was not available to the masses, but only to deserving candidates who were born into privileged positions. Nonetheless when one equates the system to the way the education system is structured today, the Ashram system of education did have its appeal.

CHAPTER:3- MAHATMA GANDHI AND ASHRAM SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN GUJARAT

With the East India Company acquiring sovereign control over the resources of Bengal in 1765, it became imperative that they should acquaint themselves not only with the Indian culture but also its social systems. There was also an understanding that they could continue to reproduce their sovereignty with a systematic efforts to take control over their minds. What better way to control the minds than to control the system of education or redesign it to suit their administrative as well as other purposes. The chapter focuses on critically engaging with the concerted efforts made by the colonial government to establish a structured education system on western lines. It establishes how non-beneficial it had proven to the Indians and in the twentieth century a need was felt to design an alternative method to colonial education structure. However, the realization came a little too late and not much could be done at the

mainstream national level. The local education system had become completely westernized and this transformation happened with legal efforts of colonial government.

Nonetheless, theoretical formulation could be seen being discussed and written about and at times even implemented especially during the time of Gandhian mass movements. During these when a call would be given for the youth to join in, many of them would leave government schools and colleges. In order to ensure a continuing education many national schools and universities were established in the early twentieth century. For instance, Gujarat Vidyapith was established by Mahatma Gandhi in the 1920. It was Mahatma Gandhi who not only focused on higher education but also worked towards basic education or Buniyadi Shiksha. Since, he was an iconic figure there were many who joined him in this venture and it was through their efforts that many schools came into existence. The second part of this chapter focuses on Gandhian model of Ashram system of education.

CHAPTER:4- ASSESSMENT OF BUNYADI EDUCATION BASED ON ASHRAM SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN GUJARAT WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON SAURASHTRA

This chapter deals with how Gandhian idea of education practically applied by many educationalist in Gujarat with special reference of Saurashtra. After Independence many schools were established in several states of India, which was based on Gandhian Philosophy of education.

Such Schools are known by different names in India such as- Basic educational vidhyalaya, Buniyadi Schools, Ashram School, Gurukul, Vidhyapith, Lokshalao, Gram Vidhyapith, Dakshina Murti, Vidhyabharti, Lokbharti etc.,. Here the focus is on the historical evolution of above types of Gandhian schools, how Gandhi practically implemented his thoughts of

Education in Gujarat. In which mainly dealt with many aspects like the various founding figures of this type of schools, Socio-Economic aspects of schools, Life of students- teachers, campus activities, subjects, how it impacted nearby schools in village, and lastly what basic difference between these buniyadi education and the education which provided on bases of western methods.

This chapter also focus on to checking the effectiveness and acceptance of Buniyadi education based on research field survey and questioner filed by students, teachers and parents who engaged with Buniyadi ashram system of education.

CHAPTER:5- CONCLUSION

After examination of the literature and analyzing the collected data through questionnaire and interviews come to aware there were lots of efforts need to improve the Buniyadi education in Saurashtra. Most important thing which I found is that the 80 to 85% aspects of Buniyadi education were covered in our new education policy-2019. Now a day the Buniyadi education is not popular among new generation and even though many discontentment in western methods of education people access it.

APPENDICES

The section contains the statistical and descriptive data documented during the present study

GLOSSARY

This section explains the meaning of major terms used in current research.

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Both primary and secondary sources have been collected for the current research. The primary sources mainly are collected from Nai Talim Bhavan, Gujarat Vidhyapith, Ahmedabad and carried out a questionnaire based survey of most of the Buniyadi schools in Saurashtra. The secondary sources have been collected from various books, articles and other applications. Other avenues of sources such as electronic media including internet sources, newspaper reports, commentaries, doctoral dissertations, charts, maps etc. have also been used as per the nature of requirement. Some important references mention below:

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