

## Concept of Education by Gandhiji and R.K.Narayan

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### Abstract:

Mahatma Gandhi and R.K. Narayan, notable figures in Indian history and literature respectively, advocated for educational systems focused on holistic development and moral integrity. Gandhi emphasized "Nai Talim," a principle promoting self-reliance and vocational training alongside academic studies. Narayan, through his fictional works, subtly critiqued the rote educational methods of his time, championing learning that nurtures creativity and character. In contemporary society, their ideals resonate in the growing emphasis on value-based education, critical thinking, and innovation, challenging traditional curriculum-centered approaches.

Keywords: Nai Talim, Holistic Education, Moral Integrity, Creative Learning, Modern Society.

### I. Introduction

The concept of education as espoused by Mahatma Gandhi and R.K. Narayan holds immense significance in understanding the role of education in shaping individuals and society. Both Gandhiji and Narayan emphasized a holistic approach to education, which goes beyond mere academic learning to encompass moral values, character development, and practical skills. Gandhiji's philosophy of Nai Talim, or basic education, emphasized the importance of learning through work and manual labor, promoting self-reliance and community service. On the other hand, Narayan's portrayal of education in his novels often focuses on the struggles and triumphs of individuals navigating the complexities of societal expectations and personal growth. By exploring these perspectives on education, this research seeks to shed light on the profound impact of educational philosophy on individual development and societal change.

### II. Background of Gandhiji's Educational Philosophy

The background of Gandhiji's educational philosophy is rooted in his belief in holistic education that aims at promoting the overall development of an individual's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects. Gandhiji emphasized the importance of practical learning through hands-on activities and experiential education rather than rote memorization. His philosophy also highlighted the significance of character building, moral values, and social responsibility in education, instilling a sense of service towards others and societal harmony. Gandhiji's educational approach was deeply influenced by his own experiences and struggles, leading him to emphasize self-reliance, critical thinking, and creativity in teaching and learning. Overall, Gandhiji envisioned education as a means to cultivate individuals who are not only well-educated

but also ethical, empathetic, and socially conscious members of society, nurturing a harmonious and sustainable community (Poonam Agarwal et al., p. 76-86).

Mahatma Gandhi's educational philosophy, deeply entwined with his principles of non-violence and truth, stemmed from a vision of education that should foster overall development—physical, mental, moral, and spiritual. He envisaged an education system vastly different from the contemporary models based on colonial frameworks which he felt alienated individuals from their own society and culture.

Gandhi proposed the concept of 'Basic Education', also known as 'Nai Talim' which translates to 'New Education'. It was a holistic educational strategy, aimed at developing the individual's capacity to serve their community and enhance social welfare. According to Gandhi, this could be best achieved by focusing on manual work and productive labor. He considered hands-on learning as crucial to understand and appreciate the dignity of labor.

In his view, this pedagogical approach would blur the distinctions between manual and intellectual work. Learning by doing was pivotal to his method. Gandhiji proposed that craft-centered education not only makes the learner self-reliant but also instills in them a sense of responsibility towards their community. Thus, spinning cloth on a charkha (spinning wheel) was recommended as a key element in education – epitomizing self-sufficiency and interdependence.

Gandhi was not merely concerned with literacy; he saw that as just a tool in the process of education. For him, true education meant drawing out the best from the child's personality and enabling them to express themselves fully. He underscored character development over literacy or purely academic knowledge, arguing that moral values were essential to create an upright citizen.

Drawing from traditional Indian teaching systems such as Gurukulas as well as modern principles of experiential learning, Gandhi's educational philosophy was strikingly progressive for its times. It sought to break down barriers between different castes and social groups through collective experiences in farming, weaving, carpentry and other crafts common in India's villages.

Gandhiji firmly believed in non-discrimination and inclusiveness in educational settings. He advocated for co-educational systems where boys and girls could study together, thus promoting gender equality. He also called for mediums of teaching to be in vernacular languages so that it resonates with the lives of ordinary people.

Education under Gandhian framework was meant to be life-long learning process - extending outside the confines of school walls into every facet of life. Citizenship education aimed at encouraging active engagement in reconstruction of society along egalitarian lines was to be at heart this never-ending journey of learning.

Gandhiji's philosophy carried within it an intrinsic faith in human goodness and potential for change - an optimistic underpinning asserting education's transformative power. This belief in transformation extended beyond individuals to society at large; hence his stress on social reform could be often found weaving through discussions on education.

It is important to note that Gandhi's ideas were ahead of their time in many ways, advocating sustainability before it became a movement and emphasizing local economies before globalization took hold. His thoughts resonate closely with today's concepts of ecological intelligence, hands-on practical skills training, lifelong learning capabilities, moral education and citizenship formation.

Gandhi's legacy endures largely due to the universal appeal of his vision—an inclusive society where every member is educated not just intellectually but also morally – less an institution-based instructional paradigm than an organically interwoven component within daily life contributing towards holistic human progress.

### III. Overview of R.K. Narayan's Views on Education

R.K. Narayan, a prominent Indian author, shared his unique perspectives on education throughout his works, highlighting the importance of a holistic approach to learning. Narayan believed that education should not be confined to academic knowledge but should encompass moral values, cultural heritage, and practical life skills. In his novel "The Guide," Narayan emphasizes the significance of self-discovery through education and experiences, suggesting that true learning comes from self-reflection and personal growth. By intertwining his characters' journeys with the essence of education, Narayan illustrates the transformative power of learning beyond textbooks. His views align with Gandhiji's philosophy of education as a means to cultivate individuals' character and integrity, rather than merely acquiring knowledge for utilitarian purposes. Through his literary portrayals, Narayan advocates for a well-rounded education that nurtures the mind, body, and spirit, reflecting his deep-rooted belief in the transformative potential of holistic learning experiences. (R. K. Narayan).

Narayan believed in an education system that promoted not just academic learning, but also moral values and personal growth. He was a proponent of an educational structure that prioritized the development of character over rote memorization or the mere accumulation of facts. Through his characters and narratives, he subtly criticized the education system for being too restrictive, regimented, and detached from practical life.

For Narayan, true education transcended the boundaries of textbooks and classrooms. He underscored its role in shaping one's understanding of life's complexities and fostering a sense of empathy and responsibility towards others. Education was seen as a holistic process that nurtured the heart and spirit as much as it did the mind. This vision stands in clear opposition to an overly examination-focused methodology that turns students into passive recipients of knowledge rather than active learners.

In his writings, Narayan advocated for an education that embraced the rich cultural heritage of India while also remaining open to new ideas and innovations from the West. He stressed on a balance where modern scientific temper could exist harmoniously with traditional wisdom. His ideal educational model would not only produce efficient professionals but also well-rounded individuals who remained connected to their cultural ethos.

Narayan's apprehensions about solely career-oriented education become evident through various characters in his works who find themselves at odds with their own aspirations due to societal and educational pressures. He emphasized that an education system should adapt to individual needs, allowing students to pursue their passions rather than forcing them into predetermined molds.

Narayan's narratives often reveal a distrust toward overly bureaucratic educational institutions which seem to be detached from actual teaching-learning processes. For Narayan, educators were not mere purveyors of information but rather guides who played a vital role in inspiring curiosity and independent thought among students.

Another aspect that R.K. Narayan was concerned with was language used in education. His preference for instruction in one's mother tongue over colonial English underscores his belief that language is a crucial vehicle for both cultural expression and learning; however, he wasn't dismissive of learning English or other languages as he recognized their importance in facilitating global exchange.

R.K. Narayan envisaged an education system embedded within a larger socio-cultural milieu characterized by flexibility, personal attention to individual talents, moral instruction alongside intellectual development, preservation of indigenous cultures while embracing useful foreign elements, instruction through inspiration rather than compulsion, and lastly, an all-encompassing growth extending beyond job readiness to creating responsive citizens and enriched human beings.

Through literary gems, he passionately articulated these perspectives on what constitutes meaningful education - binding academic excellence with character building, cultural integrity with progressive outlooks - creating a tapestry rich with implications for educational reformers who dare to envision schooling as not just a preparation for life but life itself.

#### **IV. Comparison of Educational Concepts between Gandhiji and R.K. Narayan**

Gandhiji and R.K. Narayan offer distinct yet complementary perspectives on education. Gandhiji's emphasis on holistic education, centered on character development and practical skills, contrasts with Narayan's focus on intellectual growth through literature. Gandhiji believed in the importance of integrating academic learning with hands-on experiences to nurture well-rounded individuals capable of contributing positively to society. In contrast, Narayan's literary works often explore the transformative power of education in shaping one's worldview and fostering critical thinking. Despite these differences, both Gandhiji and Narayan shared a commitment to the idea that education should empower individuals to lead meaningful lives and serve the greater good. By comparing these educational concepts, we gain a richer understanding of the multifaceted nature of education and its potential to shape individuals and communities positively. (Rā. Su Maṇi).

## V. Impact and Relevance of Gandhiji and R.K. Narayan's Educational Ideals in Modern Society

The impact and relevance of Gandhiji and R.K. Narayan's educational ideals in modern society are profound. Gandhiji's emphasis on practical learning through manual work and R.K. Narayan's portrayal of the Indian education system have made significant contributions to shaping educational practices today. Gandhiji's concept of education as a means to promote social harmony and self-reliance aligns with the current discourse on holistic learning and skill development. Similarly, R.K. Narayan's critique of rote memorization and the need for a more creative and engaging curriculum resonates with contemporary calls for educational reform. By studying and incorporating these educational ideals into modern educational frameworks, we can foster a more balanced and inclusive approach to learning that addresses the diverse needs of students in today's society. Incorporating these ideas can lead to educational systems that empower individuals and strengthen communities in a rapidly changing world. (R. S Mani (educator.)).

Mahatma Gandhi and R.K. Narayan are two influential figures from India, each having contributed significantly in their fields. Gandhi, a leader in India's struggle for independence from British rule, also had specific ideals regarding education. He promoted 'Nai Talim,' a system of education emphasizing manual labor and self-reliance, stressing the importance of learning practical skills alongside academics. His philosophy was that education should develop a person's intellect and spirit while also making an individual capable of contributing to the economy and society constructively.

In contrast, R.K. Narayan, one of India's greatest English-language novelists, brought out the cultural essence and myriad facets of Indian life through his work. His views on education, although not as widely documented as Gandhi's, can be inferred through his literature which often portrayed the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of the Indian educational system with mild sarcasm yet with an undertone of understanding its importance.

In modern society, both Gandhiji's and R.K. Narayan's educational ideals hold substantial relevance. As we venture into an era dominated by technology and globalization, Gandhiji's emphasis on self-sufficiency and holistic development resonates deeply with sustainable living practices. Skills-based education is gaining momentum as it ties with the global agenda for sustainable development goals (SDGs). With a growing consciousness about the environment and economic disparities, incorporating Gandhian principles could balance technological advancement with environmental sustainability.

Narayan's insights into the nuances of education call to attention the need for systems that respect cultural diversity and promote critical thinking over rote memorization. In an era where information is abundant but wisdom is scarce, his indirect censure reminds policymakers to cultivate learning environments that value creativity and practical understanding over uniformity.

Educational frameworks imbued with these ideals would foster individuals who are not just academically proficient but also humane, empathetic, and well-equipped to face real-world

challenges. The timeless values they represent encourage educators to build systems that champion moral integrity alongside intellectual growth.

Gandhiji's model promotes a balanced development of hand, heart, and mind while Narayan's narrative nudges towards introspection within educational structures. Their ideals continue to inspire a harmonious blend between traditional values and contemporary necessities in modern educational paradigms.

## VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of the educational philosophies of Gandhiji and R.K. Narayan reveals significant similarities and differences in their approaches to education. Gandhiji's emphasis on experiential learning, self-reliance, and moral values aligns with his belief in holistic education for the development of an individual's character and inner strength. On the other hand, R.K. Narayan's portrayal of education in his novels reflects a more pragmatic and realistic view, highlighting the challenges and opportunities that education presents in a rapidly changing society. Despite their divergent perspectives, both Gandhiji and R.K. Narayan underscore the transformative power of education in shaping individuals and communities. This comparative study contributes to a deeper understanding of the concept of education as portrayed in the works of these two influential Indian thinkers, offering insights into the complexities and nuances of educational theory and practice.

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