

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF I.C. VIDYASAGAR AND M. K. GANDHI ON WOMEN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Education is the main important factor in the developmental process of a nation. It improves the quality of a life leading to the formation of human resources. Education acts as a catalyst that makes individuals and communities to move out of poverty and ignorance into a life of prosperity and wisdom. The absence of morality brings in a society crimes, injustice, corruption, etc.

According to I.C. Vidyasagar, education can change evil social attitude, which would not only be basic and vocational but must be moral. Mahatma Gandhi believes that there is an element of goodness essentially present in all, so there is need of proper education, i.e., moral education, which would bring out this element of goodness. Therefore, the goal of education should be moral education or character-building education. Then any work of the society would be moral, there would be no injustice towards any being, or even towards nature.

Keywords: *Moral Education, Justice, women Education.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is the main important factor in the developmental process of a nation. It improves the quality of a life leading to the formation of human resources. Education acts as a catalyst that makes individuals and communities to move out of poverty and ignorance into a life of prosperity and wisdom. This paper is an attempt to highlight on the importance of proper education to bring social justice. The absence of morality brings in a society crimes, injustice, corruption, etc. which can be removed through moral education.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar worked endlessly to provide equal education to all men and women irrespective of their cast, religion and gender. He along with many other active reformer opened schools for educating girls. He believed that the status of women and all kinds of injustice and inequalities that they face could be changed only through education. Liberation of women was the goal of his life and he strove hard for female education.

Mahatma Gandhi believes that there is an element of goodness essentially present in every man. So, there is need of proper education, i.e., moral education, which would be able to bring out this element of goodness. Therefore, the goal of education, according to Gandhi, should be moral education or character-building education. Then any work of the society would be moral, there would be no injustice towards any being, or even towards nature. To Gandhi, women are the incarnation of Ahimsa. His consent message to them is that bravery and courage is not the monopoly of men. Gandhi says that women are mentally and spiritually equivalent to men. He reminded the specific quality of women like- devotion, tolerance, passions, sacrifice etc. Women were superior to those of men in their practice of non-violence. In moral conduct he believed in leveling up and not in leveling down. Gandhi thought that it is luck to be born as a woman. Because woman have such physical and mental power by born as a woman like power of creation by suffering a pain that may the cause of death. Though man also involves in the process of creation but it is not by suffering any pain. This is a matter of proud from the side of women. Thus Gandhi always said that women must realize her capacity, not to treat herself weak, rather to think as stronger than men as the mother of man.

Women's status in society is affected by the traditional customs. The society which is guided by superstitions cannot be developed freely. Gandhi was against all such traditional customs that hindrance women's freedom, dignity and power. According to Gandhi education is helpful to enable women to uphold their natural rights. It will ensure their moral development and make them capable of occupying the same platform as that of man.

MORAL EDUCATION

The system of education is the medium to enrich oneself with right knowledge. Education makes possible to carry information from past to future through the present situation. At present people are conscious mostly about the importance of education, which can only make one's career batter in the materialistic world. But we are realizing that, this 'modern education' can fulfill only the physical need of an individual. So, for a just and peaceful society an individual must cultivate the quality of unselfishness in him, which can give him spiritual satisfaction. This

spiritual realization is only possible through moral education. Moral education helps one to know about self-duty, performance of duty in a right way, respect for others right which is very much essential to establish social justice. So it is important to include moral education in all branches of education.

I.C. VIDYASAGAR ON EDUCATION

Vidyasagar's mind was always open only to discover the truth and reality. He was the great social reformer, writer, educator, and entrepreneur and worked endlessly to transform society. His contribution towards education was remarkable. For him, educational reform was much important than any other reform. He believed all kinds of injustice and inequalities could be changed only through education. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar worked endlessly to provide equal education to all men and women irrespective of their caste, religion and gender.

Vidyasagar wanted to change the orthodox Hindu society from within. He gives importance on strict moral law. Once, Vidyasagar as Assistant Secretary of Sanskrit College gives some recommendations, basically based on moral law to introduce some much-needed reforms in the educational system. But when the Secretary rejected the recommendations, Vidyasagar resigned in protest. Regarding the reason behind his resignation he told that selling of potatoes is more better then serve in an institution against principles.

Education of girls was one of the prime objectives of Vidyasagar's plan. He realized that, without morally educated persons it is impossible to emancipate and liberate the society from the burden of inequalities and injustice. Vidyasagar was in favour of spreading mass education by witnessing the pervading darkness and superstitions in which people of Bengal lived. In the absence of education the status of women in nineteenth century was in pathetic condition. At that time education would not provide to woman by giving the reason that education is the cause of widowhood. Indeed at that time education was the most important matter to free women from all evil customs and superstitions. People were blindly following different customs without applied any reason to those. Vidyasagar was quite aware of the backwardness of women in India. As the Inspector of Schools he travelled all over Bengal and got the opportunity to witness the pervading darkness and superstition amongst the illiterate, uneducated masses of Bengal. He was so anxious by all the malpractices he saw, especially the exploitation of women in the name of religion. He realized then there is an urgent need of education to uplift women status. He had opened 35 girl schools with total enrolment of 1300 girls in his time. He had faced many difficulties for this purpose. In this regard he also had to spend his own money, though he did not stepback. He tried his best to give education to women.

M.K. GANDHI ON EDUCATION

Gandhi insisted on the proper education of morality and ethics to students of both at the school and at the college levels. In this regard while suggesting some guidelines for teachers, he says that it is duty of teachers to develop high morals and strong character in their students. “Character building has the first place in it and that is primary education. A building on that foundation will last.”¹ According to Gandhi education means “an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man- body, mind and spirit.”² As such, education becomes the basis of personality development in all dimensions—moral, mental, and emotional. Every individual is born with certain qualities which can be developed to the fullest extent for the benefit of individual and society by proper education. Gandhi’s educational theory puts greater emphasis on the complete and harmonious development of individual personality, so that everybody would be able to realize the element of goodness present in every man and would be able to realize spiritual oneness of the whole universe. Therefore, the goal of education, according to Gandhi should be character-building; the development of strength, courage, virtue, the ability to forget oneself in working towards great aims.

All round development is possible only if education is combined knowledge with work, percept with example. Then it would give him a perfect well-balanced, all-round education, which will constitute an individual into a natural, harmonious whole. This is what is known as Gandhi’s *Basic Education*. Education is the most influential factor for all. Absence of education is the root cause of our suffering. From the very beginning of our society women education were being neglected. Gandhi realized the necessity of educational reconstruction for the upliftment of women. Without the participation of both men and women it would be difficult to established *Rama-Rajya*. According to Gandhi, “The modern age is such that it does not allow anyone to remain in the same position. Those who don’t want to go forward, or do not do so, must fall behind.”³ According to Gandhi no nation will proceed forward if the education of women is neglected. The people who live in a decent life they will make no disparity in the condition of men and women. There would be no gaining from such education which was designed for selfish ends. That would be only like changing one’s dress.

Gandhi said that we must fight this impression and pluck out from its very root the general habit of regarding women as inferior beings. It is only education that helps women to be empowered. According to Gandhi both boys and girls should be educated, but for the two sexes it is only the primary education that can

¹ Gandhi, M. K. *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 2006, p.77.

² Gandhi, M.K. *Harijan*. 31st July 1937.

³ Joshi, Pushpa. *Gandhi on Women*. Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad & Centre for Women’s Development Studies, New Delhi. 2011, pp. 4-5.

have much in common. As far as the higher education is concerned, important differences would exist. “As nature has made men and women different, it is necessary to maintain a difference between the education of the two. True, they are equals in life, but their functions differ. It is woman’s right to rule the home. Man is master outside it. Man is the earner, woman saves and spends.... She is her children’s educator and hence, mother to the Nation.”⁴ Gandhi felt that for the education of women there must be provision for separate arrangements. Though Gandhi later realized the need of situation give importance on every kind of learning according to the interest and ability. Women must become literate, as education is beneficial for them as well as their families. The family web is woven around the women. She has to be up to the mark and educated so that she could provide for herself and her family during the hour of crisis. The status of women would improve only if they educate themselves and grab every opportunity to become stronger and more powerful than before.

CONCLUSION

Education is not merely a medium to earn, most importantly a basis to make men wise. A wise person only can make an ideal society. Without an ideal society we cannot lead a life, which is superior to animal life. According to Vidyasagar, education can change evil social attitude, and such education would not only be basic and vocational but must be moral. Gandhi's view-point on education is to the development of physic, mind and after all inner spirit of an individual. Thus we, who are concerned with education, need to think over their views on education. We have to apply the thought of those great thinkers according to the present circumstances of our country and also as per the demands of our present time.

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⁴ Joshi, Pushpa. *Gandhi on Women*. Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad & Centre for Women’s Development Studies, New Delhi. 2011, p.14.

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