



## **Gandhian National Education system as reflected in R.K. Narayan's: the English Teacher**

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### **Abstract**

National Education day, 11<sup>th</sup> November naturally reminds us legacy of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the first education minister of independent India. Maulana Azad veiled influence of Gandhiji. His of the views about universal primary Education complements to Gandhian view of National education. The changing scenario of education from pre Independence to post Independence compels to study Indian National education system. The education system under the British India was rudimentary, from that period of moment Indians were practicing hybrid education policy based on Britisher's policy. It does not give child training of body, mind and spirit. Observing the rogue practice in education the present researcher would like to study the National Education system before independence. The pioneer of Indian freedom movement the Mahatma Gandhi has contributed a lot for education also. National Education thought also reflected in 1920s literature influenced by Gandhian philosophy. It compels the present researcher to study about education thoughts reflected in Indian writing in English by renowned author.

### **Keywords:**

Education, National Education, Gandhiji, Narayan, the English Teacher, Krishnan, Activity based education

Education is that which liberate is as true today as it was earlier. Here education does not mean knowledge of letters and spiritual liberation after death but it includes training by which one serves to mankind for betterment. Liberation means freedom from servitude. Servitude is of slavery to domination from other people and temptation of one's own simulated needs. The knowledge gained in the quest of this

ideal constitutes real study. Gandhiji himself defines education as drawing out the best latent potentialities of child. This means to impart education through life.

Gandhi grew up as a young dynamic being when India was getting conscious about its dependence. At the time of independence movement like other vital issues education also draws his attention. Gandhiji criticized British education on grounds of: (i) it fails to develop all round being of a child, it is based on foreign culture, (ii) it lacks training of self reliant, (iii) and it is inimical to the growth of vernacular languages. By dint of Gandhiji stresses the need for a national education. Gandhiji observed that by English education we have enslaved the nation in hypocrisy and tyranny. English knowing Indians have started to cheat and strike terror into people. Gandhian scheme of education not virtually discard the teaching of English language and literature in India. He opines to teach English through translation of English text into Indian languages.

Gandhiji imbibes the Gurukul ideal of teaching but not rigorous training that child had to undergo. He has a view of natural learning without exerting any rigour like Madam Maria Montessori. In Gurukul system child has to compulsorily undergo physical activities like fetching water, rearing cattle, cutting firewood, cleanliness of surrounding etc. Here in this scheme of education Gandhiji reserves a provision for physical activities. He advocates education through vocational training in order to make education self supporting. Hence Gandhian National scheme of education caters to ideals of Gurukul system in terms of modern Indian reality. He allows incorporating English education if it tends to promote linguistic, literary and cultural values of India. So the Gandhian scheme of education is termed as national education.

Education in contemporary India emerges as an identity asserting itself as a mode rather than a convention. Gandhian Education enumerated with reinterpretation of ancient educational values in the existing context, enabling educational organization to get self sufficiency by craft and incorporating the tenets of English education if they tend to develop the growth of Indian vernaculars and literature.

Gandhiji influenced both politics and national literature after his return from South Africa in 1915. A rapid increase in the sale of Harijan and Young India journals launched by Gandhiji, evidences the impact of Gandhian ideology all over the country. Premchand, Sohan Lal Dwivedi in hindi, Kaka Kalelkar, and Umashankar Joshi in Gujarati, Mama Warekar in Marathi, Nilmani Phookan in Assamese, Annadashankar Ray in Bengali reflect a vast impact of Gandhiji in their work. Like Indian writings in English also reflects a tremendous influence of Gandhiji. Chief among them K.S. Venkataramani, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Chaman Nahal, K.A. Abbas, Narayan Sahgal and K. Nagarajan. R.K. Narayan veiled Gandhian influence with spirit of cultural and social changes that takes place in

society. R.K.Narayan's novels seem to present a notable spread of English education system. The enormity of English education is depicted in a Gandhian way. Narayan has made English education an arguable issue in his fiction. Among his work of art the present paper studies the paradigm of Gandhian National education thought in the novel, *The English Teacher*.

Firstly *The English Teacher* was published under the title *Grateful to Life and Death*. Its reprint under the title *The English Teacher* brings the theme of English education into pinpoint. *The English Teacher* ridicules at the rigid sets of pedagogic way of teaching which altered English literature to "the dead mutton of literary analysis and theories and histories"(Narayan 178). Krishnan in *The English Teacher* echoes the love of English literature with Gandhian perspective. Krishnan would like to reads "for the fiftieth time Milton, Carlyle, and Shakespeare" (Narayan 5). When he took decision to resign his English lecturer job he reflects: "What fool could be insensible to Shakespeare's sonnet or the Ode to the West Wind or 'A thing of beauty is a joy forever?'" (Narayan 178). Krishnan tells to his principal Mr. Brown that though he reveres English poets and dramatist, yet he would like to teach them "in a different measure and in a different manner" (Narayan 180). This statement of Krishnan advocates catering teaching-learning activities with self creative and critical ideals.

In the beginning of the novel, Krishnan voices his disagreement with Mr. Brown, the Principal of Albert Mission College about the precision of English language and its uses of the vowels. He opines English education as "literary garbage" (Narayan178), and the frustration of English lecturer is to educate the literary garbage as "the paid servants of the department" (Narayan171). Like Gandhi, he stresses on the importance of mother-tongue education to mould child a civilized being. He dislikes British colonial educational system was going to assault the whole century of phony teaching, so he wants to resign the job with respects to nation education.

*The English Teacher* espouses the Gandhian ideal of national education and advocates education through crafts activities. The headmaster's school 'Leave them alone' enables his school children to make a variety of objects like paper flowers, cardboard, bead work instead of educating through crafts. He also put them in practice of drawing tiger, lions and trees. The headmaster begins a child's education by teaching craft in Gandhian way. As this of the thoughts presented in the Mind of the Mahatma Gandhi:

Literacy in itself is no 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 training...I hold that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education. Only every handicraft has to

be taught not merely mechanically as it done today, but scientifically, i.e. the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process (Prabhu and Rao 379).

Krishnan daughter Leela very first day makes a paper boat in headmaster's school. The headmaster tells Krishnan that Leela complete her paper boat making "within an hour" (Narayan 134). It accentuates the implication that the headmaster also allows his student a plenty of opportunity to apply their mind to learn the intricacies of the craft. The objective of the Gandhian education through craft is to make learning spontaneous and easier.

Another aim of the promotion of education through craft is to make every school self-supporting economically. *The English Teacher* instead of using the crafts as a source of income preserves them in school as "the trophies" (Narayan 134) as a source of motivation. Headmaster's school does not sell crafts to make itself supporting. He maintains utmost economy:

This will do for a school. We are a poor country, and we can do without luxuries. Why do we want anything more than a shed and a few mats and open air? This is not a cold country for all the heavy furniture and elaborate buildings (Narayan 135).

In the novel headmaster also put the students in of practice game-way method. The headmaster tells Krishnan: "just as they play- I gather them together and talk to them and take them in and show them writing on boards. They learn more that way" (Narayan 125). Krishnan highly impressed by headmaster's system of game way method. At first he doubts about thinking, "If they are always playing, when do they study?".(Narayan 125) But Krishnan's direct communication with headmaster clears his doubt: "I was sure there were many things about him which would fascinate me. I was seized with a desire to know more of him". (Narayan 125)

One can also find Krishnan's interest in headmaster's insistence on the teaching of crafts. The Krishnan's response to his daughter's product, a green boat evidenced that: "My little Leela in relation to an outside world, making her own mark on it".(Narayan 134) Krishnan's experience to the headmaster's method of education enables him to apprehend a real meaning of education. As a lecturer in English at Albert Mission College, Krishnan is ultimately led to defy English education normally in a Gandhian way. He says:

I am up against the system, the whole method and approach of a system of education which makes us morons, cultural morons, but efficient clerks for all your business and administrative offices (Narayan 179).

It realizes Krishnan about his identity and leads to resign his college job to work as a teacher at the headmaster's school. For the work satisfaction and emancipate his soul from swindle feeling he is ready work in one fourth of his college salary. It validates the Gandhian impact of national education on Krishnan. At last Krishnan ceases to be the English teacher and gets freedom to experiment with education on Gandhian lines.

Krishnan in his quest for identity could be defined as a true Gandhian character. The awareness of Krishnan about job is that the main aim of every vocation is to earn money and to maintain one's family. This approach to life rooted in the sentence presents his maturity. His simple and casual statement views the value of labour in life for bread and butter. In these statements there is an expression of the Gandhian economic theory- 'Sanctity of Labour'. By this tenet Gandhi makes an advocacy of physical labour for all without conjecturing to Caste, Education and Profession. In Krishnan's work rational labour is the only labour, which he has to advance across. Gandhi, who not only practiced this principle in his economic conjecture but also practiced it in his routine life.

*The English Teacher* seems to espouse the Gandhian principle of national education based on Wardha training developed by Gandhiji in 1937. Dignity of labour and personality building thought: Simple living and high thinking also practiced by Narayan. Krishnan and Headmaster both are embodiment of this aphorism. In the thoughts of headmaster one must agrees with him:

We are a poor country, and we can do without luxuries. Why do we want anything more than a shed and a few mats and open air? This is not a cold country for all the heavy furniture and elaborate building (Narayan 135).

### **Conclusion:**

It is observed that Mahatma Gandhi has influenced whole mass of freedom movement. R.K.Narayan's *The English Teacher* portrays the evil of English education in cultural, linguistic, religious, and literary contexts. It interprets the Gandhian advocacy of national education through the headmaster's school based on creative and critical teaching. In the novel we find Krishnan and Headmaster as prototypes of Gandhian ethics.

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